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Art in the public realm and the politics of rural leisure: Access and environment

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*Art in the public realm and the politics of
rural leisure: Access and environment*

Alex Murdin

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF:

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**FALMOUTH SCHOOL OF ART, FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY (FORMERLY DARTINGTON COLLEGE OF
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ALEX MURDIN

ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM AND THE POLITICS OF RURAL LEISURE: ACCESS AND ENVIRONMENT

ABSTRACT

Exploring both political aesthetics and the politics of aesthetics to outline an environmental ruralism for art in public spaces, this practice lead research project postulates a “complemental practice”, outlining its methodology and contexts for operation, the rural, spaces of leisure and the public realm. It is a response to threats to spatial and environmental commons from heritage, place-making and nostalgia, psychological inhibition such as a sense of global contingency and widespread economic exploitation.

Responses by artists to this situation can be characterised as a binary of dialogism (Kester, 2004) and relational antagonism (Bishop, 2004), i.e. consensual/collaborative or antagonistic/autonomous practices. Informing both is the work of Jacques Rancière who theorises an ethical and social turn in the arts. Through both commissioned and self-initiated projects this thesis offers an interpretation of Jacques Rancière’s conception of dissensus (Rancière, 2010) modulated through an application of the work of philosopher Slavoj Žižek on environmental politics and complementarity - the inscription of the universal within the particular (Žižek, 2011).

The thesis’ originality lies in this theoretical synthesis which sets out a complementary practice based on dissensus and the undecidability of subject and context, but which dismisses any inflexible schema of either aesthetic autonomy or ethico-political egalitarianism. In addition it suggests an approach to practice in this field and a situation for this - a dissensual infrastructure for the common public realm which is socially relational and evolutionary over time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Context: Art in the public realm/ public art	2
1.2	Context: The politics of aesthetics / Political aesthetics	5
1.3	Context: Rural space and the public commons.....	10
1.4	Methodology	13
2	A brief typology of instrumentality	24
2.1	Sustainability	25
2.2	Environmental instrumentality	26
2.3	Economic instrumentality.....	29
2.4	Social instrumentality.....	34
2.5	The Jaywick Tourist Board: Arcadia revisited (again)	40
2.6	On being instrumentalised.....	54
3	Complemental practice: Between the monument and the embrace	56
3.1	Political aesthetics / politics of aesthetics.....	56
3.2	Complementarity: Autonomy and dialogue.....	63
3.3	Stairway to heaven.....	74
3.4	Towards a Complemental practice.....	79
4	A politics of leisure	82
4.1	Leisure without content: A weak end to history.....	83
4.2	Leisure, tourism and the environment: Pride of place.....	91
4.3	Sites of reception: Pride of place 1.0.....	93
4.4	Time for a change.....	100
5	Rurality: The tyranny of heritage and place	103
5.1	Romanticism, discipline and regeneration.....	104
5.2	Heritage, ecology and nostalgia	117
5.3	Radical ruralism	121
5.4	Fluidarity	123
6	Access and environmentalism: The impossible gaze of the ecological subject.....	125
6.1	Anthroposcenery	125
6.2	Presence and absence in the landscape: Inclusive path	127
6.3	Unmanagement of the future natural: One mile wild	133
6.4	Subtraction?	142
7	Populations: Environmental publics.....	145
7.1	The human species.....	146
7.2	Contra - imposture: Immersion.....	152
7.3	Lyme Light: Pride of place 3.0	159
7.4	Out of control.....	165
8	Dissensual infrastructure	167
8.1	The con of temporary art?.....	167
8.2	Rural infrastructure and risk.....	171
8.3	Sun Stages	176
8.4	Parallax.....	179
8.5	Dissensual infrastructure	183
8.6	Interstices	188
9	An infinite number of finite demands	190
	Appendix 1 – The Jaywick Tourist Board	202
	Appendix 2 – Stairway to heaven	206
	Appendix 3 – Sites of Reception	219
	Appendix 4 – Organic Pony Skin Rucksack.....	223
	Appendix 5 – Inclusive Path.....	227
	Appendix 6 – One Mile Wild.....	231

Appendix 7 - Immersion: A strategic framework for eco-recreation in British waters	234
Appendix 8 – Lyme Light: Light Year	318
Appendix 9 – Sun Stages.....	323
Appendix 10 – Lines of Flight.....	331
Appendix 11 – Tats for Bats.....	334
Glossary of key terms	337
References	340

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Detail of Trevena Square, Tintagel (2005), Michael Fairfax.....	27
Figure 2. The Angel of the North (1998), Anthony Gormley	30
Figure 3. Drop (2008), Steve Messam.....	31
Figure 4. The Harlow Temple of Utopias (2008), Roman Vasseur & Diann Bauer	34
Figure 5. Homerton City Playscapes: Exhibition invitation (2004), Nils Norman.....	38
Figure 6. The Jaywick Tourist Board: postcard (“Love Shack”) (2008), Alex Murdin	43
Figure 7. The Jaywick Tourist Board: phone tour flow diagram (2008), Alex Murdin.....	45
Figure 8. The Jaywick Tourist Board: questionnaire(2008), Alex Murdin	48
Figure 9. The Jaywick Tourist Board: t-shirt (2008), Alex Murdin.....	50
Figure 10. 46 Brookland Gardens (2008), Nathan Coley	53
Figure 11. Swords of Qādisīyah (1997), Adil Kamil.....	57
Figure 12. Western view of Capitol building in Washington D. C.....	59
Figure 13. Contemporary model of the Great Hall (Volkshalle)	59
Figure 14. Fear Eats the Soul (2011), Rirkrit Tiravanija.....	67
Figure 15. Stairway to Heaven: visualisation (southern view) (2006), Alex Murdin	76
Figure 16. Stairway to Heaven: plan and elevations (2006), Murdin & Childs.....	76
Figure 17. Sites of Reception: car park 1 (2009), Alex Murdin	96
Figure 18. Sites of Reception: badges (2009), Alex Murdin.....	97
Figure 19. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack (2010), Alex Murdin and Tony Piper	107
Figure 20. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack (2010), Alex Murdin and Tony Piper.....	107
Figure 21. Greasy Pole (2008), Jeremy Deller & Alan Kane.....	116
Figure 22. Time Landscape (1965-), Alan Sonfist.....	118
Figure 23. Inclusive Path: Grasmere (2007), Alex Murdin.....	129
Figure 24. Inclusive Path: Grasmere (2007), Alex Murdin.....	131
Figure 25. One Mile Wild: satellite view (2009), Alex Murdin	137
Figure 26. Sanctuary: Münster (1997), Herman de Vries	139
Figure 27. Sanctuary: Münster in 2007.....	140
Figure 28. Immersion: Mothecombe aquarium (2008), Alex Murdin	157
Figure 29. Immersion: rapid response unit (2008), Mike Cox and Nick Childs.	158
Figure 30. Lyme Light: The haywain (2008), Alex Murdin.	162
Figure 31. Two possible locations for Lyme Light: Light Year on Lyme Regis seafront	164
Figure 32. Lyme Light: Light Year: blue for a boy (2008-), Alex Murdin.....	164
Figure 33. Reflective Fence (2010), Michael Pinsky	174
Figure 34. Road Fountain (2010), Michael Pinsky.	175
Figure 35. Sunstages (2010), Alex Murdin and Mike Cox.....	177
Figure 36. Sunstages: Sunrise Cinema (2010), Alex Murdin and Mike Cox	178
Figure 37. Sunstages: Schematic (2010), Alex Murdin and Mike Cox	178
Figure 38. Lines of Flight (2012), Alex Murdin	184
Figure 39. Animal Wall (2009), Gitta Gschwendtner. Photo: Keiran Ridley.....	185
Figure 40. Tats for Bats (2012), Alex Murdin	186
Figure 41. The Jaywick Tourist Board: www.jaywicked.org.uk (2008), Alex Murdin.....	203
Figure 42. The Jaywick Tourist Board: Martello Tower (2008), Alex Murdin	203
Figure 43. The Jaywick Tourist Board: series of 5 postcards... (2008), Alex Murdin.....	204-5
Figure 44. The Jaywick Tourist Board: Google Earth tour . (2008), Alex Murdin.....	205

Figure 45. Stairway to Heaven: trifold printed leaflet (2006), Alex Murdin.....	207
Figure 46. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Introduction (2006), Alex Murdin	208
Figure 47. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Background (2006), Alex Murdin	208
Figure 48. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Market (2006), Alex Murdin	209
Figure 49. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Site Issues (2006), Alex Murdin.....	209
Figure 50. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Accessibility (2006), Alex Murdin	210
Figure 51. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Solution (2006), Alex Murdin	210
Figure 52. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Survey (2006), Alex Murdin.....	211
Figure 53. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Haytor Ways (2006), Alex Murdin.....	211
Figure 54. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Lyrics (2006), Alex Murdin.....	212
Figure 55. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Leisure use (2006), Alex Murdin.....	212
Figure 56. Stairway to Heaven: Plans, (2006), Alex Murdin & Childs Sulzmann	213
Figure 57. Stairway to Heaven: planning notice at Haytor, (2006).....	214
Figure 58. Stairway to Heaven: messages on “Ouch! ...”, (2006).....	215-17
Figure 59. Stairway to Heaven: press coverage, (2006)	219
Figure 60. Sites of Reception: car park 1 (2009), Alex Murdin	220
Figure 61. Sites of Reception: proposed location (2009), Alex Murdin.....	220
Figure 62. Sites of reception: car park 2 (2009), Alex Murdin	221
Figure 63. Sites of reception: car park 3 (2009), Alex Murdin	221
Figure 64. Sites of reception: beach (2009), Alex Murdin.....	222
Figure 65. Sites of Reception: proposed signing in system (2009), Alex Murdin.....	222
Figure 66. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack (2010), Alex Murdin and Tony Piper	224
Figure 67. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack: accessory (2010), Alex Murdin and Tony Piper..	224
Figure 68. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack: press coverage (2010).....	225
Figure 69. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack: description & comments (2010-11)	225-6
Figure 70. Inclusive Path: flyer/poster (2007), Alex Murdin.....	228
Figure 71. Inclusive Path: installation in Keswick (2007), Alex Murdin.	228
Figure 72. Inclusive Path: press release (2007), Alex Murdin.....	229
Figure 73. Inclusive Path: BBC coverage (2007), Alex Murdin.....	229
Figure 74. Inclusive Path: composite photo of participants (2007), Alex Murdin	230
Figure 75. One Mile Wild: proposal (2009), Alex Murdin.....	232-3
Figure 76. Immersion: A strategic framework (2008), Alex Murdin/Simon Ryder ...	235-316
Figure 77. Immersion: BBC coverage (2009)	317
Figure 78. Lyme Light: Light Year: proposal (2008), Alex Murdin	319-2
Figure 79. Sun Stages: proposal (2010), Alex Murdin and Childs Sulzmann.....	324-30
Figure 80. Lines of Flight: project flyer (2010), Alex Murdin	332
Figure 81. Lines of Flight: temporary installation (2010), Alex Murdin	333
Figure 82. Tats for Bats: laser etched bat-box (2012), Alex Murdin.....	335
Figure 83. Tats for Bats: installation view (2012), Alex Murdin.....	336
Figure 84. Tats for Bats: tattoo as basis of design (2012)	336

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Contexts, outcomes, methods and key theoretical points by project.....	20
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AUTHORS DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee. Work submitted for this research degree at the Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment

A programme of advanced study was undertaken which included postgraduate study courses at both Dartington College of Art and University College Falmouth and supervised instruction. Relevant seminars and conferences were attended at which work was presented and papers prepared for publication. Conferences were also originated including *Wide Open Space*, 2011 (Convenor: One day conference with the Dorset Design and Heritage Forum on Localism, public art and rural planning) and *Healthy Communities, Sustainable Places*, 2011 (Co-convenor: One day conference on the role of art within public health and wellbeing initiatives). Publications have included a chapter from this thesis *The impossible gaze of the ecological subject* for the Home and the World conference (May 2012) and a forthcoming chapter *Death in environmental art: Self-eradication to mass mortality in Malady and Mortality: Illness, Disease and Death In Literary and Visual Culture* (2015), as well as other articles such as *Debate: art in public and localism* (an, Nov 2011), *Art in aspic: Rural artists breaking free from the mould* (artcornwall.org, Sep 2008) and *Water, recreation and art* (The Global Environment, Edition One, Sep 2008). A number of performances and other artworks were presented in public spaces and places as detailed in this thesis.

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1 INTRODUCTION

"Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall." Gilles Deleuze in (Foucault, 1977b: p. 206)

This thesis is informed by my experience as a combination of artist and producer working on art in the public realm projects for the past 20 years. As an artist I work conceptually, developing a core idea for a site/context which might be delivered in a number of different ways, usually in collaboration with other artists, technicians or people from other disciplines, for example landscape designers, architects or planners. To a large extent these projects can be said to be co-designed as they involve working with communities of interest who contribute to the development of core concepts and more practically in terms of resources. It is this interaction with other people, those who design public space and those who occupy it, when working in the public realm that has given me an interest in the motivations behind it, and ultimately in the politics surrounding making art in public - why people might want it in the first place, what are the obstacles to it happening and what is its legacy? All of these questions must be answered in some way as an artist and producer for both personal motivation and in order to convince other people that this is a worthwhile activity. My perspective on these questions is perhaps unusual as I have been on both sides of the fence, as an artist employed by commissioners to create work and as producer employing artists on public projects. Having always had an interest in the natural world and having moved to Devon some time ago I became particularly concerned with how to make work in a **rural**¹ context - whether that changed things for my practice and what were the particularities of the rural space I was living in, for example it is a place of serious work for some but a playground of leisure for others.

¹ Key terms in the thesis are defined in a glossary on p. 337 for reference. They appear in bold italics in the main body of text on their first use.

This combination of circumstance and interest has led to this thesis and its objective, to answer the question:

*Is it possible to create a coherent artistic praxis, a synthesis of practice and theory, that functions as an aestheticised political process and that effects the rural public realm, in order to respond to contemporary threats to **public commons**?*

1.1 CONTEXT: ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM/ PUBLIC ART

The research question must of course also be placed in a wider context of the theory, literature and practice of art in order to understand its possible relevance. Its territory can be summarised as artistic theory and practices which concern themselves with:

- Art in public (public art)
- The *politics of aesthetics* and *political aesthetics*
- Rural space and the public commons

The field of art in public, public art or art in the public sphere/realm is currently enjoying a period of enormous interest, academically and within the wider culture. A reason for this in the United Kingdom over the past 10 or 20 years is that there seems to have been a convergence between artists who take the social as both the topic and form of their practice, art institutions concerned with developing new audiences, and government policy on economic regeneration, social inclusion, public **access** to common facilities, the countryside and environmental **sustainability**. This is overlaid onto an existing tradition and history of art that appears in public spaces stretching back into pre-history which includes architecture, sculpture, folk art, community art and more. There is a vast literature on the subject which includes many sub-domains, for example site-specific art, context-specific art, place-specific art, landscape art, environmental art and socially engaged art to name a few. In simple terms art in the public realm can be taken to mean art that appears physically in the built or natural environment. It is distinct therefore from art in the public sphere which manifests incorporeally within communications media, on

the internet, etc. This is not to say there is no overlap and art in the public realm may include spaces created in public that are devoted to presenting the public sphere - billboards, internet kiosks or just spaces for discussion. There is also increasing interaction between the two on handheld technology linked to phone signals, the internet and global positioning systems. Art in the public realm can additionally be defined generally as the opposite of 'studio' or 'gallery' art, practices which appear in spaces which are effectively designated and controlled specifically for the display and reception of art. Art in public is taken in this research to encompass a wide territory for art practices, including interventions in both the physical environment and works in the public sphere that overlap - projects which others prefer to call "publicly commissioned art", "art in the public interest" or simply "art in outside space" (Franzen et al., 2007: p. 14).

Art in public has been better known in the past as public art, but this term has a specific set of associations and meanings which has been a cause of dissatisfaction to many in recent years. It was the most common appellation used in the USA, UK and Europe from the 1960s to the 1970's to describe mostly visual art located in public spaces. By 1980s it had come to be associated most often with the act of placing (studio) art into the public realm. Since then has largely fallen out of favour in academic discourse, although it still has meaning for local authorities and developers in the UK. The main cause for dissatisfaction with the term was that some public or private sector entities, in the spirit of philanthropic civic monuments and memorials of the past, took as their mission the education of the public, and/or the aggrandisement of their reputation through art sited outside the gallery or corporate headquarters. Art was used to brand buildings, towns and cities; a work by Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore or Jacques Lipchitz became the mark of a cultured, modern city. Justifications were made by commissioners that merely by coming into contact with art in a public space people would respond, engage and become better educated about modern art. Critics however came to see this approach as privileging artistic autonomy and, driven by the economics of asset creation, favouring works with permanence which would gain value in the marketplace. Many writers have contributed to this critique:

examples are *Dialogues in public art*, by Tom Finkelpearl (2001), *Art for public places* edited by Malcolm Miles (1989) or *Art in the public interest* edited by Arlene Raven (1989). Work that was simply transplanted from the gallery to the square with no consideration of its environment, or the communities using the space, became known derisively as “plop art” or the “turd in the plaza”- terms coined by architect James Wines in the 1960s (Wormersley, 2005: p. 1967).

As the character of the Western public sphere started to change (questioning modernist utopian visions and embracing more pluralistic, postmodern perspectives) this approach was also interrogated by artists for whom the relationship of art to its location or site had become an important part of the work itself. For example running parallel to the official public art of the 1960s other artists such as the Situationists, led by Guy de Bord, worked politically in critiquing a passive society consuming spectacle. Processes included making temporary, performative works using techniques such as the *dérive* - chance movement through (urban) terrain. This became elaborated into a psychogeography that “...manifests the geographical environment’s direct emotional effects” (Ford, 2005: p. 34), a tactic still favoured by a significant number of artists working in the public realm and sphere today. Just two examples would be the work of Wrights and Sights who work in the South West to create “misguides” to cities which unearth unofficial histories and narratives from inhabited places and that of Tim Brennan who works in the North and uses mobile phone imagery to reimagine romantic landscapes and the industrial struggles of the trade unions. Contemporarily there is still a need to challenge stereotypes of public art. The organisation Situations in Bristol, led by Claire Doherty, is at the forefront of reimagining public art that does not decorate or embellish, that can be temporary interventions or single moments (although within the framework of an embedded and durational approach within communities) and most importantly that emphasises the ability of art to surprise and interrupt.

The following are some recently published *New rules for public art* by Situations:

“It doesn’t have to look like public art, it’s not forever, create space for the unplanned, don’t make it for a community - create a community, withdraw from the cultural arms race, demand more than fireworks, don’t embellish, interrupt, share ownership freely, but authorship wisely, welcome outsiders, don’t waste time on definitions, suspend your disbelief, get lost.” (Situations, 2015)

This manifesto is an attempt to move forward the debate on the nature of art in public space, resisting the implicit or explicit expectations of the authorities and capital that control and finance the development of the public realm whilst protecting the individual artist’s vision and integrity, so removing any sense of instrumentality. However there is a danger here where, by protecting the artist from the instrumentalities of public space development, a chance is missed in confronting the instrumentalisers, of changing attitudes and even making this engagement into an opportunity for intervention. This is the opportunity discussed and challenge taken up in this thesis.

1.2 CONTEXT: THE POLITICS OF AESTHETICS / POLITICAL AESTHETICS

Politically the majority of perspectives on art in public tend to stem either from a genealogy of Marxist critiques of capitalism or from a liberal democratic social conscience, and much of the argument is between these camps. For instance currently popular is Jacques Rancière’s radical leftist concept of “the distribution of the sensible” as the way in which art can make visible the disenfranchised. In *The politics of aesthetics* (2000) Rancière describes *aesthetics* acting on the body politic through ways of making and doing that reconfigure apparent or visible facts in the constant interchange between the demos (citizens) and polis (hegemonic authority), which he calls “the distribution of the sensible”. In this way Rancière has been an important figure in the rehabilitation of the term aesthetics (generally defined along the lines of a “visual or auditory appearance which is pleasing or displeasing for its own sake” (Parsons, 2008: p. 17)). Aesthetics as a term and discipline had been largely rejected by modernist artists and critics as too restrictive, a reading of art practices associated with the systemisation of art, beauty and meaning within the established institutions of the art world, which Rancière has called the

“representative regime”. However in his vision of aesthetics, set out most recently in *Aisthesis : Scenes from the aesthetic regime of art* (2013), Rancière asserts that in fact the revolution of modernism, with its emerging equality of styles and subjects, was a new ***aesthetic regime*** as art creates a free space of sensory play. It is in this sense of freedom that Rancière finds that art operates in the same way as politics as a space where the liberty of the subject is asserted. However he underlines that, in his view, art occupies the same territory as politics but that paradoxically art must remain distinct from real life politics in order to retain its efficacy to change human experience, sensibilities and political state:

“Suitable political art would ensure at one and the same time, the production of a double effect: the readability of a political signification and a sensible or perceptual shock caused, conversely, by the ***uncanny***², by that which resists signification. In fact, this ideal effect is always an object of negotiation between opposites, between the readability of the message that threatens to destroy the sensible form of art and the radical uncanniness that threatens to destroy all political meaning.” (Rancière, 2000: p. 63)

His position is however criticised by neo-liberal American critic Hal Foster as “wishful thinking”, as “any redistribution of the sensible through contemporary art is a mirage and, when pitted against the capitalist ‘transformation of things into signs’, it is little more than the opiate of the artworld left” (Foster, 2013: p. 15). Foster though agrees that the reason Rancière’s work is so popular in the art world is that there is a “fatigue with ‘criticality’ as a principal criterion of practice” (ibid), the liberal-democratic model of denunciation of the injustices of current politics and capitalism which only end up being subsumed back into the market place. To others this situation does not matter. For instance there is the conservative political and cultural philosophy of Francis Fukuyama who suggests that art has evolved largely into a formal concern which is concerned with a pure aesthetic of contentless beauty. There is nothing wrong with this as it signals a culture which achieved all that there is to achieve in the real world of society, politics, economics etc. and is involved in refining its cultural history and established moral system: “Culture can be

² My bold italics – see glossary for definition of “uncanny”.

defined as a-rational, ethical habit passed on through tradition" (Fukuyama, 1995: p. 7). That there are cultures which haven't found this correct formula yet is not disputed by Fukuyama however their adoption of it is only a matter of time.

However this laissez faire attitude seems to be at odds with any sense of urgency for cultural practitioners in the face of ethical concerns or social injustice now, instead of at some future point. This seems to demand a political aesthetics, sensory forms that inhabit politics instead of addressing politics from outside. Even by Fukuyama's reckoning culture relies on a stable economic and political situation in order to flourish and must therefore be concerned with social and political inequality. This is why in this thesis I have introduced the thinking of Fukuyama's antithesis Slavoj Žižek, not only as he suggests a sense of political urgency and agency through a reinvigoration of the radical left, but for his insights into the role of culture in this situation. Although he mentions contemporary art per se infrequently and concentrates on more accessible culture such as Hollywood films or popular architecture his psychoanalytic (Lacanian) and philosophical (Hegelian) observations remain pertinent to an art practice concerned with discovering a wider social relevance outside of confines of the art gallery and cut through some of the more finely balanced arguments within the politics of aesthetics. Ultimately he provides a number of avenues to explore for a reinvigorated appraisal of how we should interrogate the fundamental structuring of common public spaces in the face of their destruction through consumption, or appropriation through privatisation, which is a key concern of this thesis. He makes the point that all returns to the social as, without addressing basic inequalities, it is impossible to address issues which affect everyone and are held in common, be they cultural or environmental factors. He suggests that the correct question in this regard is always: "...the proper radical answer to liberal's sympathetic concern for the excluded: "How come that they are out there, excluded from public space?" - "How come that you are in here, included in it?"" (Žižek, 2011: p. 124).

Culture also relates to politics in terms of political aesthetics, that is the forms and appearance given to politics by those involved, and in turn the appearance this gives to the manifestation of those politics through cultural policy. In the UK in the years of New Labour (1997-2010) the emphasis for culture was very much on social activism at a grassroots level (e.g. in addressing social inclusion), tempered with the administration promoting national art and culture as an industry and marketing strategy, i.e. “cool Britannia” (The Economist,1998). With the coalition government of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats and the subsequent Conservative government from 2010 onwards, and in the context of a global economic recession from 2011 onwards, the emphasis has returned to art in public space as part of physical regeneration for economic return and decreasing sources of public sector funding for art in public. Ixia’s³ survey of public art in 2012 showed this decline: “The main driver for the public art sector continued to be private sector money aligned to public sector policy, although we estimate that funding for public art via the planning system and capital projects undertaken by local authorities fell from £33m during 2011 to £22m during 2012” (ixia, 2012).

Funding of course controls public manifestations of art very directly. In this market driven environment there are fewer opportunities for artists concerned with politics who want to work in the public realm/sphere in a direct manner as resources must come from the more limited funds of independent non-governmental institutions, foundations or academia. In the UK PLATFORM are activist artists working in London who are supported successfully through these channels. They consider their social and ecologically inspired work to be an: “...active mode of listening” for “i) ‘communities of interest’, ii) ‘communities of place’, iii) ‘communities of the dead’; and iv) ‘communities of the unborn’”, characterised by performative strategies defined as seduction, ritual, the double take, revelatory absurdity and longevity. There appears to be no doubt in their minds that this is a proactive political project: “...we are committed to exercising the responsibility and

³ A national development organisation in the UK concerned with art in public space.

the right to try to shift such values embedded within our culture from the patriarchal, the imperial, the disdainful, the erasive and the extractive to the co-operative, the consensual, the vigorously debated, and the maintained.” (Trowell, 2000: p. 99-109). PLATFORM are unusual, if not unique, in that they work to both lobby at a policy level (outside of cultural policy) as well engage through art at the grassroots.

Other politically overt art groups challenging political aesthetics include Liberate Tate who object to the sponsorship of the Tate Gallery in London by corporations they see as responsible for environmental degradation (their introduction of a wind turbine blade into the Tate Gallery as a protest against BP is discussed in Chapter 8). Similarly the Free collective (Dave Beech, Mel Jordan and Andy Hewitt) have with works like *The Function Of Public Art For Regeneration Is To Sex-Up The Control Of The Under-Classes*, (2005) addressed the complicity of cultural agents in engaging with statal and corporate programmes of regeneration. Both Liberate Tate and Free are also engaged with the Politicized Practice Research Group at Loughborough University whose members research: “the function of culture in the articulation of politics and asserts its contribution to emancipation through art and design” (The Politicized Practice Research Group, 2015).

These practices and research projects investigate the direct effect of art on *and in* politics and are the background for this thesis. There is however a gap in this field in addressing the specificities of the rural, art and politics although this has been tackled recently by Malcolm Miles in the *Eco-aesthetics: Art, literature and architecture in a period of climate change* (2014) as part of the Radical Art, Radical Aesthetics series, edited by Jane Tormey and Gillian Whitely from the Politicized Practice Research Group at Loughborough. Miles includes some of the ideas in this thesis on the “*impossible gaze*” and my projects *Inclusive Path* and *One Mile Wild* (see Chapter 6) in *Eco-aesthetics...* as an illustration of a polemical interruption into environmental space (Miles, 2014: p. 143-6), alongside other practitioners such He He, Cornford and Cross and Liberate Tate.

1.3 CONTEXT: RURAL SPACE AND THE PUBLIC COMMONS

Rural space is a peripheral space. One has only to examine theoretical texts that are cited in this field on the relationship between subject, space and society to notice that they usually take the urban paradigm as a point of departure. For example theorist Henri Lefebvre discusses the purpose of art in the public realm in terms of its resistance to the production, or commodification, of social spaces by capitalism in order to reproduce hegemonic structures. The main site suggested for this is the urban with its large population engaged in technological and industrial production. However Lefebvre points out that the rural is important because agriculture is necessary to supply expanding cities with food and spaces for leisure. Crucially he observes that leisure appears to offer a counter-space where people can escape work through play, even if the space remains heavily structured by the capitalist system: "The space of leisure tends – but is no more than a tendency, a tension, a transgression of 'users' in search of a way forward – to surmount divisions: the division between social and mental, the division between sensory and intellectual, and also the division between the everyday and the out-of –the-ordinary (festival)" (Lefebvre, 1991: p. 385). It is this counter-space that seems to offer unique opportunities for the development of art work that asserts the value of rural space as a socially, politically and environmentally important and formative space in its own right. The marginalisation of the rural is not something new, but it is actually this sense of being on the periphery that is creating more interest in it as site of research into the potential for art as activism and for those artists who wish to work outside of the contemporary visual arts professional circuit. As American art critic Grant Kester sums up:

"...this shift of emphasis (from the urban to the rural) should not be underestimated in an art world that continues to privilege the city as the only relevant site of art practice and dissemination (evident in the tendency to identify major biennial exhibitions with particular cities, and in the ongoing relationship between new museum construction and the process of urban redevelopment). As Kane-Sy⁴ writes, "it is habitual to think that art may, and must, rhyme with urban existence alone." The core/periphery logic of

⁴ Amadou Kane-Sy in *Reflections on art, contemporaneity, and urban existence in Dakar*, in *Africas: The artist and the city*, (Kane-SY, 2001).

globalization thus reiterates a more general prejudice within the discourse of modernism that contrasts the city, as the site of an advanced, cosmopolitan culture, with the conservatism, stagnation, and idiocy, in Marx's famous words, of rural life. The renewed interest in rural cultures and contexts evident in the work of Huit Facettes and Dialogue, as well as groups such as Ala Plastica, Littoral Arts, and the collaborative team of Tim Collins and Reiko Goto, has effectively challenged this simplistic opposition, drawing attention to the complex changes being registered in the countryside through the process of globalization, and exploring the necessary interdependence of the urban and the rural." (Kester, 2011: p. 99)

Another American critic Lucy Lippard also reassesses the rural and uses the concept of locality to challenge the relevance of globalised artistic practices to different sites, calling for a place specific art. Inspired by the ecosophy of art critic Suzi Gablik and new analyses of culture and environment by geographers such as Yi Fu Tuan, she breaks down stereotypical notions of the rural as backward and explores the complex relationship of Americans to the land both as inalienable private capital and as symbolic of civil liberty in a new multicultural and "multicentred" society (Lippard, 1997).

Arguably the rural has become more important as a key constituent of what I choose to call the "public commons". This term refers not only to traditional agricultural lands shared amongst farmers or smallholders and public urban squares which have been around for millennia but also the commons the general public have acquired access to in the past few hundred years, recreational territories generated for leisure such as National Parks. Overarching these spatial commons there are the less prominent commons of infrastructure, which all need access to in order to participate in society, such as communication networks, transport and energy conduits. In addition there are a set of commons which have come more sharply into focus as an expanding global population of humans put them under pressure, those of the ecological environment which are the biological commons, e.g. oxygen, natural pharmacological compounds and the genetic heritage of both humans and the living world. These commons are also linked intrinsically with the commons of culture, which itself can suffer from restrictions on intellectual and artistic freedom.

The relationship between all of these commons and the need for their defence is neatly summed up by Slavoj Žižek in his book *Living in the End Times*:

"The only true question today is: do we endorse the predominant naturalization of capitalism, or does today's global capitalism contain antagonisms which are sufficiently strong to prevent its indefinite reproduction? There are four such antagonisms: the looming threat of an ecological catastrophe; the inappropriateness of the notion of private property in relation to so-called "intellectual property"; the socio-ethical implications of new techno-scientific developments (especially in biogenetics); and, last but not least, the creation of new forms of apartheid, new Walls and slums. There is a qualitative difference between this last feature—the gap that separates the Excluded from the Included—and the other three, which designate different aspects of what Hardt and Negri call the "commons": the shared substance of our social being, the privatization of which involves violent acts which should, where necessary, be resisted with violent means:

- the commons of culture, the immediately socialized forms of "cognitive" capital, primarily language, our means of communication and education, but also the shared infrastructure of public transport, electricity, the postal system, and so on;
- the commons of external nature, threatened by pollution and exploitation (from oil to rain forests and the natural habitat itself);
- the commons of internal nature, (the biogenetic inheritance of humanity); with new biogenetic technology the creation of a New Man in the literal sense of changing human nature becomes a realistic prospect.

What the struggles in all these domains share is an awareness of the potential for destruction, up to and including the self-annihilation of humanity itself, should the capitalist logic of enclosing the commons be allowed a free run." (Žižek, 2011: p. 91)

Whilst these commons are global and appear in all contexts a significant number are strongly linked to the rural both physically and culturally. Culturally landscape art has enormously formative of perceptions of the environmental. In Europe in particular it is has produced tropes which still influence globally and play a major part in how the ecological environment is conceived, the Sublime, the Romantic and so on. Territorially and physically the rural remains an important site of common assets, a site of food production, oxygen production through greenery, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, etc. given increasing significance by environmental politics. Thus Cornwall based art critic Rupert White calls for a "**radical ruralism**" (White, 2007) as a balance to an urban centric art world and as a site of resistance to the flattening out of difference by global capital. Politically Littoral (Celia Larner and Ian Hunter) who curate the Merz Barn project in Cumbria by Kurt Schwitters have taken a lead on rural policy and the arts, particularly:

“notions of ‘deep practice’, the ‘immersive aesthetic’ and ‘art and the policy sphere’ as alternatives to current public art, *relational aesthetics*⁵ and art in the public sphere practice and theory” (Littoral Arts, 2015). Littoral are the only organisation in the UK who address rural policy and politics directly in this way, in comparison to others concerned with commissioning art work in a rural context, such as Grizedale Arts, Aune Head Arts (now defunct), Allenheads Contemporary Arts or Deveron Arts, all of whom have concerned themselves primarily with a more restricted aesthetic/social territory. Equally there are many practitioners concerning themselves with place, locality and socially engaged practices in rural areas. For example Encounters, who have been working in the context of Transition Towns (a movement preparing individual neighbourhoods for climate change) and other places on projects such as *A Little Patch of Ground*, (Encounters, 2009-), a series of 20 week inter-generational food growing and performance projects. However in the assessment of Littoral Arts “there are no precedents or documented examples available from which to begin to identify or test the efficacy of the proposed new practice genre (art in the policy sphere)” (ibid). This thesis is then a contribution to marking out this new field of engagement with rural policy and its effect on the public commons.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this thesis is to answer a question: is it possible to create a coherent artistic praxis, a synthesis of practice and theory that functions as an aestheticised political process and that effects the rural public realm, in order to respond to contemporary threats to public commons?

⁵ My bold italics – see glossary for definition of “relational aesthetics”.

Threats to these commons come from many spheres of human activity but those explored in this essay are those that have a significant aesthetic dimension at both a political and psycho-social level. In summary these are:

- **Post-historical** visions of a leisured human culture free from serious concern (i.e. contentless) which generate accompanying feelings of nostalgia for a meaningful past.
- Psychological barriers to engagement such as **cognitive dissonance**, an inability to empathise with the environment (the impossible gaze) and feelings of **contingency** in the face of global risks.
- Economic and technologically driven tropes which promote human power over disciplined landscapes to support an ever increasing population, but which lead to unimaginative spatial planning and regeneration of housing, industrial and agricultural space.

Conversely it is a truism that a threat contains an opportunity. The opportunity that these threats present are that leisure, as a sanctioned space for play, the out-of-the-ordinary and aesthetic experience generally, can be repurposed to make visible the economic and political conditions of its opposite “work” that creates leisure in the first place and in doing so make apparent the underlying systems of power and consumption that leisure relies on. In this context a socially and politically engaged art practice could bring back content to contentless leisure, and potentially even change the political aesthetic ordering.

In what ways could an artist respond? This is the methodological part of the research question, how to think an aestheticised political process and its outcomes in the public realm.

Combining the political theory of rightist and leftist philosophers (mainly Francis Fukuyama, Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière and Slavoj Žižek) there are broadly three options for response - stasis, subtraction and addition:

- **Stasis**: this is business usual with its reliance on market led solutions and the forming of political **consensus**.
- **Subtraction**: a withdrawal from the system in order to critique it from the outside, from external spaces.

- *Addition*: radical change of the social system and the creation of new **public commons** or the preservation of commons from exploitation (without social justice there can be no environmental justice and vice versa).

The last two options, subtraction and addition, are necessarily associated with forms of antagonism (direct conflict) or “*dissensus*” (making the disenfranchised visible – (Rancière, 2010)) as the status quo must be broken, changed or at least challenged by those unable to participate in democratic consensual politics. There are methodical variants of these positions. A significant one cited in this thesis is that of “*fluidarity*” (Guattari, 1989: p.10), a unified collective of disunited points of view from both the subtractive and additive positions. It is my contention that these options can be mapped to aesthetic counterparts within a field of art that concerns itself with the social and political generally and the environmental particularly. Although simplistic they form a basic structure against which the practice led projects in this thesis are examined.

In terms of this schema there are artists who are content with stasis, working in the established art system with its intensive commodification of art by corporations and capital generally, presumably with the conviction that art will change the world by its aesthetic radiance. These artists will not necessarily be interested in the social or political at all and probably object to the idea that art could be part of an “*instrumentalisation*” by social or political forces. However any artist, if their work is socially relational (and there is an argument that all forms of art are as they must be experienced by another to exist in one sense) must deal with the forms of instrumentality that constitute the socio-political context in the first place. This is the conclusion of *Chapter 2, A Brief Typology of Instrumentality* which includes an analysis of the instrumentalities contained in my project *The Jaywick Tourist Board, (2008)*, where the brief was to consider the regeneration and sustainability of an impoverished settlement in Essex.

However resistance to the idea of art being instrumentalised becomes even more entrenched when it comes to the idea of art in some sort of service to politics. As mentioned previously some like Rancière contend that art cannot be understood as

political in the first place as this implies that art can effect real change in power relations. The argument for them goes that art relies for its power to effect people on the introduction of “**undecidability**” otherwise it is a form of illustration of a particular point. If art cannot be universally understood in a particular message then it cannot direct political change, especially if it is concerned with reaching out to all equally. Art’s action in this context is rather to make visible or sensible particular situations which might relate to the political. This is theorised by Jacques Rancière as dissensus where art makes apparent the circumstances of the disenfranchised. A large part of the beginning of this thesis, *Chapter 3: Complementary practice: Between the monument and the embrace*, is therefore necessarily taken up with answering this question of the relationship between aesthetics and political effect, ultimately suggesting through the idea of “**complementarity**” that the unknowable always contains reference to its opposite, the knowable. This is debated in practice in the project *Stairway to Heaven*, (2006) where a planning application was made to make a natural feature (a tor in Dartmoor National Park) accessible to wheelchair users, colliding the politics of access with those of conservation to question both. With the addition of complementarity *Stairway to Heaven* therefore illustrates a modulation of the theory of dissensus in application, as a “complementary practice” where extra-aesthetic agency is always operating in aesthetic practice.

Returning to the formula of stasis, subtraction and addition, there are artists who prefer addition, postulating new utopias, new relationships through dialogue or other ways to engage with communities in order to change society. For example the art critic Grant Kester has coined the term “**dialogical aesthetics**” for practices which use conversation to create social relationships, usually in response to a specific social issue. This type of approach was the basis for the project proposal *Sites of Reception*, (2009) set out in *Chapter 4: A politics of leisure*, which was for a series of open access reception desks to be placed at key public thresholds into the town of Lyme Regis (car parks and paths) to play with the roles of tourist/local by offering different modes of conversation other than transactional ones associated with a visitor being served by a resident. Chapter 4 also

contains an analysis of contentless leisure, its rise as a dominant paradigm in the post-historical world and ways of rethinking leisure as space of environmental progressiveness.

This leaves the third option of the triad, subtraction. This is essentially to work from outside of the system. Artistic strategies adopted here have been to use modes of institutional critique, to make confrontational/controversial attacks on accepted social or cultural norms, the use of satire or irony, or even the establishment of settlements in un- or re-inhabited locations. Examples of this type of critique, conflict and controversy can be found in the writings of Claire Bishop, who relates these processes into her conception of a “**relational antagonism**” – a social art of interruption. Chapter 5: *Rurality: The tyranny of heritage and place* veers in this direction and challenges the rural idyll through the work *Organic Pony Skin Rucksack*, (2010), which is a functional rucksack made from Dartmoor pony skin, a waste product from an animal largely used by land managers on Dartmoor to keep vegetation down for the benefit of leisure users. Its use in this way though remains controversial to some groups who maintain a nostalgic vision of an anthropomorphised animal in a Romantic landscape. Other forms of nostalgia as an inhibitor of possibility in public space are discussed in this chapter as they relate to the public realm particularly the idea of “**place-making**”, a process popular amongst planners and landscape designers of identifying locally distinct attributes of a place and reinforcing them through an often narrow lens of heritage. The alternative is to reconsider the rural as a place of progressive sustainability, as leisure was in the previous chapter, through a radical ruralism which involves a coalition of positions characterised as a fluidarity of concern for the commons.

Taking the idea of a subtractive process to logical extremes *Chapter 6: Access and environmentalism: The impossible gaze of the ecological subject*, describes two projects, a performative work called *Inclusive Path*, (2007) and a proposal for a project called *One Mile Wild* (2009). Both of these works propose a literal subtraction of humans from environmentally problematic sites. *Inclusive Path* gave an opportunity to visitors to the Lake District to take a fake selfie of themselves at the top of Scafell Pike, thereby saving

path erosion. *One Mile Wild* suggested a wall built around Kinder Scout, which suffers from similar erosion problems, to keep people out. In both the environmental logic of exclusion is contrasted with the political logic of access via the writings of Slavoj Žižek who highlights one of the underpinning psychological factors involved the aesthetic consideration of these sites, the “impossible gaze” – the desire to be both present and absent in a conception of a pure nature (e.g. wilderness).

This psychological nature/culture split is further explored in *Chapter 7: Populations: Environmental publics* at the social or macro level, introducing Michel Foucault’s idea of “**biopolitics**” in which statal power functions through totalising biological controls, e.g. influencing birth and death rates of populations through medical systems. Human over-population remains the elephant in the room of environmental politics as it is the root cause of resource depletion, pollution, climate change and species extinction, but any form of control of population is an ethical minefield. However with biopolitics (and in conjunction with other key ideas such as Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory and James Lovelock’s Gaian theory of earth as a self-regulating entity) humans are potentially re-joined politically and culturally to a biological world in equality with other species. In this way the chapter reiterates the idea that global issues like over-population give a global commonality to politics and that to address environmental issues there must first be global social action and equality which in turn can be addressed as a cultural issue. These points are engaged with in *Immersion* (2008-9) which considered animals and plants cast in the role of invaders as non-native or alien species, the territorial control of their populations and possible new modes of co-habitation. *Lyme Light: Light Year* (2008-) furthers this enquiry into population in highlighting the direct relationship of population with energy consumption in a seaside street light which reacts to births, death and marriages in the parish of Lyme Regis: as it combines decorative seaside lighting with a functional streetlight it has a practical energy saving intent. With these projects (as well as the ones previously mentioned) the simplistic methodological categories of stasis, addition and subtraction outlined at the beginning of this introduction blur. For example whilst

Immersion proposes that non-native species are introduced into disused lidos for educational purposes (i.e. to have an additive/dialogical relationship with them) it also suggests their control through eating them (literally a subtractive approach). *Lyme Light: Light Year* could be said to be both additive in the direct engagement of a population in the debate on energy conservation and subtractive in its implicit critique of human population growth which has led to the over-use fossil fuels for cheap energy in countries like the UK in the first place. These projects tend to the adoption of multiple positions of addition and subtraction within individual works, which can be described by the term fluidarity as a disunity of perspectives joined for common purpose.

So far then the thesis has arrived at the following positions:

- An aesthetic justification for the engagement of art with politics as a form of dissensus modified by complementarity, a complementary practice.
- A methodology of fluidarity with its unified disunity of subtractive and additive approaches within individual projects.
- A direction of travel for practice in addressing individual psychological threats and social threats from human over-population to environmental and spatial commons from within the context of a leisured rural environment.

A summary of the methods and outcomes of the projects involved arranged chronologically (Table 1) shows a (non-sequential) progress to these positions. Having established initially the premise of a complementary practice in the public sphere in *Stairway to Heaven* the column "Outcomes (character)" shows there is a testing of additive and subtractive processes against this. There is a shift under the heading "Outcomes (intent)" from process driven work in the public sphere only to work which aims to introduce environmental or accessibility politics within the public realm itself with products for dissensual exchange that subvert expectations - a development from projects about political awareness only to political awareness and form of action. Under "Context" it also shows an ongoing concern with different forms of infrastructure, lighting, paths, leisure and transport.

Project	Year	Commissioner	Practical method	Context	Outcome (intent)	Outcome (character)	Key theoretical points
Stairway to Heaven	2006	Self-initiated	Proposal for public realm / planning application / media intervention	Environmental & accessibility politics / National Park / Tourism / Infrastructure (paths)	Process for policy intervention (spatial planning)	<-> Complementary (fluidarity)	Dialogics versus relational antagonism / Dissensus + Complementarity = Complementary practice
Inclusive Path	2007	FRED festival (range of sponsors including National Trust)	Public performance / media intervention	Environmental & accessibility politics / National Park / Tourism / Infrastructure (paths)	Process for policy intervention (landscape management)	- Subtraction (antagonistic)	Landscapes of discipline / Impossible gaze
Immersion	2007-9	Landscape Arts & Network Services	Proposal for public realm / media intervention	Environmental & accessibility politics / Tourism / Infrastructure (leisure facility)	Process for policy intervention (ecological management)	<-> Complementary (fluidarity)	Biopolitical mastery / Environmental justice = social justice
The Jaywick Tourist Board	2008-9	Landscape Arts & Network Services, Essex County Council, Tendring District Council	Exhibition/media intervention	Housing / Tourism	Process for policy intervention (regeneration)	+ Addition (dialogic)	Instrumentalised aesthetics
Sites of Reception	2008-9	Turn Lyme Green, Dorset County Council, Lyme Regis Town Council	Proposal for public realm	Infrastructure (transport) / Tourism	Product for dissensual exchange (environmental awareness)	<-> Complementary (fluidarity)	Post-historical (contentless) leisure
Lyme Light: Light Year	2008-	Turn Lyme Green, Dorset County Council, Lyme Regis Town Council	Proposal for public realm	Infrastructure (lighting) / Tourism	Product for dissensual exchange (environmental awareness)	<-> Complementary (fluidarity)	Biopolitical mastery / Contingency
One Mile Wild	2009	Re:Place	Proposal for public realm	Environmental & accessibility politics / National Park / Tourism	Product for dissensual exchange (environmental awareness)	- Subtraction (antagonistic)	The future natural / Subtraction
Organic Ponymskin Rucksack	2010	Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World	Exhibition/media intervention	Environmental & accessibility politics / National Park / Tourism	Product for dissensual exchange (environmental awareness)	<-> Complementary (fluidarity)	Romantic landscapes / The nostalgia of place
Sun Stages	2010	Arts NK, Lincolnshire County Council	Proposal for public realm	Infrastructure (leisure facility) / Tourism	Product for dissensual exchange (environmental awareness)	<-> Complementary	Dissensual infrastructure / Risk / Rehabilitation of permanence
Lines of Flight	2012	Turn Lyme Green, Dorset County Council, Lyme Regis Town Council	Temporary installation / Proposal for public realm	Infrastructure (lighting) / Tourism	Product for environmental mitigation (animal infrastructure)	<-> Complementary (fluidarity)	Dissensual infrastructure / Points of parallax
Tats for Bats	2012	Self-initiated	Temporary installation / Proposal for public realm	Environmental politics / Housing	Product for environmental mitigation (animal infrastructure)	<-> Complementary (fluidarity)	Dissensual infrastructure / Points of parallax

Table 1: Contexts, outcomes, methods and key theoretical points by project.

The penultimate chapter, *Chapter 8, Dissensual infrastructure* deals with two final issues that cannot be ignored when talking about art as action in the public realm, i.e. not only as a catalyst for discourse and debate, but as a manifestation in the physical world. The issues are duration and risk. Largely as a reaction to concerns about artists being instrumentalised by others, especially the state with its tradition of creating “permanent” monuments that reference official histories and corporations serving capital, many artists and critics feel these artworks are at best of limited relevance to diverse and changing publics, or at worst state/commercial propaganda. The objection to these objections is that they ignore some of the key principles of both sustainability (it is problematic to see temporary works satisfying the principle of the minimal consumption of resource over time) and egalitarian access to art (time limited works are seen by only a few). The second issue is risk (and liability) which is a barrier to commissioning progressive art projects, both in terms of threats to the health and safety of the public by introducing the unusual into the public realm, but also in terms of the political risk of controversy. The approach proposed to address both issues is to locate artwork within existing public realm infrastructure. Co-opting infrastructure for art, as it consists of permanent conduits for the delivery of variable energy, communications or other matter, allows for the creation of artworks which use minimal resource to set up in the first place, are changeable over time and can allow for the accrual or change of content. Working with existing infrastructure can also minimise the cost of artwork (public expenditure on art is a major political risk). From the point of view of political aesthetics, once enabled, infrastructural interventions can be used for dissensual purpose, hence the idea of a dissensual infrastructure. Three art projects are introduced to illustrate the potential of infrastructure as a site for artwork in public, *Sun Stages* (2010) - a proposal for a picnic site as astronomical observation centre connecting people back to their environment, *Lines of Flight* (2012) - mirror ball bird boxes for street lighting which create ecological infrastructure and similarly *Tats for Bats* (2012) - bat boxes with reproduction of residents tattoos which become a permanent part of the skin of their house and are also ecological infrastructure. The potential of inhabiting

the interstitial spaces of infrastructure (which are both subtractive, as they are at one remove from mainstream public or private space, and additive, as they convey energy or matter into the public realm or domestic space) is reinforced by considering them as in-between points of what Slavoj Žižek describes as “*parallax*”, pivot points which change perspective on the politics of public space. The conclusion of the thesis, *Chapter 9: An infinite number of finite demands*, summarises these points as a final choice between cynicism and irony, and characterises the praxis developed as a complementary practice.

In terms of research methodology this thesis has consisted of developing a series of art projects that have taken place in public contexts, making work, reflecting on the experience and then creating new projects – all unpicked by a number of theoretical observations (as set out in Table 1). As Gilles Deleuze has said:

"Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall." (Foucault, 1977b: p. 206)

In one sense this research method can be likened to a scientific one as there is a hypothesis informed by theory (e.g. “White says radical ruralism can challenge the globalisation of place”), an experiment in the form of an artwork and a reflection on the success or not of the artwork as compared to the prior theoretical standards. The results are then subject to a further iteration of this process until a weight of evidence is apprehended one way or another, against or for the hypothesis. Where the process differs is that it is not intended to be quantitatively or qualitatively measured empirically and it is non-sequential as it relies on intuitive and discursive aesthetic operations. Likewise it departs from key scientific protocols in the absence of any controlled environment for comparison. Indeed the basic nature of this enquiry as one into art in public space has meant developing a number of these projects in response to other agencies’ briefs over which there is no control (other than only applying for projects which relate to the topic at hand) over when they appear and what they address. However these public projects have

been supplemented by my own initiatives where I have felt there have been gaps in the research which need to be filled.

Due to the vagaries of the process of making work for public space (politics, pragmatics, time, funding etc.) some of my art projects have been realised and some remain proposals. This is a key part of the experience of creating art in public where very few initial concepts will emerge in toto or un-moderated - if they are realised at all. This is not a problem for me personally, as the passage and negotiation of the aesthetic act through public space is the reason why this field of study is so endlessly mutable and fascinating.

The thesis format is not necessarily adequate to describe the particularity of works which originate in the public realm which are multi-layered. So whilst the text is accompanied by representative images from art projects a more thorough documentation of each project or work is presented as an Appendix in the sequence they appear in the text. All of the work created during the thesis was also documented on the website www.ruralrecreation.org.uk as part of this process, allowing some of the feedback included here. *ruralrecreation*, is not a constituted organisation, rather it was set up as a conceptual umbrella that allows me to collaborate with others and lends gravitas to interventions in the public sphere. The project *The Jaywick Tourist Board* (2008) has its own website www.jaywicked.org.

2 A BRIEF TYPOLOGY OF INSTRUMENTALITY

"...our clients and funders, we believe, have had good value for money in terms of 'leverage' and 'outputs', 'marketing profile' and 'cross cutting themes'" (Powell, 2004: p. 32)

Following a presentation I gave on the 10th June 2011 at the Ixia⁶ conference *Beyond angels, elephants, good intentions and red-nose rebellion: What is the future for art in the public realm?* on the relationship of art to current planning policy, and how this was being effected by the global economic recession, one artist in the audience commented that now was a good time for artists to break free from the impositions of working with local authorities or other government agencies and that artists should start making more of their own work in public spaces (Murdin, 2011). This is just one example of many I have experienced of artists feeling compromised by the economic, social, environmental or political instrumentality which is at the heart of making art in public. There is much ambivalence, suspicion of motives, or outright antagonism to the gatekeepers of public space from artists (and an equal suspicion of opportunism, idealism and ignorance of realpolitik from commissioners). To understand better how this situation has developed and currently operates the following is a typology of the instrumentality of art in public. As such it is intended to map out a context for artists working in public space and therefore what must be in some way negotiated in any practice concerned with the social and political. I contend that these instrumentalities are *required* for the constitution of art in public as a socially engaged art and therefore, turning this around, that art is instrumentalising the social as form and content. The project described at the end of the Chapter, *The Jaywick Tourist Board* (2008-9), outlines some of the specifics of the way the project was instrumentalised by its commissioners and project partners, compares it to a project taking place at the same time which was ostensibly free of these instrumentalities (but subject to others) and suggests why *The Jaywick Tourist Board* failed in respects by not being instrumentalised enough by its target audience.

⁶ A public art development agency with a national remit in the UK (<http://ixia-info.com/>)

2.1 SUSTAINABILITY

A good place to start in this area is with contemporary evaluations of art in the public realm which analyse the range of values and ambitions (and therefore instrumentalities) of those involved. *Research on public art: Assessing impact and quality* (Thompson et al, 2005) was a review commissioned to provide “guidance on impact” for public art by Ixia. Over and above a project’s artistic value (broken down as aesthetic, design quality, social activation, innovation, participation and criticality) this study identifies a consensus amongst funders, commissioners and agencies in the public and private sectors for valuing art in public against:

“...international definitions of sustainability:

- Social values are about people and the community
- Environmental values relate to place and the physical environment
- Economic values relate to costs and income, including marketing, regeneration, tourism, employment and the local economy.” (Thompson et al., 2005: p48)

Sustainability has come to mean many things, but literally it comes from the Latin for “stressed” and “hold”. Since the 1980’s the term has been applied to a wide range of social, economic and environmental responses to the threat of global environmental catastrophes - global warming, pollution, species extinction, energy depletion and so on. Responses are interlinked – conservation of environmental resources cannot happen without a common understanding by the whole of society about the implication of excessive consumption, which in turn is an economic matter in a global system which is predicated on growth, which is then a contested political issue. Hence the report breaks down the wider instrumentality of sustainability into social, environmental and economic values. Notably *Research on public art: Assessing impact and quality* leaves out the political from its analysis as the authors admit the difficulties of evaluating art in the public realm where art practices are explicitly political in nature (i.e. activist art). It cites the writing of Nina Felshin (1995) and Suzanne Lacy (1995) in their challenge to a notion of coherent

audiences and sites of reception that makes sociological evaluation methodologies problematic in this context.

It is not only *Research on public art: Assessing impact and quality* which aligns public art with sustainability, in *Art, space and the city*, academic Malcolm Miles confirms that public art's urgent function is to imagine, "...possible urban futures...the alternatives – acceptance of terminal urban decline, cynicism, or a flight to an illusory rural paradise – are varieties of despair" (Miles, 1997: p. 2). Thus there is an established instrumentality of sustainability that shapes the way in which art in public is created.

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL INSTRUMENTALITY

Arguably the most common sub-form of instrumentality of those cited by Thompson et al is environmental in the sense of art in the public realm which improves the design of physical spaces as opposed to environmentalist art in public which is about the politics of environment. Examples of this would be street furniture, lighting schemes or architectural glass. Here public art is recognised as part of "...a continuum of practice located between art and design" (Rendell, 2006: p. xiii) and a contributor to landscaping or architectural schemes in the natural or built environment. In the 1980's, largely as a response to the debate over "plop art", there was a call for art to be considered as an integral part of development and design of public space again⁷, made specifically for the site where it was located in order to produce more coherent environmental projects.

One manifestation of this was the increased advocacy for "art and architecture", art which was integrated into the built environment by artists working alongside other professionals on projects (just one example of many is shown in Figure 1, an image of work for Trevena Square in Boscastle, a scheme led by artist Michael Fairfax, where street furniture, poetry and stone surfacing is incorporated into the fabric of the landscaping). In the UK this

⁷ The split between 'fine' art and architecture is of course part of a process dating back to the Renaissance with the fine artist becoming an autonomous practitioner, reaching its apogee in the Modernist period as architects minimised any sort of decoration or embellishment and the cult of the artist as 'solitary genius' took hold.

resulted in the Art for Architecture Awards which were run by the Royal Society of the Arts from 1991 to 2004 to fund collaboration between artists and architects at the early stages of projects. Another catalyst for the art and architecture movement was the introduction of the National Lottery in 1994 which funded the production a whole series of public buildings and spaces, most of which followed Arts Council England policy requiring the involvement of artists in the design process. Integrating art and architecture was also more widely promoted by Arts Council England from the late 1980's onwards through the promotion of "per cent for art" policies, promoted in *Per cent for art: a review* by Phyllida Shaw (Shaw, 1991) Here the premise was to link public art to both public sector and commercial development by the allocation of an amount of money for art projects from the budgets of any given development. The concept of per cent for art became common and was introduced by some (certainly not all) local authorities into planning policy as a requirement from public sector and commercial developers alike.



Figure 1. Detail of Trevena Square, Tintagel (2005), Michael Fairfax. Detail of Trevena Square, Tintagel by lead artist and photographer: Michael Fairfax. Text by Amanda White. Seat designed by Michael Fairfax and fabricated in oak by Alistair Guy.

A result of these circumstances was a focus on projects which favoured integrated forms of public art which earned their keep as they were easier to justify. For example a crafted or designed bench was, and is, far easier to get acceptance for from either customers (business or domestic purchaser or tenants) or from the public (the electorate/tax-payer) as its utility is a self-evident reason for its existence. In this vein craft and design was promoted as a bespoke solution, i.e. if a standard solution isn't available for a particular design problem then extra money will be spent anyway on the solution and therefore why not make it an artistic feature? This way of working became so common that nowadays it is hard to get many developers thinking differently, as a senior planning officer for a local authority puts it: "...to think beyond benches being public art and that's the only solution" (Murdin and Schwarz, 2011: p. 11).

The utility associated with the design/craft end of the public art continuum remains problematic for some, whether this is art in the first place and because of the instrumental functionality of craft and design. There is no room in this thesis to cover the larger debate on definitions of craft, art and design themselves, whether craft and design are or are not art, however in *Art and architecture: A place between* (2006), Jane Rendell suggests that there is a demarcation line between design solution and public art in this context:

"...artists...appear to be 'designing' objects but not in the way a designer might...it is the reflexive nature of this mode of work that makes the work art and not design." (p44). The issue is not just an aesthetic or semantic one though, but also an economic one. Miwon Kwon makes the following comment based on similar experiences of art for architecture in the USA:

"Foregrounding functionalism over aesthetics, such artist-architect team efforts integrated art into environmental design, with artists providing designs for seating, shading, lighting, etc., as part of a larger architectural or urban design project. While essentially remaining paternalistic in its mode of operation - that artists and architects, as well as the sponsoring government agency, know best what is good for the public - such efforts accommodated corporate interests keen on real estate development, too. Artists were recruited, in other words, to provide amenities that would increase the property value of certain buildings and zones of gentrification. As such, in this case, the paternalistic basis of public art is conflated with a commercial mode of public address." (Kwon, 2002)

2.3 ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTALITY

Economic value seems to be one of the most controversial forms of instrumentality. Even so, many involved in promoting art in public have been required to justify it from this point of view - as an investment for a patron which will appreciate in value on the art market, or in a the more general sense of marketing a property or development. For example a survey by the University of Westminster in 1993 of art installed at the Broadgate housing, office and retail development in London at the time suggested that, with all other factors being equal, commercial developers could brand property with art in order to achieve higher rents, developers: "...saw the provision of public art as part of a strategy or package to raise the quality of their developments". For occupiers, 62% of those surveyed "...recognised that the contribution which public art made to their buildings image was significant" (Roberts et al., 1993: p. 1 & 11). However, in her book *The benefits of public art*, Sarah Selwood points out these claims were ultimately difficult to substantiate quantitatively and were criticised, not least by the artists involved, for their reductionist tendencies (Selwood, 1995: p. 4) and for art being reduced to corporate bling. Public art agencies like Beam have used examples like these to stress the regenerative potential of art in public to gain a place at the table for artists alongside the developer, architect and planner: "...combine it [art] with the growth of culture-led regeneration, and we get a new equation: Culture = Value = Good Business" (Powell and Stevenson, 2001: p. 25). The association of art with high end commercial development also meant for some "...that quality comes to be associated with the status of the site and size of the budget for the work, rather than its reception" (Miles, 1997: p. 95). This observation still has currency and seems to have reached an apotheosis in a new generation of monumental public art works where size matters, one of the most famous examples has been *The Angel of the North* (1998) by Anthony Gormley in Gateshead, a sculpture 20 metres high and 54 metres wide in cast iron (Figure 2). Here its scale is conjoined with its value is as civic status symbol, part of a strategy of branding Gateshead as a more culturally sophisticated town, bringing in tourism, attracting business investment and cultural regeneration,

particularly in the face of competition from Gateshead's larger neighbour Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Tornaghi, 2008). This rationale has been successful and in the wake of the *Angel of the North* there have continued to be large scale projects linked to regeneration, for example the four *Panopticon* sculptures (2003-2008) of East Lancashire and the 114 metre high *Arcelor Mittal Orbit* (2011) by Anish Kapoor for the new Olympic Park in London. However since the economic recession which started in 2008 projects of this scale have tapered off, with Olympic investment representing a last gasp in the face of dwindling appetite to spend large amounts on art as most public services are cut. Mark Wallinger's *White Horse* (2007) project for instance, a proposed 50m high white horse sculpture next to the channel tunnel rail link in Kent with an estimated cost of £15 million, is now in a sort of permanent limbo.



Figure 2. The Angel of the North (1998), Anthony Gormley. Photography: David Wilson Clarke ("Fly Angel" – Wikipedia - Creative Commons 2.5).

In a way the recession has made making economic arguments more, not less important and there has been a continuing need for economic evaluations of art in public which measure attributes like tourism and marketing value. *Drop* (2008) by Steve Messam consisted of a large, temporary inflatable sculpture of a rain drop in the Lake District, commissioned by Culture Cumbria (Figure 3). In Culture Cumbria's report, *Drop 2008: Visitor survey and economic impact analysis* (2008) the project was reckoned to achieve an advertising value of £44,931 and a public relations value of £132,818. The input into the local economy was £149,771 and a total return of £319,926 on the original cost of £25,000, a multiplier of 1:5. The report concludes that this compares favourably with other active outdoor events under their remit.



Figure 3. *Drop* (2008), Steve Messam. Photo: Steve Messam. Installation at Crummock Water, Buttermere.

Drop was a relatively small temporary project; at the other end of the scale has been *Panopticons*, another rural regeneration project consisting of 4 permanent works. Funding

for the *Panopticons* was typical of larger scale art in public space initiatives requiring a wide partnership. For this project funding was from Arts Council England, the Northwest Regional Development Agency, the Lancashire Economic Partnership, Lancashire County Council, the six district authorities of East Lancashire and the local government funded marketing and tourism agency The Northern Way. Naturally all these partners came with differing expectations, aesthetic, social, environmental and so on, but quantitative economic impacts were a priority as clearly demonstrated by the headline evaluation of the project on the Mid Pennine Arts website which starts with soft social engagement outcomes but majors on hard economic outputs. The project:

“Involved over 22,700 local people, 47 schools, 366 teachers, 46 community organisations and over 100 volunteers in practical environmental projects • Employed 139 artists, architects, designers and arts organisations • Generated 208 construction jobs, 46 work weeks for businesses and 81 for creative industry professionals • Supported 69 Pennine Lancashire businesses, 21 regional and 23 national businesses • Created 2 jobs • Safeguarded 2 jobs.” (Mid Pennine Arts, 2012)

The range of expectations involved in partnership projects makes critics see them as inherently flawed, contending that art by committee will water down any contentious element. This is one of the most common accusations against artwork created in economic and regenerative contexts, that it will be simply unchallenging and dull. In their book *No room to move: Radical art and the regenerate city* (2010) Slater and Iles suggest that: “...over-instrumentalised art may simply fail to be art – what councillors, developers, and regeneration agencies want appears to be something which looks like art, and clothes itself in simulacrum of neutrality and creativity, yet serves their limited ends” (Slater and Iles, 2010: p. 50), these ends being the glossing over of real social problems. Much art in public in their eyes is aiding and abetting “gentrification” and even becomes “urban pacification”. At its worst this is a further iteration of plop art, art providing the ill-considered embellishment to buildings or public space that the architect Norman Foster described as “lipstick on the gorilla” (Cork, 2003: p. 378).

Slater and Iles go on to describe the work of a number of artists who support their commentary in some way -Nils Norman, Alberto Duman, the Freee group, Laura Oldfield Ford and Roman Vasseur. Where they have been commissioned to support regeneration projects all these artists describe some level of disappointment or sense of failure in the consensus or compromise required in the art produced and their inability to engage with or communicate to the notional and fixed public identified in their briefs. It is noteworthy though that *No room to move...* takes as examples only artists and work which “consciously opens up these tensions” and art which is not “complicit” in the “propagandistic system” of developers profits, social exclusion through gentrification and so on (Slater and Iles, 2010: p. 7-8). It is not surprising, given that they only interview activist artists in the first place, that they conclude that it is only possible to operate a critical practice from outside of the capitalist political system, that there is no room for collaboration. Given this the interesting question is then what motivates activist artists like those interviewed to participate in a regeneration programme in the first place, to become economically instrumentalised? Roman Vasseur, working on Essex County Council’s Genius Loci programme of public art (Figure 4), notes this paradox for activist artists working in public space in *No room to move...*: “...why would [artists interested in] a politics of opposition wish to function within an economy of urban regeneration if it is opposed to regeneration wholesale ?” (ibid: p. 123). Vasseur answers himself - it is the lure of “sensual expression”, the aesthetic pay off.



Figure 4. The Harlow Temple of Utopias (Let us pray for those residing in the designated area). (2008), Collaboration between Roman Vasseur & Diann Bauer. Photo by Richard Davies, courtesy of Commissions East.

2.4 SOCIAL INSTRUMENTALITY

A response to critiques of instrumentality from artists and others has been a tendency from strategic bodies involved in developing art in the public realm to now emphasise the value of artistic process over artistic product, art in public fostering the creativity of others. In the introduction to *Desirable places: The contribution of artists to creating spaces for public life* (2004) Emma Larkinson sums this up:

“Public Art practice – an overarching term embracing creative practice that includes art in public places, art as public places and socially engaged practice - is an acknowledged part of the make up of our towns and cities... It is not the intention to dismiss the call for cleaner, greener and safer communities, well designed public spaces and accessible and open green space; rather, it is to argue for the significance of artistic creativity within this agenda.” (Ixia, 2004: p. 3)

By avoiding the idea that an end product like a physical artwork or pretty public space is the final objective, accusations of straightforward asset creation for economic purposes can be avoided and the output, a sculpture, bench, etc. becomes a by-product of the

fostering of societal creativity. An evaluation of the public art funding programme, PROJECT by Public Art South West and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, develops this theme of the value of process into a benefit for the other professionals involved as well. This evaluation concludes that:

“The effect of the engagement of artists in the process of development projects has been manifest in three distinct ways. There is wide appreciation among the other professionals that the engagement of artists has raised the quality and value in the project and, it is believed, in the built environment that ultimately ensues. The range of allowable discourse between developers, architects, planners and clients has been beneficially extended by artists’ intervention. The engagement of communities of residents and potential users has been facilitated by artists’ work.” (Holding and Brookes, 2006: p. 41)

This thinking marks the latest part of a paradigm shift from public art considered as placing work in front of an audience, to projects which aim to create ownership of the project by communities. This process takes place on a spectrum from consultation and community engagement, to co-design⁸ and community art⁹ being the least autocratic approaches. The level of involvement is of course ultimately a political choice depending on the inclination of commissioner (and artist) and how much there is a wish to involve the public. Arnstein’s *A ladder of citizen participation* (1969) is much cited in discourse on the involvement of the public in the development of art in public space, originally brought to the fore for artists by Suzanne Lacy in *Mapping the terrain: New genre public art* (1995). This starts at the least involved manipulation, through therapy, consultation, informing, placation, partnership and delegated power to the most involved citizen control. Thus manipulation in the context of commissioning public art could be considered as the total

⁸ A shorthand for any or all of “Community design, Collaborative design, Cooperative design...A set of tools used by designers to engage non-designers by asking, listening, learning, communicating and creating solutions collaboratively. A community centred methodology that designers use to enable people who will be served by a designed outcome to participate in designing solutions to their problems...” (Design Council, 2012).

⁹ “Community arts” has variable nuances as a term. It is used here in the sense of artists enabling the public to create art: “Community arts are most frequently associated with some form of ‘amateur’ practice, often produced collectively by groups. However, there is also an assumption that activities are supported and nurtured by a practicing, professional artist working at the community level to promote arts participation” (Adamson, 2009).

instrumentalising of art in the service of the state (e.g. as propaganda), citizen control as anarchic manifestations of art by the public (e.g. graffiti).

It is also noted by some that this shift towards defining public art by the less elitist term creativity (as opposed to art) and the progression toward the citizen control end of participatory ladder burgeoned in the UK under the Labour government of 1997 to 2010 as it aligned with its themes of social inclusion. A key document in defining the potential utility of the arts, *Use or ornament: The social impact of participation in the arts* by François Matarosso (1997), covers roles for the arts in personal development, health and well-being, education, skill-building and employment, social cohesion, intergenerational contact, community empowerment and self-determination, strengthening a sense of place and developing creativity amongst others, ultimately linking these benefits with potential cost savings to government:

“Participatory arts projects are also effective means of supporting and investing in local communities... It is not unreasonable to suggest that the social benefits identified in this report will produce savings in public expenditure. People who are confident and capable get or create jobs. People who have active social lives do not ask their GP’s for support. People who know their neighbours do not normally attack them. People who feel involved in their neighbourhood do not smash it up, and people who are optimistic about their future do not look for destructive ways to change it. The presumption must be that the social impacts which arise from participating in arts projects will translate into savings: the challenge lies in proving this invisible benefit.” (Matarosso, 1997: p. 75)

The challenge of “proving this invisible benefit” has been taken up in some areas. For example in arts and health contexts there is growing clinical evidence of the value of art for “...inducing positive physiological and psychological changes in clinical outcomes”, “reducing drug consumption” and “shortening length of stay in hospital” (Staricoff, 2004: p. 47). This sort of empirical evidence is highly valued in the arts and health field as arguments need to be made for art to a scientific community. Elsewhere proving benefit in unequivocal terms is more difficult due to the intrinsic nature of art in public places where responses, audience and context change over time and the definition of the site of reception as community or public are equally in flux. Massey and Rose make the point that this flux is part of a definition of art in public in their assessment of public art in Milton

Keynes: "For an artwork to be public, it needs to invite engagement not only *from* different groups, but *between* them" (Massey and Rose, 2005: p. 19). In spite of this difficulty other evaluations using qualitative methodologies are still able to assert positive social outcomes to make the case for supporting an art of social cohesion both as a process of engagement and for its environmental results. There is now more evidence to suggest to commissioners that evaluation methods need to be more sensitive to the particularities of the aesthetic experience. A study by the University of Central Lancashire, *New Model Visual Arts Organisations & Social Engagement (2011)* sets this out clearly:

"Much Socially Engaged Arts Practice aims at making an intervention in long-term change processes and complex webs of social relations. Although attendances or internet-presence can be measured numerically, it is difficult to quantify such influence. But it can be evidenced empirically with research which is interpretive, reflexive, ethnographic, narrative, biographical and longitudinal. Theoretically rigorous and generalizable conclusions can be drawn from rigorous qualitative and case-based research." (p. 105)

However instead of welcoming the pragmatic benefits from evaluations like these as hopefully increasing opportunities and financial support for art in public space critics still object on political and aesthetic grounds to what they regard as a state intervention which is at worst manipulation (in Arnstein's terms) at best a therapy of reconciliation for society to the status quo. Claire Bishop, a critic outspoken in the defence of aesthetic independence, describes participatory art under New Labour as "soft social engineering" (Bishop, 2012a: p. 5). Even Grant Kester who advocates for involvement of communities in the creation of art projects in his dialogical aesthetics says:

"Community art, under the mandate of New Labor [sic], will encourage 'social cohesion' but not political solidarity. It will seek to acclimate the working class to the forms of subjectivity demanded by capital, but not to question the demands themselves." (Kester, 2011: p. 198)

What then is the alternative to acquiescence? Activist art appears to be the only way to escape from the instrumentalities of sustainability - the art described by Slater and Iles which "consciously opens up" the tensions inherent in public space through aesthetic

means with “no room” for compromise. Interviewed in *No room to move...* artist Nils Norman (Figure 5) agrees that artists “making changes is pretty much a myth” however he goes on to say, “...compromise and negotiation is not compatible with how artists have traditionally been educated” (Slater and Iles, 2010: p. 101). Here he makes the very relevant point that there is a whole new generation of artists who choose to describe themselves as working within a socially-engaged practice and for whom forms of “negotiation” and “compromise” are part of their methodology (Norman is comparing this to the modernist tradition of the autonomous and revolutionary artist).



Figure 5. Homerton City Playscapes: Exhibition invitation (2004), Nils Norman. For this project Norman proposed a sprawling extension to the Homerton Grove Adventure Playground. The proposal takes the form of a drawing depicting an expansive network of play areas, connected by an intricate system of towers and walkways.

Socially engaged practice itself is a term which emerged in the 1990's that is used of any artistic practice that takes the social as a combination of both subject and form. It can therefore be applied as equally to the social sculpture of Joseph Beuys as to Suzanne Lacy's new genre public art, Grant Kester's dialogic art or Claire Bishop's participatory art. Lars Bang Larsen describes its resurgent popularity: "During the 1990s, a new economy began brimming with imperatives to socialize through email, mobile phones and, later, social media, and as social and economic processes were pulled closer together, both art and power became 'sociological'. The reification of the social form became almost indistinguishable from social content. In other words, the social can also be a simulacrum: an instrumentalisation of models and tastes that are already received and working in the culture at large" (Bang Larsen, 2012). Socially engaged artists are now often found making art in public spaces precisely because, as Massey and Rose suggest, art in public is created in the negotiation between publics and between the artist and publics. How then should socially-engaged practitioners working in public spaces react to being instrumentalised? Logically negotiation or compromise as art must surely be acts of creative synthesis which require an Other with a different position (individuals, publics, communities, institutions, governments and so on) - and what is instrumentalisation if not an expression of the needs of the other? If negotiation *between* is the defining feature of art in public then it is also defined by the requirement for the other and the instrumentalising context. David Adamson makes a similar point in his analysis of community art which engages with regeneration that:

"The critical issue is that these 'instrumental' benefits actually derive from the experience of the 'intrinsic' value of arts practice. Intrinsic value and instrumental value are not separate experiences but different facets of the personal change which acts of creativity can produce in the individual. The dichotomy often posed between the intrinsic value and the instrumental value is false. For those arts practitioners who declare no interest in the contribution of arts to regeneration they are failing to see the wider impact of the experience they are providing." (Adamson, 2009: p. 5)

It can therefore be said that art in public is constituted by the instrumentality of sustainability. If so it is also possible to say the reverse, socially engaged practice needs its social context and uses the agendas of sustainability as subject and form. Surely then acts of instrumentality art are in fact appropriated by the aesthetic experience? This then is a response to those that complain that sustainability is instrumentalising aesthetics – there are a whole generation of practitioners out there who turn this around and use aesthetics to instrumentalise sustainability.

2.5 THE JAYWICK TOURIST BOARD: ARCADIA REVISITED (AGAIN)

The project *Arcadia Revisited* took place in Jaywick on the Essex Coast over 2008 and 2009. It was commissioned by Landscape and Arts Network Services (LANS) for Essex County Council, with funding from Arts Council England East and Essex County Council's Genius Loci public art programme. Other project partners were Tendring District Council and Jaywick Martello Tower. The project brief set out the aims of the commissioners for the artists, to:

“...engage with the community, and provide new information to be used by regeneration professionals to inform the future development of the area through:

1. Developing creative research on new possibilities for leisure and tourism in a coastal context
2. Engaging with the social and physical context of the community and local area
3. Producing an interactive exhibition at Jaywick Martello Tower
4. Disseminating the results to regeneration professionals, partners, stakeholders and funders
5. Engaging with the aims and objectives of Essex County Council's Genius Loci public art programme” (Landscape & Arts Network Services, 2008)

The context for this was recognition by Essex County Council and Tendring District Council of the need to address significant social, economic and environmental issues affecting the settlement of Jaywick on the Essex coast. In December 2007 the National Index of Deprivation had determined that the ward of Golf Green in Jaywick was the third most deprived Super Output Area in the country, slipping down from its previous position at 103rd. At this time 44.2% of the working-age population were Department of Work and

Pensions claimants, with 8.8% claiming Job-Seeking Allowance and over 24% on incapacity benefits. In the 2001 census for the area, over 58% people aged 16-74 had no qualifications (ibid).

Part of the reason for this situation was historical. The settlement was established as a "plotlands" holiday village of chalets in the 1930's by developer Frank Stedman on marshland not thought fit for larger housing. The chalet's were bought primarily by Londoners as the means for an inexpensive holiday by the sea and have remained some of the cheapest property in Essex. Thus, as tourism to the British seaside declined generally, they came to be permanent residences for those on low incomes. At the same time, as a private estate, the infrastructure received little public investment and the built environment also deteriorated as some people abandoned chalets or simply did not maintain them. Economic drivers for improvement failed as planning restrictions on development were enforced due to the risk of flooding of this low level site, meaning that the small chalets could not accommodate the modern desire for larger, more comfortable holiday homes.

In the face of continuing negative economic and social statistics Essex County Council, the East of England Development Agency and Tendring District Council had prioritised the regeneration of Jaywick and by 2006 had already undertaken consultation with the community and commissioned an initial master planning exercise from agency Llewellyn Davies Yeang. Their report, which was published prior to the commencement of *Arcadia Revisited* early in 2006, recommended a range of options which centred around wholesale redevelopment through demolition of hundreds of homes in the worst affected areas in Jaywick, if necessary through compulsory purchase orders (BBC, 2006a). Unsurprisingly the project caused "uproar" amongst the residents who accused the relevant authorities of being "as obstructive as possible. The land has been deliberately and systematically run down to show it in the worst possible light"(Clacton Daily Gazette 2007).

It was against this background of distrust and anger, directed primarily towards Tendring District Council as the local co-ordinators of the masterplanning process, that *Arcadia Revisited* was conceived with a utilisation of art practices aiming, “...to provide new information to be used by regeneration professionals to inform the future development of the area” (Landscape & Arts Network Services, 2008). To a certain extent the status of the artists in the project was neutral as LANS had introduced a number of arts community focused projects into the area already, setting up a new arts centre in a disused Martello Tower in Jaywick.

Previous projects included *Jaywick Rocks* (2006), a film made by artist Karen Lois Whiteread which depicts a positive image of the people of Jaywick, “...their enthusiasm for their community and deep sense of their own history” (Jaywick Martello Tower, 2012). The hope was the Tower would provide a neutral space for discussion of the future of the settlement.

The initial stage of producing artwork for *Arcadia Revisited* was period of research, engaging with the social and geographical context and researching the local history and environment. I spent several weeks at Jaywick over the summer period experiencing and recording the topography of the site, walking from neighbouring Clacton-on-Sea to Jaywick, and from Jaywick to St Osyth, at night and in the day. During these early stages residents of Jaywick, in particular the Friends of Jaywick Martello Tower, were interviewed about their reasons for living in Jaywick, their thoughts about the environment surrounding the village and what the future might hold.

What emerged was that tourism is the main raison d'être of Jaywick, with residents (not tourists in the strict sense of being away from home, but tourists from the 'normality' of work) and visitors attracted from primarily Essex and London. Most residents were proud of their chalets. The deregulated nature of the private estate has meant that people has been able to customise the original basic chalet designs. Now there are art-deco and

tudorbethan chalets, ones decorated with Irish shamrocks and sailing ships, the “The Palms” and the “Love Shack” (Figure 6).

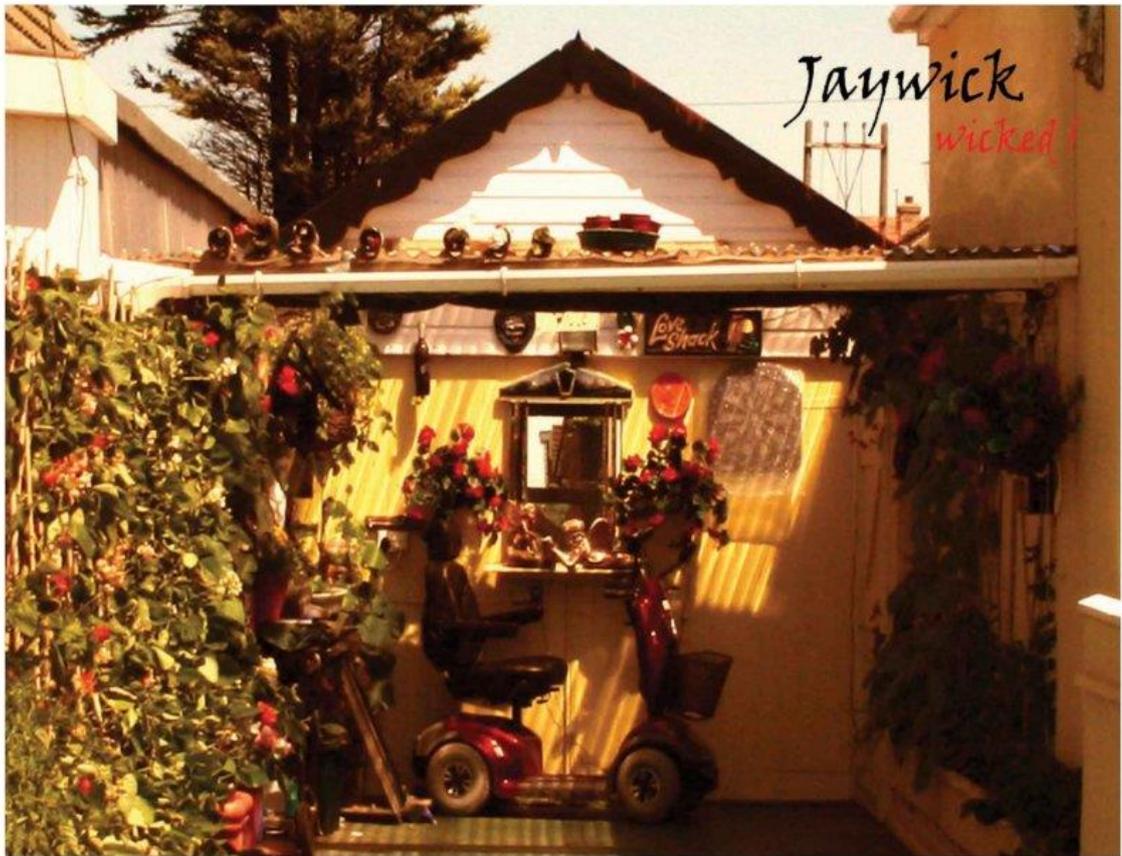


Figure 6. The Jaywick Tourist Board: postcard (“Love Shack”) (2008), Alex Murdin

There was also a sense of tension of people in relation to the environment at Jaywick. Drawn by the beach and the sea most visitors and residents are content to gaze upon it without necessarily entering it. Likewise the marshes to the east at Colne Point are occasionally appreciated for their wildness but are not generally directly experienced (as witnessed by the overgrown footpaths out on the marshes). Instead, like most seaside towns, Jaywick provides all weather entertainment: a pub, restaurant, amusement arcade, garden centre and golf course. The environment is also a threat, in the background all the time is the memory of the flooding of the area in 1953 when a coastal surge along the East coast killed 37 people and destroyed many chalets.

Thus the key threads that emerged were:

- The fiercely independent cultural history of the settlement and the Do-It-Yourself nature of its architecture.
- The threat to the future survival of the village by flooding from the sea especially given the environmental threat of climate change which could increase the likelihood of flooding in coming years.
- Ambivalence to the natural environment – a love of the beach as the main reason for being there but a dislike of the inhospitable marshes.
- The poor state of the built environment - of individual properties, infrastructure and facilities – community perceptions of neglect by those in authority and resentment at the depiction of Jaywick in the media and by those in power as an entirely dysfunctional place of violence, arson, drug addiction, poverty and so on.

The main questions from the commissioners were - how to map a place in a way that could be empowering to communities, how this is communicated to the regeneration professionals, what might need to be kept, and what added to into any regeneration project. For me personally, related to the official regeneration agenda, there was an overarching question of how the community might live and work more sustainably in the future as the primary economic driver was tourism - could there be such a thing as a sustainable tourist economy in this context or is sustainable tourism an oxymoron ?

The first proposal made to the commissioners was for a number of mobile phone tours of Jaywick. At that time mobile phone tours had been just been developed by tourist attractions to take visitors outside and do away with large amounts of physical interpretational material on site, making it more suitable for locations which are sensitive due to ecological or heritage reasons. The proposal was to make use of mobile phone developments and new characteristics like interactivity, with the combination of text and image creating a participatory way of guiding people around Jaywick in situ. The subject would be stories of local importance the community and their everyday lives, narratives from the area's heritage, notes on its ecology *and* the proposed regeneration changes, where the new park, shopping and housing would be, and what it would look like (Figure 7).

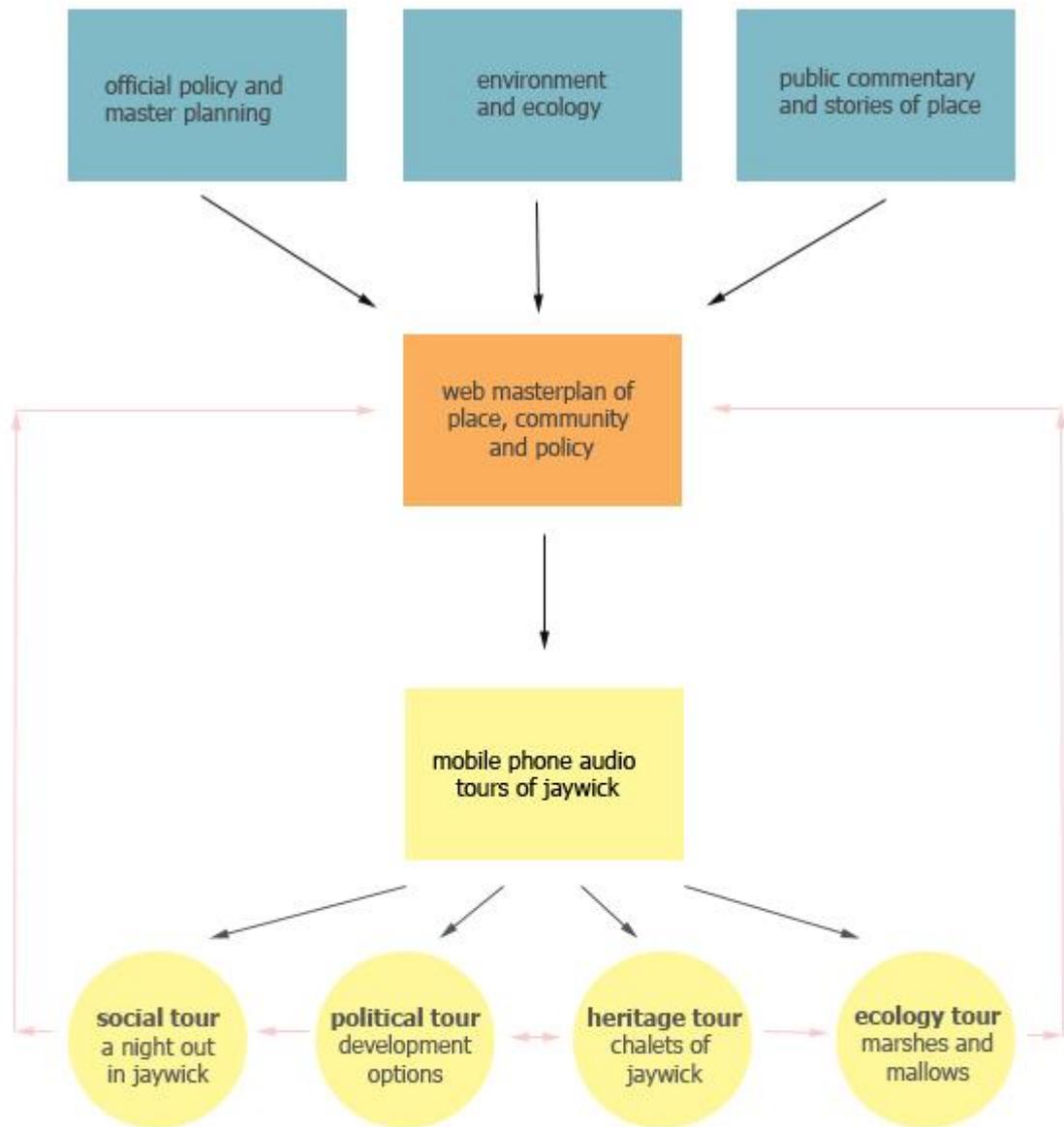


Figure 7. The Jaywick Tourist Board: Mobile phone tour flow diagram (2008), Alex Murdin

At its core was the idea that this would surreptitiously place the ecological and political back into the public realm in an accessible manner, concealed within the shell of a standard tourism trope. The system would also have the potential to feedback tour user's thoughts into the masterplan through interactive options in the tour system. Perhaps most importantly the suggestion was made that members of the community would actually read and voice the tour of the local plan/masterplan development options and that members/officers of the local authorities would read and voice parts related to local stories - a literal and symbolic exchange of views.

In spite of several calls and emails there was no response made to this proposal from Tendring District Council or Essex County Council and in the end the use of the political/regenerative element was discouraged by LANS, although LANS were positive about telling the social, historical and ecological narratives of the Jaywick. Without any specific feedback it is impossible to define the reasons for this however the inference is that the authorities involved were unwilling to "engage" the community through the art project, but happy to be "informed" by it as this involved no particular commitment to dialogue. Of course there were many political sensitivities in the situation given the violence of the opposition and "uproar" caused by the previous regeneration proposals.

The compromise here was to avoid specific discussion of the regeneration proposals but in doing so there was instead the opportunity to collate or represent elements of residents sense of place, and in doing so consider a future Jaywick: "Combining spirit of place with the environmental shift in the landscape, Alex will investigate how the impact of coastal erosion could inform a new landscape and leisure provision within future planning.

Working at a conceptual level he can look at how Jaywick sits within the cultural profile of the Sunshine Coast of Tendring in Essex, as well as how the environment may alter that."
(Essex County Council, 2008)

In aesthetic terms the project resolved itself into an investigation of whether the community was in control of its own image and if not how it could represent itself to the

media and authorities. Methodologically the project was positive, or additive, about creating a dialogue with communities on the ground for positive change. In this sense it could be seen as “dialogic” in Grant Kester’s terms. A vehicle was created that addressed this and could be used to unpick the idea of sustainable tourism, *The Jaywick Tourist Board*, (2008-9) (Appendix 1). It’s first action utilised the conventions and forms that one might expect of such an institution, a day spent by me at the annual Summer Fair in Jaywick asking people to fill in a questionnaire, ostensibly to form a picture of residents and visitors habits, knowledge and inclinations (Figure 8).

Questions covered standard information like age, place of residence and so on, to a wider range of subjective positions and opinion – favourite food to eat in Jaywick, knowledge of the local ecology, possible improvements to local facilities, interest in the environment and so on. Deliberate contrasts were introduced, for example whether the respondent was in Jaywick “on holiday”, as a “resident” or “for pleasure”. Without any intention of a result with statistical authority this was a means to dialogue and way of questioning the authority of such a basis for actions and planning.

Jaywick
wicked!

The Jaywick Tourist Board

Questionnaire

1 Are you: Male Female

2 Are you: 0-15 15-25 25-35 35-45
45-55 55 plus

3 Where were you born:

4 Where do you live now (the first part of your postcode)

5 (Tick one) Are you in Jaywick
on holiday?
on business?
for pleasure?
resident?

6 (Tick one) How did you get here today?
Walk
Bicycle
Bus
Car
Boat

7 What is the best thing to see in Jaywick and why?

8 What is the best thing to do in Jaywick and why?

9 What is your favourite place in Jaywick and why?

10 Where have you been on holiday this year?

11 When you go to the beach what do you take with you? (Please list as completely and fully as possible e.g. suntan cream, John Graham novel, coolbag full of cider, etc...)

11 What sort of food do you eat on holiday?

13 What did you have for breakfast this morning?

14 Do you like marshes? (yes/no)

15 Can you name 3 plants native to Jaywick?

16 Can you name 3 birds native (or visitors) to Jaywick?

17 Can you name 3 fish/shell fish from the sea off Jaywick?

18 What is your favourite food from Jaywick?

19 Complete the following sentence
I love/hate (delete as appropriate) Jaywick because...

20 If you could choose one word to describe Jaywick what would it be?

21 What's your favourite colour?

22 What facilities would you like to see more of in Jaywick? (Tick as many as you like):
Pubs
Swimming pools
Amusement arcades
A pier
Playgrounds
Skate park
Other (please specify what):

23 If you could do one thing to improve Jaywick's environment what would it be?

Thank you for participating in our survey
Please return the completed survey to Jaywick Marallo Tower reception

Figure 8. The Jaywick Tourist Board: questionnaire (2008), Alex Murdin

For the most part *The Jaywick Tourist Board* was conceived as a research vehicle for capturing and re-presenting the residents and visitors sense of place, reflecting these impressions, stories and images back into the public sphere and ultimately the public realm. In contrast to investment heavy, highly polished tourism campaigns the project was deliberately low tech and Do-It-Yourself so that it could easily be taken over by members of the community in the future or replicated by other small groups. Its ultimate manifestation was a website www.jaywicked.org which included a number of tours. A simple audio tour called *Let The Waters Roll Down* covered the history, ecology and community narratives of Jaywick gathered from the local history society and other people met in Jaywick. It was read by residents, visitors and workers from Jaywick. For example a Dutch construction worker who happened to be repairing the sea defences in Jaywick at the time of recording read the story of the 1953 flood which also inflicted massive damage

in the Netherlands. Other items were made up from scraps from Wikipedia contrasted with official reports on flood risk and ecological issues, most voiced in the estuary accents of Jaywick with an introduction by a local BBC radio presenter. The following is the scripted introduction to the audio tour:

“Hi, I’m Ray Clark, I’m a presenter at BBC Radio Essex and I have lived in Essex for all my life. Jaywick is a small settlement on the coast of Essex, tucked in between Clacton on Sea and the marshes and dunes of Colne Point. Built in the 1930’s as a holiday village of chalets for London’s East Enders it now has a year round population of people, as well as many visitors in caravans, enjoying the golden beaches of Jaywick Sands. It’s a great place to be on a sunny summer day when people stroll along the miles of sea walls, sit on the dunes or swim by the seaweed covered, boulder breakwaters. That’s not to say that Jaywick is perfect. There are problems here like anywhere else. Streets need fixing, some chalets are vandalised in the winter and there is always the threat of the North Sea in its wilder moments. Some say that Jaywick is like Marmite; you either love it or hate it. Water has played a major part in shaping this place. It is Jaywick’s lifeblood as a seaside village, and shapes the unique ecology and environment of the area. It is also though a major threat to the peacefulness of life here, which the bunds and sea walls clearly demonstrate. This is an audio tour of what water means and might mean in the future to Jaywick. It is read by visitors, residents and workers in Jaywick.”

Also by using Google Maps three internet based tours were created with pictures from the residency periods and descriptions of places to see along routes in Jaywick, out through the marshes and along the coast towards Clacton on Sea, *Walking Away From Jaywick*, *Walking Back to Happiness* and *Jaywick Nights (Walking Back To Happiness: Reprise)*.

The project had a physical manifestation through an installation at the Jaywick Martello Tower, complete with desk and local information board with the printed internet tours. The audio tour was put on mp3 players which could be borrowed by the public. In addition a number of postcards using some of the more iconic images from initial research were printed (Figure 6), as well as reproduced on t-shirts (Figure 9) and mugs. These used a logo and brand created for the Jaywick Tourist Board – “Jaywick: wicked!”.



Figure 9. The Jaywick Tourist Board: t-shirt (2008), Alex Murdin

www.jaywicked.org now receives 270 visitors per month and has continued to gather responses to this presentation of images and narratives from Jaywick (as well as enquiries on where dog walking is allowed and the best places to stay):

“Re: A fine sea breeze wafts over Jaywick

From: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Sent: 27 October 2008 15:27

To: info@jaywicked.org

Subject: A fine sea breeze wafts over Jaywick

Wow! Jaywick's wicked!?!?In a couple of ways yes, and in many ways no. I am quite shocked that Jaywick is getting so much attention all of a sudden. "Quintessentially Essex" is well right. I'm from Wivenhoe, but now live in Hackney, and Jaywick is the place I bring my mates for all over to get a feel of Essex, only before sundown though, or it all becomes a little scary. Did the person that put the heads down that chimney ever get caught? A quick pint in the "Never say Die"? I've always wanted to, but never been brave enough. I love the advertising campaign. Is the chalet entirely made out of doors still around? Nice one, innit? Cheers" (Elin, 2008)

The *Jaywick Tourist Board* was intended to be a conversation in the public sphere between the objectivity of those managing a place and the subjectivities of those people in situ, identifying this with the processes of tourism which consume 'authentic' local identity through a heteronomous global infrastructure. The intention was equally for the means of producing and framing the tourist gaze¹⁰ to be placed in the hands of those whose life is on show. For this reason the project was deliberately low key and lacking in the sophistication usually applied in the service of both tourism (and spatial planning) in order for it to be as accessible as possible to all involved. Tools used are simple and easily replicable to be taken forward if/as desired by the community. However so far this has not happened as there was no chance or opportunity created for the community to become involved in *The Jaywick Tourist Board's* further development. Likewise there is no evidence that the local authorities have used the project to inform future regeneration (the evaluation of the project has not been made available to me in spite of several requests to the agencies involved and the Arts Council) although verbal feedback from the project managers LANS was that this element of the project had been well received by the local authorities and visitors to Jaywick Martello Tower. A number of factors may have been responsible for this. At the time the management of Jaywick Martello Tower was passing from LANS to Essex County Council which created a vacuum of project management support for the project on the ground towards its end point - where *The Jaywick Tourist Board* should have been handed over to members of the community. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that there were a number of technical issues with the other project for *Arcadia Revisited* by David Cotterell, an interactive white board in the Jaywick Tower with a version of Google Earth showing a satellite map of Jaywick. The idea was this whiteboard could be annotated by Jaywick residents to show places they thought of importance. Cotterell maintained that it was always intended to be an experimental work, however the fact that it was not functioning whilst it was on public display at the Jaywick

¹⁰ The visuality of tourism as the production of visual amenity for consumption, "the tourist gaze" (Urry, 1990).

Martello Tower led to reluctance by staff at the Martello Tower to promote an experience that could not be delivered to the local community. On the other side political sensitivities made it difficult for the local authorities to engage with a community project on the subject of regeneration whilst their own position was being developed by further studies (particularly an awaited future flooding map). Likewise there was a sense of indifference to the project, for example indications of initial support from the department responsible for tourism at Essex County Council to promote *The Jaywick Tourist Board* failed to be translated into action.

The instrumentalities involved in *Arcadia Revisited* were stated up front in the brief for this art project to “engage with the community” and subsequently “provide new information for regeneration professionals” through uncovering a “sense of place”. As such *Arcadia Revisited* covered all of the main types of instrumentality –environmental improvement and education, social inclusion and ultimately economic improvement through tourism. Without specific feedback from the authorities on whose behalf this process was taking place it is not possible to say definitively whether this project succeeded in these terms. However from a personal perspective it appeared to be an instrumental failure when set against the original criteria, as the work has not been taken forward or used in any specific sense to support a regenerative process that benefits the lives of residents of Jaywick. One contributing factor may be that, as an ultimately uncontroversial project accepted by the community, *Arcadia Revisited* was not well enough known or discussed within the media and therefore largely ignored officially. The overall political position of the project was also framed by a public backlash against money being spent on art projects in Jaywick, following the installation of a work by Turner prize nominated artist Nathan Coley, *46 Brooklands Gardens* (2008) (Figure 10).



Figure 10. 46 Brooklands Gardens (2008), Nathan Coley. Photo: Keith Hunter. Courtesy studioNathanColey.

This project, initiated by the Firstsite gallery in Colchester, took place in Jaywick at the same time as *Arcadia Revisited* and generated the following local news item:

“Arts chiefs have been slammed for funding the building of a shack-like sculpture in a resort where there is no cash available for street lights. Colchester-based organisation Firstsite – which gets some private donations but relies heavily on tax-payers’ cash – handed internationally-acclaimed artist Nathan Coley £40,000 to put up the sculpture in Brooklands Gardens, Jaywick. At its unveiling on Saturday, residents said the money could have paid for investment in the area, which is believed to be one of the poorest in the country. One said: “What I don’t understand is that we have money for art, but at the end of the day there’s no money to put lights up along our street.”” (Leate, 2008)

Whilst these types of comments are typical of many arts projects, called public art or otherwise, antipathy may have been exacerbated by the sense of a project generated for viewers from outside of Jaywick as opposed to something created for, or by, the residents within. For example Coley talks of its siting in the centre of Jaywick as a way of making *visitors* come into the centre of Jaywick to witness the problematics of the settlement, and then “...moving away from it, having to deal with the architecture of the other houses on

your way back out" (Williams, 2008). Likewise a review in the Sunday Times echoes this idea of a project which becomes an "edgy comment" because of its location in "...a slum, a favela. Just the place for a Turner-shortlisted artist to insert an enigmatic object" (Pearman, 2008). This commentary fosters the idea of this artwork as the focus of a sort of slum tourism for contemporary art audiences. This also can be said to be reinforced by the work itself which consists of rudimentary coloured wooden slats on a steel chalet frame. The pared down Do-It-Yourself aesthetic, when taken out of the gallery and sited in a place where this aesthetic is an indicator of poverty, not rebellion against slick consumerism, only grounds the work in a romantic view of the simple life and the beach hut of stereotypical holiday fantasies (the tropical island getaway or in this case a retreat from the grime of London life).

Slajov Žižek points out this aesthetic trap in the context of other sorts of externalised aid programmes:

"The architecturally correct opposition between authentic function and vulgar display can be illustrated by the contrast between a simple water pump and a gold tap: the one a simple object satisfying a vital need, the other suggesting an excessive display of wealth. However, one should always in such cases be careful to avoid the trap... It is (mostly) poor people who dream about gold taps, while rich people like to imagine the simple functionality of household equipment - providing a simple water pump is how Bill Gates seeks to help poor Africans, while the poor Africans would probably embellish it as soon as possible with "kitsch" ornamentation." (Žižek, 2011: p. 248-9)

2.6 ON BEING INSTRUMENTALISED

In conclusion this chapter has shown that there are environmental, economic, social and political instrumentalities for art in public as a socially-engaged form. Some artists believe it is possible and desirable to operate in public space without their aesthetic being affected by these. The point they are missing is that art is equally co-opting these environmental, economic, social and political forces to aesthetic effect and that therefore they are necessary and not dispensable. The issue is therefore not *whether* you will be instrumentalised in working in public space but *how* this is dealt with within the work - instrumentality has to be embraced.

In contrast to *46 Brooklands Gardens* which tried to focus the external visitor on the austerity of the site *The Jaywick Tourist Board* attempted to channel the kitsch culture of Jaywick residents outwards, allowing a space for the subjects of the tourist gaze to take back control of their image. From this point of view *The Jaywick Tourist Board* is a tentative step in allowing an aesthetic operation to instrumentalise the politics of sustainability.

For me the key area where the project failed was methodological in having to work through official channels which limited the type and scope of media coverage necessary to really stimulate input into the regenerative project via the public sphere. Its dialogic/additive approach of generating conversations within the community therefore failed. *46 Brooklands Gardens* was successful in generating public debate but this focussed on money wasted on art, not the political situation. *The Jaywick Tourist Board* as part of *Arcadia Revisited* was paid lip service as a socially positive, sustainable project but was not controversial enough because it was not instrumentalised enough - by the community as an opportunity for activism, by the local authorities as a way to engage the community, or by myself as artist in promoting the value of its aesthetic experience. Ultimately it was simply not noticed.

3 COMPLEMENTAL PRACTICE: BETWEEN THE MONUMENT AND THE EMBRACE

"...complementarity conceived as the impossibility of the complete description of a particular phenomenon — is, on the contrary, the very place of the inscription of universality into the Particular" (Žižek, 1996: p. 214).

In the previous chapter there has been a discussion of the instrumentalities of working in public space, set out as social, environmental and economic factors by Massey and Rose in *Research on public art: Assessing impact and quality* (Thompson et al, 2005). Massey and Rose however avoid art which deliberately addresses politics in some way shape or form as problematic, citing problems in defining the audiences or communities to which the projects are addressed. Equally in a report which aims for an objective assessment of "impact" there is another major issue with addressing politics, that politics relies to a large extent on an explicit or implicit ethical choices and beliefs which are hardly ever a matter of true consensus, not universal, only particular. To avoid ethical or political content though is to miss out a significant component of the context for art in public, as seen in Chapter 2. Certainly within the art world there has been intense debate on the subject and the recent "ethical turn" (Rancière, 2009: p. 109-132) in aesthetics and its relationship to politics. To engage with politics and ethics or not in the first place, whether art can operate within politics, whether it will make any difference, whether the results are art any more, to provoke or to aim for consensus - these are just some of the questions this ethical turn raises for artists in the public arena which must be worked through in any discussion of art that engages in the socio-political field.

3.1 POLITICAL AESTHETICS / POLITICS OF AESTHETICS

Historically the relationship of art and aesthetics to politics is a volatile one although on the face of it they have little common territory. On one hand we have an ordering of (individual) human experience through sensory means and on the other a set of power relationships which structure (group) life in a given social milieu, e.g. the state. They have

however been inextricably entwined throughout history as antagonists and partners, art functioning as a symbol of power directly or indirectly and politics attempting to instrumentalise perception for various ends. Where politics has been significantly aestheticised it has often been directed by a totalising power. Extreme examples are the neo-classical art and architecture in the Nazi state of Germany in the early 20th century and the official constructivist propaganda and folk art of communist Russia up until that regime's collapse. A more contemporary example would be the dictatorial gigantism of Saddam Hussein's triumphal arch in Iraq, the 20 metre high *Swords of Qādisīyah* by Adil Kamil (Figure 11).



Figure 11. *Swords of Qādisīyah* (1997), Adil Kamil Photo: John Houghton Jr (Wikipedia - Public Domain)

The catastrophic outcomes of these regimes (particularly Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia) have led some to conclude that the aestheticisation of politics inevitably leads to disaster. This is opening of Crispin Sartwell's analysis of a totalitarian sublime in *Political aesthetics* (2010) where he refers to the words of Walter Benjamin ruminating on early

20th century Fascism: “All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war” (Sartwell, 2010: p. 15). In this Benjamin was making the connection to a generation of artists politicised by the First World War who attacked the classical beauty associated with the establishment. Arthur Danto’s essay *The abuse of beauty: Aesthetics and the concept of art* (Danto, 2003) is referred to by Sartwell to make the point that: “The concept of beauty became abruptly politicized by the avant-garde around 1915... It became that in part as an attack on the position under which art and beauty were internally linked, as were beauty and goodness. And the “abuse” of beauty became a device for dissociating the artists from the society they held in contempt...disconnecting beauty from art as a moral revulsion against a society for whom beauty was a cherished value, and which cherished art itself because of beauty” (Sartwell, 2010: p48). Thus as political regimes like the Nazis attempted to totalise life and art into a heteronomic political form radical artists were asserting the autonomy of art from a particular socius. This opposition has characterised the trajectories of politics and aesthetics in the intervening period. Sartwell though aims for a rehabilitation of political aesthetics, for instance pointing to the American neo-classical tradition of government architecture as an embodiment of democratic culture (Figure 12) and a balance to Albert Speer’s Nazi vision of Berlin as an imperial capital to match classical Rome (Figure 13). Sartwell concludes that essentially political aesthetics are not intrinsically compromised, as they cannot be said to be ever wholly directed or directable by the state.



Figure 12. Western view of Capitol building in Washington D. C.. Photo: Architect of the Capitol (Wikipedia – Public Domain)

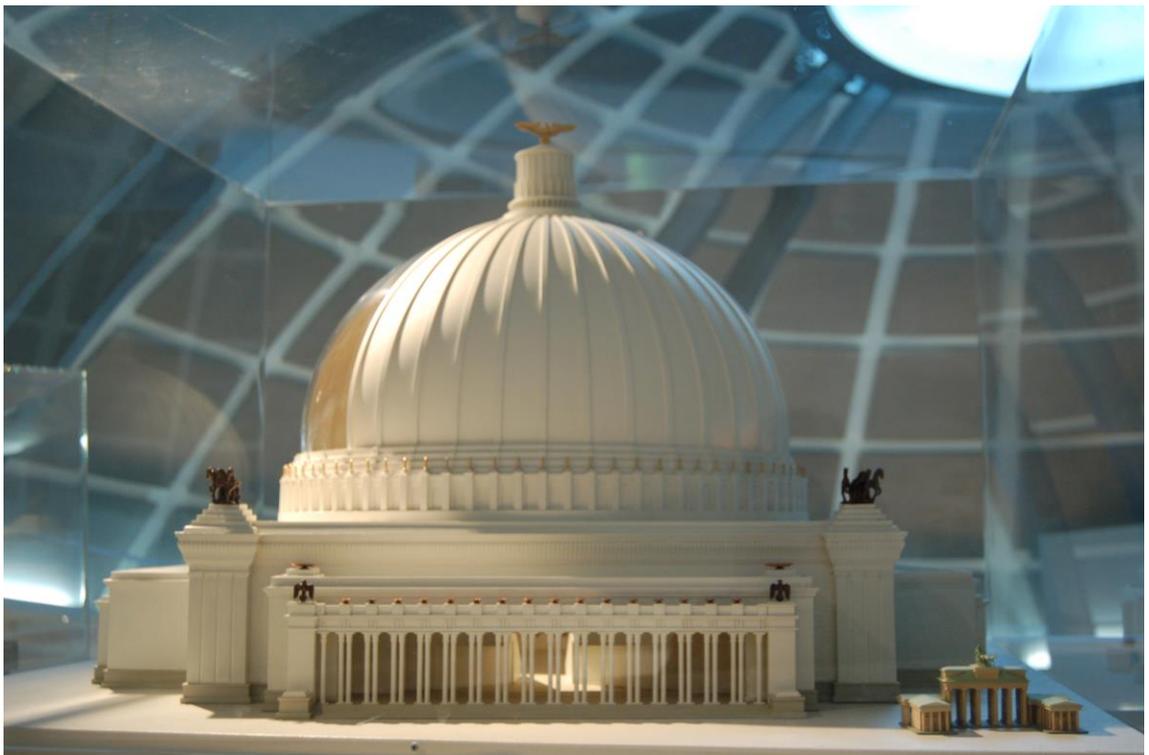


Figure 13. Contemporary model of the Great Hall (Volkshalle) designed for a new Nazi Berlin by Albert Speer and Adolf Hitler between 1925 and 1941, also showing the Brandenburg Gate for scale. Photo: Sebastian Niedlich. (Creative Commons 2.0).

His argument is therefore that aesthetics are intrinsic to politics and can be said to operate in creating a structural flaw within the political system that actually makes it easier to introduce alternatives from *within*:

“Aesthetic qualities are central for understanding political categories, infest them fundamentally... for the political system to try to absorb or deploy it or dominate it is always to set in motion meanings in excess of its own purposes. Perhaps these meanings are contradictions to itself that display the weaknesses at which the coherence of the system and the system itself collapses. But in any case, though there is no politics without aesthetics, there is also no politics that can thoroughly dominate or domesticate aesthetics. Here is one possibility, we might say, of resistance” (ibid: p81).

Sartwell’s thesis relates to the work of French philosopher Jacques Rancière who has been reoccupying aesthetics for the radical left in politics, attempting to achieve what fellow socialist Slavoj Žižek characterises as: “...the assertion of the aesthetic dimension as INHERENT in any radical emancipatory politics... [which] goes against the grain of the predominant notion which sees the main root of Fascism in the elevation of the social body into an aesthetic-organic Whole.” (Rancière, 2000: p. 76). The difference between Sartwell and Rancière is whether resistance is possible from within political structures, forms or processes. Rancière agrees with the idea that the operation of aesthetics in relation to politics produces an “excess” of meanings (or as Rancière has referred to it the “radical uncanny” (Rancière, 2000: p. 63)) but concludes that it is precisely because of this that ‘proper’ aesthetics can only operate outside of existing political structures which by definition requires some form of meaning in common and communication between the subject and object, the particular and the universal. This situation has arisen because:

- Contemporary art operates in an “aesthetic regime”, a semiotically fluid milieu which has developed in the past few hundred years (culminating in the post-modern) which has overcome the “representative regime”, in existence since the Renaissance, in which signs or symbols have a largely given meaning ordered by pre-determined hierarchies.
- Contemporary politics through neo-liberal bureaucracies strives to empty all uncanniness from the political sphere - “...cancelling out politics in the simple relationship between a state of the social and a state of the state apparatus. ‘Consensus’ is the common name given to this cancellation.” (Rancière, 2010: p. 42)

For Rancière current consensual political structures are places where negotiation takes place between opposing political views in order to synthesise a common position. For him this consensus relies on being within, and subscribing to, the democratic political system in the first place and does not take into account the excluded - those for reasons of situation, birth or political choice who are not enfranchised. Rancière is here critiquing the model of the public sphere proposed by Jürgen Habermas in which politics is described as an ***intersubjective communicative action***, where guarantees for the opportunity for free speech are given by bourgeois civil institutions, allowing political ideas to advance on the basis of meritocratic, rational discourse which leads to truly democratic decision making (processes described in *The theory of communicative action* (Habermas, 1984) and *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (Habermas, 1989)). Rancière's objection is that this relies on the presence of subjects who are "qualified to argue" (Rancière, 2010: p. 39) through forms of economic or social privilege and therefore does not allow for the excluded, or as he calls them "the part of no-part" (ibid).

The solution for Rancière is dissensus. This is not to be understood as straightforward antagonism between two parties, but as a process whereby the part of no-part becomes apparent politically: "Dissensus is not a confrontation between interests or opinions. It is the demonstration (*manifestation*) of a gap in the sensible itself. Political demonstration makes visible that which had no reason to be seen; it places one world in another... This is the reason why politics cannot be identified with the model of communicative action" (ibid: p. 38). Dissensus then, as a process, is the gaining of equality through a movement from the outside to the centre which at the same time reconfigures the co-ordinates of the centre in favour of the part of no-part. This is in contradistinction to consensus which aims to bring those from the outside into the centre whilst maintaining its fixed (Habermasian) structures and institutions which manage power distribution. Political dissensus must therefore originate from outside of the system.

For Rancière the role that aesthetics plays in dissensus is not in this actual moving from periphery to centre (in acts of revolution), it is to make this movement visible (sensible) and to make the part of no-part apparent in the first place: art does not, and cannot, effect political change in spite of those who see art/aesthetics becoming ever more closely integrated into life. It is, if anything, an alternative to politics, a metapolitics in various possible configurations which are:

"...art refuting the hierarchical divisions of the perceptible and framing a common sensorium; or art replacing politics as a configuration of the sensible world; or art becoming a kind of social hermeneutics; or even art becoming, in its very isolation, the guardian of the promise of emancipation. Each of these positions may be held and has been held. This means that there is a certain undecidability in the 'politics of aesthetics'. There is a metapolitics of aesthetics which frames the possibilities of art. Aesthetic art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy, and thrives on that ambiguity. That is why those who want to isolate it from politics are somewhat beside the point. It is also why those who want it to fulfil its political promise are condemned to a certain melancholy." (Rancière, 2010: p. 133)

Here it is important to underline the distinction that Rancière makes between the aesthetics of politics and the politics of aesthetics, the former being the way in which perceptions are shaped by the structures of politics and the police order (a "distribution of the sensible" in his terms), the latter being the power relations and discourses produced by art as a form of emancipatory self-education:

"The politics of aesthetics proves the right way to achieve what was pursued in vain by the aesthetics of politics with its polemical configuration of the common world. Aesthetics promises a non-polemical, consensual framing of the common world. Ultimately the alternative to politics turns out to be aestheticization, viewed as the constitution of a new collective ethos." (Rancière, 2010: p. 119)

So the question becomes, whether art can "infest" politics as Sartwell describes or whether artists engaging within politics are "condemned to a certain melancholy" of frustration?

3.2 COMPLEMENTARITY: AUTONOMY AND DIALOGUE

Rancière's arguments above relate to the new found ethical/social turn of artists who have reinvented the idealistic and utopic avant-garde movements of the early 20th century, as the socially engaged, collaborative, participatory or relational art which has been in vogue for the past two decades or so. Rancière's commentary makes specific reference to Nicholas Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics which he characterises as "...the loss of the 'social bond' and the incumbent duty of artists to repair it" and goes on to criticise this as a moral or ethical directive, an instrumentalising of art by artists (and critics/theorists) which starts to break down the demarcation between art and life and the "mystery" of art (Rancière, 2009: p. 57). Rancière is unimpressed though with relational art, this ethical turn is a threat to proper art in that it is interpolated with politics.

Rancière's position is that we must:

"...maintain the very tension by which a politics of art and a poetics of politics tend towards each other, but cannot meet up without suppressing themselves. To maintain this tension, today, means opposing the ethical confusion which tends to be imposed in the name of resistance, under the name of resistance. The movement from the monument to the embrace and from the embrace to the monument can only ever be accomplished at the price of cancelling out this tension. To prevent the resistance of art from fading into its contrary, it must be upheld as the unresolved tension between two resistances" (Rancière, 2010: p. 183).

In his defence Bourriaud accuses Rancière of missing his point, specifying that relational practices maintain particular aesthetic forms and a critical distance that preserves their independence from moralising effect: "At no time are the artistic positions analysed in 'Relational Aesthetics' described as social relations that are not mediated by forms, nor do any of them answer to this description, although social relations can constitute the living material for some of the practices in question" (Bourriaud, 2009). For Rancière art simply cannot operate within the actual socio-political arena, but only influences from without as an alternative vision of existence - an underground metapolitics that melts away as soon as it is concretised in 'reality'. Here there is a level of agreement as for Bourriaud the same is true as relational art operates only as abstracted arrangements of

social relations without political effect - as abstractions they act only as extrinsic alternative visions of the social, as “microtopias” of small communities at a given site.

This is also the territory of an adherent of Rancièrian principles, Claire Bishop, whose body of criticism asks the fundamental question “Is it better for art to be engaged with society even if this means ideological compromise, or for it to maintain ideological purity at the expense of social isolation and powerlessness?” (Bishop, 2010: p. 1). For Bishop the answer to this question is neither. Taking a line through Ranciè she argues that that art which deliberately sets out to achieve ethico-political effect becomes aesthetically compromised. It can no longer encompass the essential characteristic of undecidability: “The aesthetic experience is effective inasmuch as it is the experience of that *and*. It grounds the autonomy of art, to the extent that it connects it to the hope of ‘changing life’. Matters would be easy if we could merely say—naïvely—that the beauties of art must be subtracted from any politicization, or—knowingly—that the alleged autonomy of art disguises its dependence upon domination” (Bishop, 2012b: p. 134). In effect art cannot escape from the political context in which it is generated and conversely cannot help but create an immanent politics (or meta-politics) where, to put it in Deleuzian terms, autonomous aesthetic action only palpates the political, i.e. there is no direct contact with the vital organs, art just feels and presses on the body politic extrinsically to discern the political issues beneath the skin.

For Bishop then it becomes a question of how the autonomous subject (the artist who produces subjectivity) and context (society and its politics) relate. She refers in her writing to the work of Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau and Rosalyn Deutsche who all have considered this wider question. Between them these left-wing thinkers have all explored how consensual politics can be resisted and how forms of conflict and antagonism in radical politics are allowable whilst avoiding a totalitarian approach. Bishop draws on them to articulate a political sphere where antagonism is both necessary and inherent in the political subject. This is because, from a psychoanalytic point of view, the subject is

constituted by context: and therefore is in a state of flux and conflict as it seeks to establish a complete identity in relation to a changing matrix of other individuals or groups. The desire for a resolved identity (unified subject) is attempted through both distinguishing self from others (difference) and in identification with the other (equivalence). However reconciliation of these two ways of perceiving context turns out to be impossible in practice, even though this impossibility acts as a basic constituent of the political:

"Contexts have to be internally subverted in order to become possible. The system (as in Jacques Lacan's object *petit a*) is that which the very logic of the context requires but which is, however, impossible. It is present, if you want, through its absence. But this means two things. First, that all differential identity will be constitutively split; it will be the crossing point between the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence. This introduces into it a radical undecidability. Second, that although the fullness and universality of society is unachievable, its need does not disappear: it will always show itself through the presence of its absence." (Laclau, 1996: p. 53)

Antagonism then, not reconciliation, is the required response to context and is both constitutive of, and the answer to, radical politics. Having established in this way that subversion of context is the way forward, Bishop formulates the correct aesthetic response of artists working in the socio-political field as relational antagonism (Bishop, 2004: p. 77). Here the artist acknowledges and projects their conflicted identity as the means of artistic production but retains a sense of agency in engagement with the Other, so far as they are able to offer the hope of (deferred) social change through the aesthetic promise. In practice this means that Bishop praises work which produces effects of "blurring and rupture" (Bishop, 2006b: p. 183), have "perverse, disturbing and pleasurable" outcomes (Bishop, 2012a: p. 284) and in extremis work "...through a nihilist redoubling of alienation, which negates the world's injustice and illogicality on its own terms..." in "an Hegelian "negation of negation" (Bishop, 2012b: p. 36-37). Conversely Bishop condemns artistic practices which err towards political effect at the expense of these qualities, pointing to the history of the community arts movement which started in the 1960's, which is:

"...a cautionary tale for today's artists averse to theorizing the artistic value of their work. Emphasizing process rather than end result, and basing their judgements on ethical criteria (about how and whom they work with) rather than on the character of their artistic outcomes, the community arts movement found itself subject to manipulation - and eventually instrumentalization- by the state" (Bishop, 2012b: p. 38).

However many artists and critics believe that the distancing of aesthetics from political practice is part of an artistic fallacy generated by Western histories of contemporary art as an autonomous oppositional practice¹¹. Grant Kester sees this even in the socially engaged works given as examples by Bourriaud in *Relational aesthetics*. Kester objects to artistic practices that remain within what he sees as the privileged sphere of the contemporary art establishment, its organisations and elite audiences. One of the most well-known examples used by Bourriaud to illustrate relational aesthetics is the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija who has served Asian street food in contemporary art galleries in Venice and New York, eaten by the attendant cognoscenti (Figure 14), thereby fostering social relations in the common act of sharing a meal. Kester's objection though is not just about the nature of the audience who might be attending a New York exhibition opening, it is the very process as well as context which preclude any authentic social interaction. The artists are simply bringing an authored, "preconceived entity" to the gallery space as opposed to work which is "improvisational and situationally responsive" and the charge is that "...a number of Bourriaud's relational projects retain an essentially textual status, in which social exchange is choreographed as an a priori event for the consumption of an audience "summoned" by the artist" (Kester, 2011: p. 32). In this way Kester suggests that the self-proclaimed mission of many artists to challenge neo-liberal consensus and the apparatus of the state that produces it is simply overturned. By importing preconceptions of a situation to a place there is only a reinforcement of these ideas: "...aesthetic distancing, far from generating new insight, can actually encourage the stasis or fixity of thought, and

¹¹ As mentioned previously, as far as the presence of art in public space is concerned, this is oppositionality is strongly identified with the original critique of generated by Guy de Bord – a critique of the passivity of the public who consume the images generated by capitalist culture. (De Bord,)

reproduce the prescriptive, administrative ethos of state-based institutions and agencies” (ibid: p. 89).



Figure 14. Fear Eats the Soul (2011). Rirkrit Tiravanija. Photo: Andrew Russeth (Creative Commons 2.0).

The alternative for Kester is “dialogical aesthetics”. This is founded on the notion of artistic practices which collaborate with the public in the location in which the work is being produced, renounce “authorial status” and artistic autonomy in favour of co-production and “durational interaction rather than rupture” (ibid: p. 65). Whilst work is “conciliatory (and less custodial)” Kester stresses that this work is often located in a context which is oppositional to prevalent power structures and therefore is oppositional but not antagonistic. With regard to antagonistic practices he suggests that, from a psychological point of view, confusion, shock, or “trauma” pushes for the disintegration of the subject who is experiencing the work – actually making it harder for them to assimilate whatever critical position is being put forward. The correct approach is therefore that there should be a Habermasian intersubjective exchange at the level of the everyday which is mediated

and facilitated by the creative artist and aims at "...a transformation of human consciousness in a way that enhances our capacity for the compassionate recognition of difference, both within ourselves and in others" (ibid: p. 185). In this way Kester sees an art that engages in political activism and can operate *within* politics, without sacrificing the aesthetic integrity that he grudgingly admits is located at Rancière's point of unresolved tension between aesthetics and politics:

"Rancière claims to introduce a significant inflection of the traditional aesthetic. Rather than insisting on either the absolute autonomy of the aesthetic or its dissolution, he locates the power of the aesthetic in the "play" *between* art and life: a kind of quasi-autonomy. Rancière's formulation effectively restages the "third way" dynamic, relying as it does on two ostensibly opposed views that are revealed as equally compromised (both the museum-burning zealot and the *art pour la art* devotee threaten to destroy the truly revolutionary power of aesthetic "undecidability"). The solution to this "impasse", or antinomy, is not difficult to predict. Rather than withdrawing entirely into passivity and quiescence, the artist will remain engaged by working to subvert the consciousness of individual viewers. As with the logic of structural repetition I've already discussed, Rancière's resolution can only be produced by positing exaggerated or reductive versions of two ostensibly opposed positions. Few if any modernist artists or movements ever advocated a complete withdrawal from the social, or a total dissolution of art's specificity. "Undecidability" or "ambiguity" relative to the realm of politics, are inescapable and self-evident features of modern and contemporary art practice. The intellectual challenge doesn't lie in yet another re-iteration of this familiar claim, but in working through the various ways in which this ambiguity is produced situationally, what effects it has in a given project and at a given site of practice." (ibid: p. 60)

So, perhaps surprisingly, there appears to be agreement between Kester and Bishop that aesthetics joins with the political sphere at a point between the two, the "third way" or mediating third of the artwork: "...to which both parties can refer but which prevents any kind of 'equal' or 'undistorted' transmission... The same thing which links them must separate them" (Bishop, 2012b: p. 40). What is at dispute then are not the aesthetic principles (the premise that art's method is to make one plus one equal to three) but both the desire to achieve an effect and the ethical character of the outcome, whether it is 'good' or 'bad'.

Bishop's main thesis via Rancière is that art is not art if it is not separate from the political context and is therefore ethically neutral, as any 'real' outcomes are only implicit or deferred. Nevertheless on closer examination there are paradoxes in her position, for

instance the elision of an overall political objective with this assertion of arts independence from any (political) value: "...the task today is to produce a viable international alignment of leftist political movements and a reassertion of art's inventive forms of negation as valuable in their own right." (Bishop, 2012b: p. 45). More fundamentally some argue that the types of collaborative artforms discussed have crossed the Rubicon and, as they really exist in a particular context, time and place, have by definition an element of social interaction as they must take place within particular social, ethical and political sets of power relations. This is the point Kim Charnley makes in his analysis of *Dissensus and the politics of collaborative practice* (2011): "...collaborative art, of the type discussed by Kester and Bishop, falls into a lacuna in between 'the politics of aesthetics' and 'the aesthetics of politics'... in the liminal space between art and the social it is impossible to avoid questions that Rancière tends to confine to the field of the political: namely those of morality – or the 'division of right'" (ibid: p. 42). By treating only with ethics as a universal repressive hegemonic system (primarily the established, Christian inspired morals of the West) and not the particularities of the artwork, Charnley suggests Bishop is being disingenuous in her representation of Rancière's objections to the ethical turn of aesthetics and her defence of the autonomy of the artist. Rancière does not deny that ethics is part of aesthetic expression and discourse, he objects to its prevalence in the pacifying reinforcement of affirmative consensus: "For Rancière ethics is a type of consensus world view, one of the consequences of which is to disguise the relation between politics and aesthetics so that transformative politics becomes more difficult to conceive" (ibid: p. 44). The alternative to consensus, dissensus, is after all not un-ethical as dissensual forms of conflict in the service of the part of no part are good.

In the same way that aesthetics are compromised by ethics, Charnley points out that ethical systems which attempt to "erase the disjuncture between the autonomous aesthetic field and the social" (dialogical aesthetics) are compromised by the politics of aesthetics: "Activist art, if it is to remain close to its political aims, requires at the very least a double address: on the one hand there is the attempt to work towards an

egalitarian form of social relations, on the other the basic exclusivity of the term 'art', when viewed in sociological terms" (ibid: p. 49). Activist art practice, to remain sited in the field of art and aesthetics, must retain its particular terms of reference and will therefore exclude those who are not familiar with these. Charnley also argues that activist art must retain the privileges of art as being outside of normal social rules in order to "open a political space" in the first place.

Charnley concludes that both relational antagonism and dialogical aesthetics are actually attempts to eliminate conflict, either by guaranteeing artistic autonomy or by requiring co-authorship with the public. Bishop in particular is therefore ignoring some of the foundational elements of her criticism, that conflict is essential to a continuing resistance of consensual hegemony. Charnley finally returns to Rancière in order to suggest that what is needed is a reflexive dissensual practice which sustains conflictual dialogue and accepts the validity of addressing ethico-political questions through aesthetics within a socio-political context: "A collaborative art of dissensus requires that art is willing to use an engagement with its 'outside' to challenge itself, rather than to reproduce the hegemonic terms of its 'failed totality'" (ibid: p. 52).

It is possible to elaborate further on the nature of what Charnley's dissensual practice might be by returning to the wider discourse on subject and context in political philosophy. Laclau's formulation, noted above, of the undecided subject is part of a wider debate on the role ethics plays in egalitarian politics and the precise nature of conflict/antagonism as a political tool. It is obviously possible that antagonism as a prerequisite of the political can be equated to imposition and oppression. Laclau's occasional co-author Chantal Mouffe sets out an alternative to antagonism which is **agonism** or "...the agonistic struggle: a struggle between different interpretations of shared principles, a conflictual consensus – consensus on the principles, disagreement about their interpretation" (Miessen, 2010: p. 109). Agonism is antagonism lite; conflict without the desire to eliminate the perspective of the opponent, or indeed the opponent,

and a way to accept conflict within politics without resorting to qualitative judgements i.e. ethical judgements¹². For Mouffe agonism is a mechanism by which there can be a political discourse between the multivalent ethical positions of contingent individuals in a globalised culture, “...the subject as a de-centered, de-totalized agent, a subject constructed at the intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions between which there exists no a priori or necessary relation” (Mouffe, 1993: p. 12). From here it is a short step to the identification of the general (Christian) moral foundation of consensual politics as an obstacle to a properly agonistic politics. This is the logic of “*moral relativism*” – the principle that all cultures, faiths, ethical positions and beliefs can only be particular to individuals or groups, never universal.

Nevertheless for political philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, this is not necessarily the end of the story for ethics as far as the politics of emancipation goes. Žižek is a Marxist who has made it his mission to explore alternatives not only to capitalism and consensual politics, but also to leftist orthodoxies such as moral relativism. Interestingly Grant Kester cites this aspect of Žižek’s work to support his assertion of an ethical positivism with the following quotation by Žižek made in response to Laclau (and Judith Butler) in *Contingency, hegemony and universality* (Butler et al., 2000):

“I think one should at least *take note* of the fact that the much-praised postmodern ‘proliferation of new political subjectivities’, the demise of every ‘essentialist’ function, the assertion of full contingency, occur against the background of a certain silent *renunciation* and *acceptance*: the renunciation of the idea of global change in the fundamental relations of our society... and consequently, the acceptance of the liberal democratic capitalist framework which *remains the same*, the unquestioned background, in all the dynamic proliferation of new subjectivities.” (Kester, 2011: p. 242)

¹² Agonism is the basis for many in setting out a relational artistic practice, see for instance Nuno Sacramento’s writings on the Shadow Curator, an agonistic relationship between two curators of public space who test each other’s premises and positions in order to synthesise a response to location (Sacramento & Zeiske, 2010) or of Markus Miessen’s “cross-bench praxis”, a “propositional, rather than a purely reflective, notion of practice...[of] agonistic commitment” (Miessen, 2010: p. 252).

In principle this seems to support Kester's position. In fact there is a certain contradiction between the two positions taking place here. Although Žižek points out that there is a reason to still consider an "essentialist" ethico-political purpose (resistance to the inequities of global capitalism) which supports Kester's assertion that ameliorative action must be taken by artists in the face of social injustices, it is hard to reconcile what Žižek is also saying about needing a radical alternative to neo-liberal, consensual politics with Kester's premise of an aesthetic practice which is based on consensual respect for the subjectivities of others. Žižek in fact, at the same time as suggesting the validity of an ethico-political purpose to politics, affirms that its subjective contestation is inherent and necessary, recognising this as a paradox:

"According to Mouffe, an ethical foundation of politics is not only theoretically wrong but also politically dangerous, since it harbours totalitarian potential by rendering invisible the violent gesture of its own imposition: there is always an extreme violence involved in imposing a set of normative rules as a neutral-universal ground of judgement... Although this critique is fully justified, it continues to shirk the paradox of complementarity in so far as it contains the illusion of a politics delivered from naturalizing mystification, dispensing with any reference to some extrapolitical foundation: as if it were possible to play the pure game of antagonism; as if naturalization — that is, a reference to some non-antagonistic neutral (ethical) foundation — illusory as it is, were not an irreducible, necessary condition of a politically efficient prise de position. In this precise sense, ethics is a supplement of the Political: there is no political 'taking sides' without minimal reference to some ethical normativity which transcends the sphere of the purely Political — in other words: without the minimal 'naturalization' involved in legitimating our position via a reference to some extra-political (natural, ethical, theological ...) agency. And to dot the i's — the 'Yes!' of the Hegelian 'reconciliation' is, in the last analysis, precisely a 'Yes!' to complementarity: a 'Yes!' of fully accepting that one cannot simultaneously 'know it' and 'do it'; a 'Yes!' of bidding farewell to the Enlightenment illusion of a self-transparent activity, an activity wholly aware of its implications." (Žižek, 1996: p. 213).

As Laclau has already noted (see p. 65), even were it possible to eliminate or exclude something from a field of operation, the thing eliminated or excluded remains inscribed permanently within that field as its exception. On this basis complementarity would actually appear to reinforce the idea of the undecided/decentred subject that Laclau and Mouffe (and Bishop) put forward, the acceptance that "one cannot simultaneously 'know it' and 'do it'" and that in turn we must reject any universalist moral background in favour of a constantly conflicted multiple identity. Žižek though gives this observation a twist :

“...complementarity conceived as the impossibility of the complete description of a particular phenomenon — is, on the contrary, *the very place of the inscription of universality into the Particular*”, as we can never “...speak from a neutral universal place of pure metal language exempt from any specific context” (Žižek, 1996: p. 214). In other words this is the paradox that the universal inevitably appears within a particular subject - it is always present even in its absence. Žižek goes on to define the locus of this universality:

“Within the social-symbolic field, each particular totality, in its very self-enclosure, (mis) perceives itself as universal, that is to say, it comprises itself and its own perspective on its Outside, on all other particular totalities (epochs, societies, etc.) — why? Precisely because it is in itself incomplete, ‘open’, not wholly determined by its context. The point is thus not that we, the observing subjects embedded in our particular situation, can never wholly comprehend the set of particular circumstances which determine the Other, the object of our scrutiny; the deficiency is *‘ontological’*, not merely *‘epistemological’*¹³ — this Other is already in itself not wholly determined by circumstances. It is this very overlapping of the two deficiencies (or, in Lacanese: the intersection of the two lacks) that opens up the dimension of universality.” (ibid)

It is possible to consider this principle of complementarity as applied to the elimination of ethics and politics from the aesthetic regime as a normative value of ‘proper’ aesthetics as well as the inverse, in producing an ethical code for aesthetics, and in doing so apprehend the illusion of aesthetics delivered from extra-aesthetic agencies - natural, ethical, theological and political. Likewise it indicates the fantasy of aesthetics a “self-transparent” activity “wholly aware of its implications” (particularly when it is based on “undecidability”). This can only reinforce the idea of a dissensual practice as a space of universal undecidability of both subject and context which dismisses any inflexible schema of either aesthetic autonomy, or ethico-political egalitarianism, in favour of a common space created by the two “lacks”, or absences. This is the modification of the dissensual practice posited by Charnley where we are able to consider an ethics/politics

¹³ My bold and italic emphasis to indicate these terms appear in the glossary.

lacking aesthetics and aesthetics lacking ethics/politics, a space where the politics of aesthetics and political aesthetics can finally coincide as part of a *complemental practice*.

3.3 STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

So what might a complemental practice actually look like? My project/artwork *Stairway to Heaven* (2006) (Appendix 2) took place immediately prior to the beginning of this research and was its origin in terms of the questions it asked of the role of a practice both within and outside of the forms of the rural political sphere and the politics of the rural public realm. The project was independently produced with no official sanction or funding, although documentation on the project was shown at the Gallery of Dartington College of Art. The basic concept of the work was to apply the principles of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1995 to a natural feature, in this case Haytor Rocks in Dartmoor National Park. Its inspiration was in thinking about the Romantic artist as an individual walking in the landscape or exerting themselves to climb mountains and other *activity*. Then I was flicking through a copy of the *Telegraph* newspaper's magazine and was struck by the connection between the subject of its articles on Royal Horticultural Society gardens, stately houses, good country pubs etc. and the advertisements in the back aimed at the magazine readership demographic which addressed their *inactivity* or disability - hearing aids, accessible baths, stairlifts, etc. This project also took place at a time of increased general rights of access to the countryside which had come into being through the Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) Act of 2000. The DDA was designed to force "service providers" to adapt their service so that they are accessible to all. In practice this applies only to man-made environments, primarily buildings under the control of the service provider. Nevertheless, Haytor Rocks are under the control of the commoners of Dartmoor and the Dartmoor National Park, and are a focus of the National Park as an accessible attraction for tourists. A well connected road runs within 30 metres of this prominent summit from which can be seen a wide and attractive vista of South Devon and Eastern Dartmoor. It has therefore been a tourist attraction for many years as a prominent feature of the landscape - Torquay and Torbay being named for it. By the 19th century

steps had been cut into the north eastern face of the rocks to allow easier access to the summit, described in 1851 by a local, a Dr Croker as, “the unsightly stair step to enable the enervated and pinguitudinous ¹⁴ scoins [sic] of humanity of this wonderful nineteenth century to gain its summit” (Crossing, 1909: p. 300). The National Park now manage Haytor as a honeypot destination, part of a zonal landscape strategy which aims to direct the majority of visitors to sites like this in order to preserve the tranquillity of other areas, avoid congestion, littering, environmental impacts and so on.

The project’s manifestation took the form of a planning application to Dartmoor National Park to add a solar powered stair-lift (Figure 15) alongside the steps on the north-eastern face, accessed by a new ramped path from the car park below. The plans, drawn up by professional architects Childs Sulzmann (Figure 16), were accompanied by supporting information including a market research survey on access conducted at Haytor. At the same time leaflets on improving access to Dartmoor National Park were distributed to tourist destinations in the area, as well as conservation organisations like the Dartmoor Preservation Society. An exhibition of images and drawings of the plans was shown at the Gallery at Dartington College of Art. The project itself was presented as a feasibility study with Introduction, Background, Market Research, Site Issues, Accessibility Assessment, Solution, Plans, Survey, local history, lyrics to Stairway to Heaven by Led Zeppelin and an analysis of leisure uses of Dartmoor in visual and textual forms (see Appendix 2).

¹⁴ Archaic - meaning or penguin shaped.



Figure 15. Stairway to Heaven: visualisation (southern view) (2006), Alex Murdin

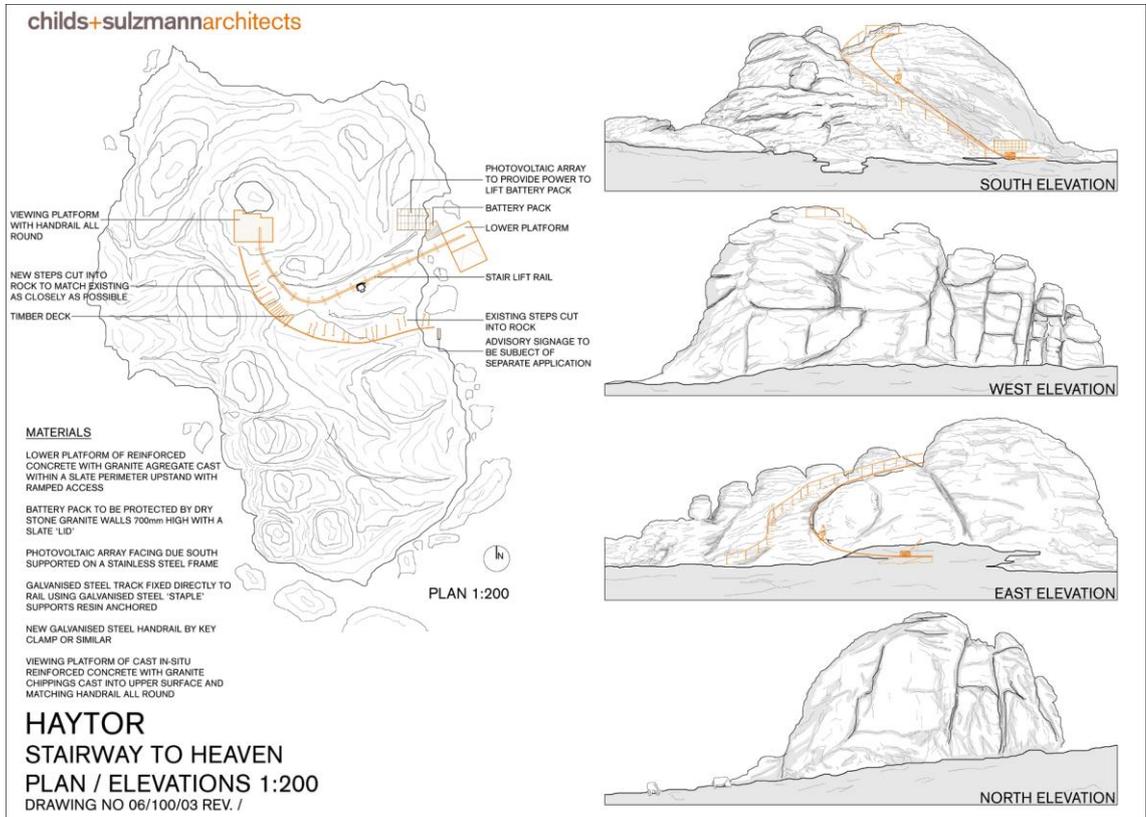


Figure 16. Stairway to Heaven: plan and elevations (2006), Alex Murdin and Childs Sulzmann Architects.

As it is currently possible to make a planning application for land the applicant doesn't own the application was accepted by the National Park (there is no obligation to consider a planning application so the conclusion must be that the planning department were interested a debate on access to this site) and in doing so ensured that the proposals were placed in the public domain, advertised and consulted upon. Consultation required both consultation with the public and requesting a response from statutory consultees, the Environment Agency, Natural England and so on. At the same time press releases were issued which subsequently appeared in national and local news media e.g. Radio 4, The Telegraph, Metro, The Mirror, The Western Morning News, BBC local television, radio and website news and even the BBC World Service.

In this way there was an enormous response to *Stairway to Heaven*, both for and against. Objections to the project from the public show clearly a primacy of aesthetico-conservationist politics as the stairlift would "deface a beautiful part of our Dartmoor" (Murdin, 2006a). This was very much part of an ingrained Romantic sense of the landscape's value for being alone and the individual connection to a "wild" landscape which was felt to take precedence over access for a minority:

"I have an immensely [sic] strong spiritual linc [sic] to Haytor, and feel that by encouraging this would compromise the conservation of the area, and take away the raw aura of the place." (ibid)

"I am sure most disabled people would be perfectly happy to forgo access to the summit of the Tor in return for the promise of keeping its rugged beauty intact." (Brown, 2006).

This was true even within communities identifying themselves as 'disabled' who felt the project was overly assertive in postulating a right for access for all at the expense of the look of the natural environment. The following is from the chat room hosted by "Ouch", the BBC's disability messageboard:

"...how does it look to the normals when they see people with disabilities pressing for such ... unwise accommodation [sic]? Doesn't it simply reinforce the militant cripp "screw you jack" stereotype?"

“Access I'd agree with, but I think the countryside has rights of its own. And in the end, is vandalism the way to get our message across? Moorland is perhaps my favourite landscape (I'm a Weardale lad), and the thing that attracts me to it is the sheer desolation of the environment and the low level of manmade intrusion. This isn't a low level, low intrusion way to bring us access, its a gawdy [sic] vehicle to publicity for someone who is using us” (BBC, 2006b).

Support for the project came from those who recognised the existing cultural influence on the landscape, particularly as framed by its designation as a common, and who were willing to consider a new aesthetic addition to this history:

“For millennia Dartmoor has been a landscape in which 'all' could exploit, today it is a landscape that all should enjoy.” (Murdin, 2006b)

“...man has already managed the landscape, and why shouldn't our generation add something of its own? I think some of the nay-saying is partly because the idea appears rather novel. It could be well designed, it could be a thing of beauty, it could be functional, it could add to other visitors' appreciation - if all relevant factors are looked at and included” (BBC, 2006b).

Ultimately *Stairway to Heaven* was a meditation on the conflicts between the primary and secondary objectives of the National Parks. These are set out in the Environment Act of 1995 in order of priority, as:

- The conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks.
- The promotion of opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks by the public.
- A “socio-economic duty” to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the communities within the National Parks.

It was because of the supremacy of the first objective that the planning application was rejected as, “The planning authority said such a lift would cause "significant landscape harm" and have a "detrimental impact" on the natural beauty of the area” (BBC, 2006c).

Thus the project functioned in an overtly politically fashion through the deliberate collision of the first function, the political primacy of an aesthetic of natural beauty with its sub functions , increasing public access to the Park with economic benefits for tourism and

social/wellbeing outcomes for a nominal group, the disabled. It's worth noting here that throughout the project there was deliberately never any claim to be speaking on behalf of "the disabled community" were such a thing to exist per se, only to apply an existing policy and legal structure to a different type of location.

3.4 TOWARDS A COMPLEMENTAL PRACTICE

Stairway to Heaven functions to make visible a set of exclusions, in this case from an aesthetic ordering of the landscape. In this sense it is possible to say that this was an aesthetic instrumentalisation of the mainstream political orthodoxies of disability access to oppose an aesthetico-political ordering, proposing a right of access in order for all to gaze upon a landscape. Considering *Stairway to Heaven* in the terminology of participatory/socially engaged art practices this project would not seem to sit comfortably in either the dialogical or relationally antagonistic frameworks discussed. It cannot be called dialogical as it set out to create a conflictual situation without any sense of using a consensual methodology or form, although it did act as a stimulus to dialogue and debate. Neither could it have been truly relationally antagonistic as it contained a readable political signification, in Rancièrian terms, which in theory eliminates the radical uncanny. It is arguable though that the project was distinctly uncanny, if only for the introduction of an accessibility device associated with the interior of private houses to the natural environmental on a monumental scale. It can also be said to have acted in an antagonistic manner to challenge preconceptions within all sections of its audience - the general public, state bodies and even those involved in disability politics.

Considering *Stairway to Heaven* as a form of dissensual project, it did then maintain a core "undecidability" in terms of form and readability, on the border between a state of actuality as the ostensible desire to realise a practical physical solution and the spiritual Romantic fantasy that nature can be modified so that we can "buy a stairway to heaven". Specific elements of the project underline this undecidability, simply submitting the

application as an artist led many people to be unsure about its status (“artwork” or “real?”), some deciding it was a “publicity stunt”, even internet “troll” or joke. The form of the project also meant it was inherently undecidable. A feasibility study is an act of analysing indeterminacy. A planning application must be debated and is compulsorily subject to commentary, not a closed authorial statement.

From the point of view of aesthetics operating at a strategic level, i.e. within power systems, making a planning application ensured that the statutory bodies responsible for policy were required to engage with the art work instead of being able to simply ignore any suggestion of difference from the status quo. Whilst the precise effect of the project on these bodies was not measured in any way, in a personal conversation with one officer at the Dartmoor National Park Authority it was said that *Stairway to Heaven* is still being discussed by staff five years after the event. Therefore, opposing the theories set out above by Bishop and Rancière that suggest the radical can only operate from outside of the system, the project’s success was that elements of undecidability were able to be inserted within the political structure. Even if it cannot definitively be said that this has had a particular effect inside of a political institution, at least it is possible to say that the radical uncanny can occupy one of its structures of consensual governance, i.e. the planning process, in a dissensual fashion. Equally by maintaining a core of ethico-political indeterminacy (undecidability) by questioning all of the political positions within its paradigm, from those in power (a local authority) to those signified (those ‘excluded’ from a site), *Stairway to Heaven* aligns with Žižek’s interstitial point of universality where both subject and context are accepted as variable. This I describe as a complementary practice.

However in the wider context of how art in public manifests itself this only goes so far towards a complementary practice - what about a significant proportion of projects in which there is an expectation of permanency? It is easy to assert undecidability and indeterminacy in a temporary project within the public sphere as all is in a state of flux.

The real challenge will be in achieving a complementary practice within a material environment, between the monument and the embrace.

4 A POLITICS OF LEISURE

"The dominant ethos today is "Fukuyamaian": liberal-democratic capitalism is accepted as the finally found formula of the best possible society, all that one can do is render it more just, tolerant and so forth. The only true question today is: do we endorse this naturalization of capitalism, or does contemporary global capitalism contain antagonisms which are sufficiently strong to prevent its indefinite reproduction?" (Žižek, 2008: p. 421)

There is little doubt that in an increasingly affluent (Western) society dedicated to economic growth that there is increasing time for leisure and that leisure in turn has affected the nature of public space. In the city regeneration is focussed on retail spaces, entertainment complexes and no city seems to be complete without a cultural offer like a prestigious art gallery or theatre to attract locals and international tourists alike. Art in public is part of this cultural offer with projects like the *Angel of the North* by Anthony Gormley or *Drop* by Steve Messam cited in chapter 2 making places more attractive to visitors in their time off from work. As the digital revolution continues the arts are equally able to be accessed and consumed in the public sphere created by the internet, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, without even having to go to a theatre or gallery. Leisure then is an all-pervasive background of potentialities to be filled with anything or nothing, whatever the individual enjoys doing. A surplus of leisure is the result of what some commentators such as Francis Fukuyama or Boris Groys describe as the end of history, that is the end of Hegel's history of struggle and revolution where neo-liberal democracy is a universal, stable, prosperous and final state of being for humankind. In this scenario leisure can be said to be contentless, absent of meaning except for the fulfilment of desire and enjoyment, a space for sensory hedonism that simply consumes what is made available by the market, holidays, status goods, experiences like sex, etc. Alternatively it could be a free space for sensory play outside of the serious world of work and survival that can re-enter and rethink that world. In the context of the research question which aims to respond to threats to the global commons, not least from market driven hedonism, this is the opportunity explored in this chapter.

4.1 LEISURE WITHOUT CONTENT: A WEAK END TO HISTORY

This research project seeks to explore contemporary political ideas and practices that reside within a context described as the space of rural leisure and how art in public is produced in these spaces. In order to understand this context and its relevance to aesthetics and politics we must consider how leisure is, or is not, aesthetic and political. Starting with politics the idea of leisure as the object of political thought seems strange to many at first consideration, after all the traditional arenas of political contestation are more “vital”: economics, foreign policy, health, education, defence etc. Politics is “serious”, it is a subject’s relationship with the state and vice versa which negotiates the survival of both in the face what is now global economic, social and environmental circumstance. Leisure on the other hand is for fun and enjoyment, going to the pub on a Friday night, reading a book, kicking a football or watching TV. By definition leisure is a temporal state in which there are no proscribed functions, activities or other parameters, it is free or uncommitted time in which one may choose do nothing or anything as one desires (Stockdale, 1985). Because it is free and at the disposal of the individual it notionally takes place outside of the responsibilities of the state and therefore cannot be political in its own right?

The starting point in answering this question must be leisure’s dialectical relationship to work, utility and compulsion - leisure being the time that is differentiated from work where we do what must be done to survive. In the context of capitalist societies like the UK, where an ethos of productivity and competition is prevalent, leisure is often perceived to be the remainder or surplus after the ‘reality’ of work which is such a key part of self-identity, both psychologically and spiritually¹⁵. How many times, immediately after being introduced to a stranger at a party, have we asked, or been asked “So what do you do (for work)?”. This dialectic relationship of work and leisure operates then within a number of

¹⁵ Consider the synthesis of the Protestant work ethic and capitalist production where work is equated with values such as probity and rectitude, leading ultimately to spiritual salvation - ‘the devil makes work for idle hands to do’. For the history of this relationship see *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (Weber, 1930).

parameters, economic (earning and spending), temporal (working hours and holiday), social (public and private life), spatial (workplace and home), psychological (super-ego/responsibility and id/enjoyment) and so on.

These relationships are not of course fixed but subjective and dynamic. As an economic example one of the most popular leisure activities that appears in geographical and sociological surveys is DIY (Hall and Page, 1999: p. 36-7), i.e. maintaining or improving a piece of property. For someone in traditional forms of employment this takes place economically and temporally outside of paid work time but is essentially utilitarian and undertaken to improve comfort and maintain the value of the asset. It is therefore, self-imposed, paid (i.e. for profit) work time within free-time. A spatial example would be that places of work and leisure have become increasingly fluid with more people (especially in rural locations) working from home via digital technologies. At the same time for those who must travel to work these technologies enable leisure activities, i.e. media consumption, during transit and in work breaks. If anything the boundaries of work and leisure are becoming more permeable. We need only consider the phrase “work/life balance”, which indicates increasing choice over where, when and how to work and where life, the totality of the subject’s existence, is equated with that which is not work (i.e. leisure). Underlying this is also the structuring by capitalism which makes leisure both the reward for work, a temporal profit, and in turn productivises it as the time to spend the economic profit. This leads us to an interesting ordering where leisure as the antithesis of work, is both alternately and at the same time the whole compass of being and a surplus or remainder from compulsory activity relating to matters of survival.

So how has this situation arisen and how does it bear on a politics of leisure? In his essay *Three ends of history* (2012) Boris Groys states: “During the last few decades we have been time and again confronted with a discourse on the end of history, the end of subjectivity, the end of art, the death of Man – and especially the death of the author; on the impossibility of creativity and the new in today’s culture” (Groys, 2012: p. 145). To

justify this statement Groys charts the rise of the post-historical or post-modern trope (“the end of history”) through a lineage from Georg Hegel to Vladimir Solovoyov, to Alexandre Kojève. The starting point for all of these philosophers is a core Hegelian notion - the way that historicity and socio-political relations have been generated by the desire for recognition by others, formulated as the relationship between the “master and servant”. In the *Phenomenology of spirit*, written in 1807, Hegel describes the meeting between two individual consciousnesses both driven by desire to know and possess the environment/resource around them. On meeting they encounter each other as an obstruction to the fulfilment of their desire and therefore come into conflict. Barring the death of one, the only result is for one entity to submit, to become the slave or servant of the other. However in establishing this relationship the servant, as he/she becomes aware of the value that he possesses in production and labour, gradually gains independence from the master as the possessor of the means of production (labour and creativity) extracted from natural resource: “Through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it [nature]” (Hegel et al., 1977: p. 117). However in this process the master, by becoming dependent on the servant, ultimately loses his own independence: “The slave works – but his work transforms the world in which the master lives, and also transforms the master’s own desires. The master becomes a prisoner in the world built for him by the slave. Work becomes the medium of the further development of the Spirit, the motor of universal history” (Groys, 2012: p. 150).

This reflection on history as conflict with the Other has become a core theme in the politics and ideologies of the left and can hardly be mentioned without reference to Karl Marx’s vision of communism, a struggle for recognition between the bourgeoisie (masters of capital), and the worker (servants possessing labour/creativity) whose result was to be an egalitarian society, the ultimate destiny of mankind. The *Phenomenology of spirit* was written by Hegel in part as a reflection on the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity which were embodied by the act of the French Revolution in 1789, also an inspiration for Marx.

In this context Groys describes how the outcomes of the French and Russian revolutions puzzled Alexandre Kojève writing in the 1930's. It appeared to him that the result of these life and death conflicts, in Hegelian and Marxist terms the absolute victory of the servant ontologically and politically, was nothing. The former revolutionary fighter simply goes back to work as normal albeit under a different form of governance: "Kojève draws from this fact that the winner is already satisfied – he has no desires anymore that would remain unsatisfied and lead him to further battles. For Kojève, the emergence of this figure of the 'armed worker' (*chelovekz ruzhyem*) marks the end of history. The citizen of the modern post-revolutionary state is a master and servant at the same time" (ibid: p. 150-151).

According to Groys, Kojève (via the writings of Vladimir Solovoyov) goes on to develop an iteration of Hegel's lesson on the desire for recognition as anthropogenic desire, which is the desire to be desired, or sexualised love. The post-revolutionary state has satisfied desire as it is universal and homogeneous, "it is the state of love that satisfies in a finalizing way our need for recognition" (ibid: p. 158). Kojève believes that struggle has ended, universal recognition has been achieved, and that therefore there is nothing left as purpose and function for the post-revolutionary subject but to participate in leisure, recreation and reproduction. In this utopic state of being, reproduction and recreation have multiple and combinatory aspects which are both biological and cultural. As desire/love has been satisfied sex is animalistic, either purely part of the perpetuation of genes or for recreation. In cultural terms Groys points out that similarly contentless and reproductive forms of art like montages of existing images were introduced by the Surrealists, Situationists and others which culminated in the "post-modern condition" of appropriation and recycling of anything and everything as art. Thus in Groys' reading of Kojève's work "...the end of history is also the end of freedom: freedom, as well as knowledge, spirit and creativity themselves become artefacts." (ibid: p. 160). This is not a problem for Groys, rather it demonstrates his basic "antiphilosophical" thesis that originality is now the exception rather than rule for philosophy, culture and politics, i.e.

there are no universal truths. After this end of history we must accept that: “the animal condition is not something to be overcome, to be transcended in the form of the Hegelian Geisterreich or the sophological ‘God-Man’ (*obozhennoe chelovechestvo*), but that this is the ontological condition of the human being as a bearer but not an owner of Absolute Knowledge.” (ibid: p. 197).

Hegel’s ideas do not remain only the property of the political left. The idea of the end of history is most famously taken up by American thinker Francis Fukuyama in his book *The end of history and the last man* (1992). Fukuyama uses Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel to suggest that history has reached an apotheosis in, “...the idea of a universal and directional history leading up to liberal democracy” (ibid: p. 338). In Fukuyama’s model liberal democracy, through non-violent, economic and political forms of contestation for recognition, has eliminated the need for radical social change and therefore is the ultimate political destiny of the world’s states.

Assuming that economic prosperity will be the norm Fukuyama suggests that a transference of the struggle for recognition has taken/will take place into a post-historical period of “contentless” leisure for everyone as forms of leisure such as sport replace the content of war and survival:

“Apart from the economic realm and political life, megalothymia¹⁶ finds outlets increasingly in purely formal activities like sports, mountain climbing, auto racing, and the like. An athletic competition has no “point” or object other than to make certain people winners and others losers—in other words, to gratify the desire to be recognized as superior.” (ibid: p. 318-9)

In the same vein Fukuyama contradicts Groys reading regarding the basic Kojèveian idea of a return to animalism for humankind, pointing out that Kojève himself revised his views on his original lectures as result of a trip to Japan in 1958, recanting his theory of

¹⁶ Fukuyama uses Nietzsche’s conceptions of *megalothymia* – the desire to be recognised as superior to others and *isothymia* – the desire to be recognised, as key motors in the success or failure of liberal democracy. An excess of megalothymia leads to war and totalitarianism, an excess of isothymia to uncompetitiveness and thus the failure of capitalism and culture to progress.

anthropogenic desire: “In another of his ironic footnotes to his lectures on Hegel, Kojève notes that he was forced to revise his earlier view that man would cease to be human and return to a state of animality as a result of a trip to Japan and a love affair there in 1958” (ibid: p. 319). The evidence given is the history of Japan, which maintained a period of peace for several hundred years prior to its spectacular end in the Second World War. In this precursor to the end of history the Japanese: “rather than pursuing love or play instinctively like young animals—in other words, instead of turning into a society of last men—the Japanese demonstrated that it is possible to continue to be human through the invention of a series of perfectly contentless formal arts... the end of history will mean the end, among other things, of all art that could be considered socially useful” (ibid: p. 320)

In both interpretations of Hegel we are told that, at the end of history, we have reached a period where political struggle through work (in European, Russian and American societies at any rate) has ceased in any radical way. With the satiation of the individual’s desire to be recognised and the naturalisation of capitalism and liberal democracy, the choices that remain are what to buy and what philosophy or politics to buy into. Leisure then as the time of choice has become the basic background of the post-historical society, characterised by number of negative or absent qualities:

- Animalistic sexuality – a populating hedonism.
- “Readymade” philosophies - an absence of universal truth in the presence of particular truths to be chosen.
- Megalothymic activity as deferred conflict– e.g. (extreme) sports.
- Contentless culture – formal and derivative arts.

From this background we can also postulate that:

1. Leisure is an output of work (and the historical struggle for recognition): it therefore retains a political inscription; if we palpate leisure we find the immanence of politics.
2. Leisure is one of the objectives of work: it therefore forms the basis of serious politics, for example working conditions and population related issues.
3. Leisure also produces work: the productivisation and servicing of leisure gives it economic and social significance which has political consequences.

To demonstrate this it is possible to plug leisure into the Hegelian model of politics.

Leisure is the temporal object of work for the master, who has won the struggle over the servant (leisure is profit in terms of time and material). For the servant time is purely work. Gradually though the servant acquires mastery through the creativity of work and makes the master dependent, a prisoner now within the time of his own desire. On emancipation from the master leisure becomes also the property of the servant/master. He now occupies the spaces of both work and leisure. The question for the post-historical period must therefore be does leisure then still retain the character of dependence by the master on the servant? In the capitalist paradigm arguably yes – except that the dependence is that of master/servants on other master/servants in dynamic and incessantly changing alternation. As one serves another is master at any given point, depending on who is at work or leisure. Dependence is still therefore present but created by the new meta-master, abstract capital. To continue the prison metaphor, leisure is an open jail where we can leave for work in the morning as long as we volunteer to return at night.

Leisure then has become a contentless, invisible background for a system of dependence based on the capitalism that has become an invisible background to politics that is accepted as the only world view. It can therefore only become a radical political space if it makes visible this paradigm, a point that Slavoj Žižek makes his response to the idea of the end of history:

"One should of course, reject the naive notion of the End of History in the sense of achieved reconciliation, all the battle in principle already won; however, with today's global capitalist liberal-democratic order, with this regime of "global reflexivity," we did reach a qualitative break with all history hitherto, history did in a way reach its end, we do in fact live in a post-historical society. Globalized historicism and contingency are definitive indexes of this "end of history". So, one can say that we should indeed assert that, today, although history is not at an end, the very notion "historicity" functions in a different way than before. What this means is that, paradoxically, the "renaturalization" of capitalism and the experience of our society as a reflexive risk society in which phenomena are experienced as contingent, as the result of historically contingent construction are two sides of the same coin." (Žižek, 2008: p. 405)

The "renaturalization" of capitalism (its all-pervasive dominance following some of the practical failures of communism) is here conjoined with the idea of the reflexive *risk*

society, the way in which humanity, its science and technology, generates and responds to transnational risks, particularly environmental ones such as pollution, nuclear meltdowns, global warming, etc., which feel as if they are out of the control of the individual. Žižek refers us to Ulrich Beck's writings which characterise a new "risk society" (Beck, 1992). It is this feeling of helplessness and contingency in the face of both seemingly unstoppable conditions that requires us to act politically, and is the new nexus of contestation:

"The act proper is precisely an intervention which does not merely operate *within* a given background but disturbs its coordinates and thus renders it visible as a background. So, in contemporary politics, a *sine qua non* of an act is that it disturbs the background status of the economy by rendering palpable its political dimensions (which is why Marx wrote on the *political economy*). Recall Wendy Brown's trenchant observation that "if Marxism had any analytical value for political theory, was it not in the insistence that the problem of freedom was contained in the social relations implicitly declared as 'unpolitical' – that is naturalized in liberal discourse?" (ibid: p. 404)

A politics of 'unpolitical' leisure can therefore be said to be part of the 'politics of freedom' and the act of rendering visible the dependencies it creates is a political act - its co-dependency with, and naturalisation of, capitalism within our social and political systems in structuring work and life. Žižek and Brown here say that if we are unsatisfied with contentless lives (and Fukuyama's "formal arts"), it is necessary to act to address our sense of contingency in the face of new globalised environmental and social threats and injustices by first uncovering them, making them visible. This coincides with Rancière who tells us that leisure, as the time for play, creates a space where aesthetics can take precedence over rationality and in doing so rearrange the current political ordering (the distribution of the sensible). Therefore leisure becomes a proper place (with work) for those with no place in the system to resist dominion:

"In the Kantian analysis, free play and free appearance suspend the power of form over matter, of intelligence over sensibility. Schiller, in the context of the French revolution translates these Kantian philosophical propositions into anthropological and political propositions. The power of 'form' over 'matter' is the power of the class of intelligence over the class of sensation, of men of culture over men of nature.... Play's freedom is contrasted to the servitude of work. Symmetrically, free appearance is contrasted to the constraint that relates appearance to a reality. These categories - appearance, play, work - are the proper categories of the distribution of the sensible." (Rancière, 2009: p. 31)

4.2 LEISURE, TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT: PRIDE OF PLACE

A project that investigates more specifically the role of leisure, *Sites of Reception* (2009) (Appendix 3) was commissioned for *Pride of Place*, the name of a programme of commissions initiated by the Dorset Design and Heritage Forum in 2008. The Design and Heritage Forum was set up by the Dorset Strategic Partnership Culture Theme Group, in turn part of the Dorset Strategic Partnership (the local authorities of Dorset and other non-governmental organisations responsible for the implementation of the overarching Dorset Community Strategy). Its membership fluctuates but has consisted of local authorities, non-governmental organisations, developers and individual (professional) members. The aim of the Dorset Design and Heritage Forum (DDHF) is stated in the *Dorset pride of place award 2008: Artist brief, invitation for expressions of interest* as: "...to bring together a range of organisations and interests with the aim of championing high quality design and conservation of the built environment and the role of artists in this context" (Dorset Design and Heritage Forum, 2008: p. 1).

Under the guidance of Public Art South West and the impetus provided by the Dorset County Council Culture Department, the *Pride of Place* Award was funded by the County and Arts Council England. It was designed to facilitate communities in the area in working with artists to promote "high quality design" and "local distinctiveness". The latter term is claimed by the organisation Common Ground in the 1980's as their invention and characterised by terms such as "authenticity", "the vernacular", "history", "identity" and "common place". "Place" in particular is now a term frequently used in local plans and urban design to describe reinforcing a specific identity in a locality (Common Ground, n.d.), hence "place-making" which acts to develop local distinctiveness.

The process for the *Pride of Place* award described in the brief was to invite applications from communities across Dorset to apply for the money, to then commission the artist who would work "...with a community to develop or realise their aspiration and vision for their local area" (Dorset Design and Heritage Forum, 2008: p. 2). Fourteen communities

and groups applied and the winning group was the organisation Turn Lyme Green in Lyme Regis. As the name suggests this is a group set up to tackle environmental issues in the locality. Made up of volunteers they have been involved in a number of initiatives including promoting the use of re-usable shopping bags, as opposed to disposable plastic ones. Their stated aim for the Pride of Place project was:

“...to advise visitors (and remind residents) about the need and reasons for environmentally responsible behaviour to preserve our beautiful town, and invite everyone to participate to that end. The aim is not only to keep our town environmentally friendly, but for visitors to carry that message back to their own communities...We now want to develop new environmental messages to engage people in action, utilising the arts...Turn Lyme Green believes in the transformational power of the arts, and their ability to contribute to social and economic regeneration and to community development” (ibid: p.3).

The commission is described in the brief as an “unusual opportunity for an artist”. Whilst what is “unusual” is not made explicit, in comparison to other public art (art in public) project briefs, it required a period of paid research and was open ended in what the manifestation might be, i.e. it did not proscribe a specific site or media and was “primarily about concepts” (ibid: p. 4). Aspirations for the project by the group included organisational development (challenging current practice and “broadening our horizons and vision”), communicating to the public “what is ‘quality art’”, working with other sectors of the community in the town, connecting to local arts groups and involving young people in the arts.

Following an open competition I was appointed as ‘artist in residence’ in November 2008. In my application I stated that I was interested in the role of human migrations and the social make-up of the town, the populations of Lyme Regis being “...in a constant state of both movement and stasis as the irresistible forces of tourism washes up against the immovable object of residential interest.” An initial meeting took place in January 2009 with members of Turn Lyme Green at which the objectives for the project were further refined. Some further context was provided at this meeting, for example that Lyme Regis is the third poorest ward in Dorset due to its tourism dependence and seasonality of

labour and that it has significant child deprivation indices and a larger proportion of residents aged over 60 than the rest of the county (Lyme Forward, 2007). The characteristics of the artwork were also further refined. They included being “accessible”, “empowering”, “fun”, “self-funding” and able to cross social divides for residents, visitors, local estates and young people. Radically the word “discomforting” was also used. The broad environmental concerns of the group were energy efficiency, recycling of waste, global warming and more efficient public transport. From this a number of volunteers came up with suggestions for artworks, a village well that goes to the other side of the earth (using video), a kinetic (wind) sculpture, a talking archive of local voices or a pavement with the imprint of local children’s hands. Prior to this meeting and subsequently I spent a period of several days in Lyme Regis walking through the town and its environs, reading about the local history and researching current policy and demographic information.

4.3 SITES OF RECEPTION: PRIDE OF PLACE 1.0

Sites of Reception (2009) (Appendix 3) was the first project proposal for the *Pride of Place*, made in March 2009. It was a direct response to the desire of Turn Lyme Green as a group to expand the sphere of their environmentalist political thought to visitors as well as residents. The proposal was created in response to two perceived issues. Firstly, Lyme Regis’ economic, social and cultural focus is on the production of leisure, or more precisely tourism. The town’s position by the sea with a harbour, its geology/fossil deposits and relatively warm climate has made it attractive to tourists since the 18th century, rapidly replacing the traditional activities of making salt, fishing and agriculture as economic drivers. In spite of this, research showed that there was very little contemporary information (available from Turn Lyme Green or other local agencies) on visitor’s perceptions, needs and opinions of Lyme generally that might shape any intervention. Secondly, as an organisation Turn Lyme Green operates as a loose affiliation of activists working primarily within the public sphere, mainly via face to face persuasion, media campaigns and a long term website. It had no physical visibility or presence in the public

realm of Lyme Regis with the exception of stickers, leaflets and a poster board on the main street. In wishing to "...advise visitors (and remind residents) about the need and reasons for environmentally responsible behaviour" one of the biggest challenges that Turn Lyme Green faces, along with the environmental movement as a whole, is overcoming people's sense of ambivalent guilt about their environmental impacts, which can in turn create feelings of resentment and apathy. Many surveys on environmental issues confirm this, for example a Natural England survey on attitudes to underwater landscapes found that for 60% of the UK population, "...the instinctive top-of-mind response to thinking about the undersea landscape is characterised by a mixture of fear, disgust and shame: fear because it is a dangerous place, disgust because it is thought to be cold, dark and slimy (unlike some foreign seas), and shame because it is thought to have been allowed to get into this state (due to over fishing and pollution)" (Rose et al., 2008: p. iii). In psychological terms these attitudes rely on cognitive, affective, and behavioural components, i.e. intellect/beliefs, feelings /emotions and everyday practices respectively. However whilst cognitively one may know that one's behaviour must change sometimes this is not put into practice ("I should use public transport to save the environment but my car gives me better social status amongst my friends and colleagues"). This is described as cognitive dissonance (Festinger et al., 1956), the knowledge of inconsistency between belief and practice and the underlying general desire for belief and practice to be consistent.

The overlap of tourism and environmental politics produces this cognitive dissonance for many, as hedonistic (animalistic leisure and touristic motivations and practices) conflict with the growth of a "politicisation of consumption" (Urry, 1990: p. 14), as demonstrated by the growth of "green", "eco", "responsible", "ethical" and "sustainable" tourism.

However although people travel and visit places for many different reasons a primary motivation centres around the desire to be in a place other than the typical cycle of home and work and therefore away from normative social responsibilities like being environmentally conscious (Hall & Page, 1999: p. 27-8). Equally environmental issues are only one factor amongst many in choosing a holiday, other factors such as cost and quality

can take priority. Whilst some tourism surveys say that up to 97% of samples agree it is important not to damage the environment (Dinan, 2003), others indicate that only 54% actually consider environmental issues when booking a holiday in the first place (Hawkins, 2007). It is easy to see that being reminded of (environmental) responsibility encounters resistance in a leisure context if it is not already an established part of behaviour.

Achieving consistent behaviour on environmental issues is also not helped by the ramifications and scale of environmental challenges, our sense of contingency (see p. 90). Within the membership of Turn Lyme Green the limitations of simple messages such as their campaign to eradicate the use of plastic carrier bags are acknowledged. One member of Turn Lyme Green pointed out that after the campaign they had been told that because plastic bags were not being provided free in shops some people had lost their supply of bags to use as bin liners and now had to purchase much bigger, virgin plastic bin bags which took up more landfill.

How then would one normally “engage people in action” in the face of these obstacles, how had Turn Lyme Green operated in the past? The most common approach is to attempt to resolve cognitive dissonance through persuasion, to shift someone to one’s own point of view. Persuasion can be described as a discursive operation which is successful when the source has credibility, there is common ground and the content is well structured, coherent and balanced – the medium is also crucial:

“In analyzing the effectiveness of the persuasive message itself, the method by which the message is presented is at least as important as its content. Factors influencing the persuasiveness of a message include whether it presents one or both sides of an argument; whether it states an implicit or explicit conclusion; whether or not it provokes fear; and whether it presents its strongest arguments first or last... The medium of persuasion also influences attitude change (“the medium is the message”). Face-to-face communication is usually more effective than mass communication, for example, although the effectiveness of any one component of communication always involves the interaction of all of them. The effects of persuasion may take different forms. Sometimes they are evident right away; at other times they may be delayed (the so-called “sleeper effect”).” (Strickland, 2001 (Strickland, 2001: p. 57)

The proposal for *Sites of Reception* was for a work in two parts, a temporary installation and an engagement between Turn Lyme Green's membership and visitors/residents as an act of research leading to a permanent work. The form suggested was a series of reception desks, replicated from existing hotel lobbies in Lyme, to be sited at three key entry points into the town for visitors, i.e. two car parks on the periphery and on the main seafront promenade (Figure 17). The desks would be made structurally from a composite material made from recycled plastic bags (reflecting the previous success of Turn Lyme Green), and/or made from the results of beach cleans (in 2008 an old rubbish tip on the cliffs of Lyme had started to erode from beneath dispersing the towns historic waste onto the beach below in an act which mirrors the process of uncovering fossils from the cliff). The plastic structures would then be painted to replicate existing desks in Lyme's hotels.



Figure 17. Sites of Reception: car park 1 (2009), Alex Murdin

The process suggested was for members of Turn Lyme Green to greet people at these major transport nodes, at the desks and ask them to “sign in to the town”, using a register where the name, car registration and so on would be filled in the same way one would sign a register on entering most corporate buildings with a form of security. They would then be given a tear off slip with the word “Visitor” or “Resident” to be inserted into a clear plastic badge, in turn clipped to clothing (Figure 18). As part of this process there would be the opportunity to introduce Turn Lyme Green and undertake whatever actions it wished. Importantly the desk would be neutral in terms of branding and so on, making it anonymous and therefore able to be utilised by anybody, at any time, for any purpose.



Figure 18. Sites of Reception: badges (2009), Alex Murdin

On the surface then we have a form which appears to fit with a traditional economic and social ordering. A reception desk is a significant site in the productivisation of tourism where a contract is entered into (signing the register) to access the service and payment/return of keys occurs on leaving. Its design is also a site of embodied and visually directional power relations - the receptionist typically sits behind the desk, the object of the subject (visitor/customer) who approaches from the front and usually stands, occupying a higher dominant position. In both the positional and directional sense it reinforces the reversal of the subject's temporal status away from work, where archetypes

suggest that the person in control (the boss) is likely to be the one behind a desk, sitting down to demonstrate their relaxation and authority.

However in our post-historical world a person's position in relation to work and leisure, power and production is not fixed and as servant/master alternates between the economic and temporal states of leisure and work. Whilst it is possible to be subordinate in a work context there is an expectation to be in control in leisure time (a receptionist is a guest when on holiday). Even where one is not subordinate in a traditional hierarchical sense, "service" is an increasingly constitutive element of the Western economies and the service industries (any work activity which provides intangible products to others, hospitality, financial, health, information technology etc.) represent around 75% of the UK's gross domestic product (Office for National Statistics, 2012). The reception desk installation therefore makes tangible the condition of the servant/master, where one may be both and/or either. This value neutral, oscillating form is amplified by removing the reception desk from its context inside of a building, where normative positions can be controlled, to the public sphere where anyone can step up, either in front of or behind the desk¹⁷.

The process can also be said to start in a traditional economic and social vein, using the formulation of persuasion above, used by marketers and politicians alike - capturing attention, demonstrating credentials and then attempting the act of persuasion. Sitting behind the reception desk/sculpture, Turn Lyme Green's members would demonstrate their mastery and credentials as residents and gatekeepers by asking the visitor to "sign in" to the town and then persuade them on the issue of the day. Where the process deviates from the tourism experience is in the way it makes visible the nature of the "signing in" process as a system of control, through the issuing of badges, and shifts its register from a voluntary act of pleasure within free time to a voluntary incarceration,

¹⁷ From a visual and directional perspective its location outside also makes the basic point that it is the landscape, or environment, behind the desk that is on offer to the person approaching the desk, instead of a room and breakfast.

returning to the forms of the work environment where identification is for security (who is entitled to be where), timekeeping purposes and productive relationships (knowing who to network with). Equally this system would make visible residents of town, alluding to their role shaping the experience to be consumed and servicing the visitor - and equally the way in which residents are effected by the visitor and their environmental footprint, litter, car pollution, noise, competition for local services etc.

The reaction to this proposal by Turn Lyme Green was negative. Comments can be grouped as follows (Turn Lyme Green, 2009):

Methodological

“We didn’t manage to get a clear picture of the research you have been doing – and wonder if the main point has been missed and the questions are not the right ones, were concerned with tourism, and with exports and imports – and made no reference to environmental responsibility... It is interesting to know that Lyme exported salt, but not very relevant to this project.”

Durational

“...we seek something which will not become quickly redundant, but has longer term and wider relevance...a short-lived 'temporary' installation/ object does not seem to fit with our aims... a longer-term vision, albeit with steps along the way – or even a short-term, maybe a few weeks or months, but continual – so people can wonder, ponder and wander back.”

Operational/resource

“...we’ve ‘done’ plastic carrier bags and need to move on from this narrow association. The idea of ‘welcoming’ is fine. We’d be delighted to have talking points and articulation of current environmental ideas through an artwork (but not for this to depend on US necessarily to do most of the work!) Low maintenance [sic] – not depending on TLG...it is not sustainable to RELY on us... respect our aims as an added benefit, concerned about the dependence on people to animate the reception desk: this is not feasible.”

Aesthetic

“It could apply to ANY community initiative it’s more of a prop... identifiable / personal to TLG or environmental issues... There may be more mileage in the Reception Desk idea, but ‘manned’ AND also made to look and feel more interesting in and of itself... misconstrued as an office or hotel flytipping event unless seen in context with many others... Could be more weird/misplaced enough... an artwork that is 'proactive' and engaging, 'attractive', REMINDING ENCOURAGING. intrigue, discovery, interaction, visually and mentally challenging, practical, dynamic, fun, grassroots, energetic, lively, inclusive, ecological“.

The main issue here appears to be a mismatch in expectations as to what the residency was supposed to produce and the commitment of the activists to the project. On the one hand the “unusual” brief stated that: “This stage is for the artist to research and develop the project and to provide direction and ideas” (Dorset Design and Heritage Forum, 2008) and was “primarily about concepts”, to “engage people in action”, “transformation”, “communication”, “aspiration” and “vision”, all essentially communicative or performative acts by the artist and Turn Lyme Green in expectation of “final piece”. However the proposal was not understood a piece of research leading to a “final piece” in spite of it stating that it would be a:

“...method of engagement during the residency, uncovering attitudes to environmental responsibility amongst visitors to Lyme Regis, the results of which will inform further work. It will be a way of collecting information and exchanging views, although this exchange could well be considered to be the artwork itself (the relationships and conversations it produces). The whole is a work which will lead to another project, and another, and another as the result of people meeting people. Some works will perhaps be art, some might not.” (Murdin, 2009a)

Leaving aside any miscommunication of the proposal or misunderstandings of resources available, the proposition of a process of engagement as a valid outcome and artwork in its own right appears to be ultimately rejected, with an implicit reinforcement of permanence, physicality and a self-contained (unmaintained) presence as valued attributes. Added to this was the aesthetic dimension of the form being neither “attractive” or “weird, or misplaced enough” – therefore its fails for Turn Lyme Green as it is aesthetically contentless, neither beautiful nor ugly, safe or radical, a platform with no pride of place or local distinctiveness. For Turn Lyme Green at least then contentless art is not an option.

4.4 TIME FOR A CHANGE

The post-historical world of the West then is not the place free from struggle suggested by Fukuyama. Although the conflicts between masters and servants over the control of labour, production and profit may appear to have subsided, in fact they have grown and

mutated into other, larger political arenas. Environmental political issues such as climate change, played out on a global stage and driven by economic growth, maintain a state of conflict within the individual conscience of the global citizens who recognise their sense of cognitive dissonance as part of a sense of contingency, of helplessness when confronted with the enormous scale of these new problems for everyone. Leisure as a function of capital, with its invisible background of consumption and hedonism, exacerbates these subjective conflicts. However as a space for play, where individuals can change their character from the one which is compromised in everyday life, it can also be a space for renewal. Art and aesthetic experiences that enable this adoption of multiple, experimental positions could contribute to this.

Sites of Reception could be read in this context as a form of political art - making visible the economic structuring of leisure and tourism and then subverting it in the service of environmentalist activism, putting the citizen in control of these public spaces and creating a platform for residents to address the visitor. In this way the project is additive, that is to say about creating consensual and constructive conversations. However it can also be read as a critique of *any* attempts to control or manipulate power relations, in this case by an environmental organisation. The oscillating form and accessibility of the public reception desk is an inherent contradiction of the notion of control in the proposed action. As such it is a rejection of one way of reading the act of persuasion where it requires a position of privileged knowledge (credibility) as this runs contrary to the Hegelian sense of the emancipatory political act as the mutual recognition of equals (an act of reception by both parties). Hence I would argue the work tends more to my conception of the complementary practice I have set out previously.

It is also in part a refutation of Fukuyama's assertion that a formal, "contentless" art cannot serve a social purpose. Just as contentless time, leisure, palpates the political so does the contentless, value neutral utilisation of the reception desk make visible the interaction of capitalism, leisure, work and our flickering positioning within this field, as

Žižek says: “The act proper is precisely an intervention which does not merely operate *within* a given background but disturbs its coordinates and thus renders it visible as a background.” (Žižek, 2008: p, 404). The act/performance of *Sites of Reception* is overtly political, the form is simply a readymade platform for a number of truths to operate within - the environmental politics of Turn Lyme Green being one of them.

5 RURALITY: THE TYRANNY OF HERITAGE AND PLACE

"I can't recommend Goretex highly enough. My two-way front zipped with raingutter flaps, rugged windproof nylon shell, Velcro closure cuffs, and fully breathable layer. Goretex waterproofs have to be the ideal choice for what to wear in Utopia." (Kovats, 1997: p. 102)

The proposal for *Sites of Reception* was a response to a brief which talked of local distinctiveness as a desirable quality for art in public. Local distinctiveness, as noted previously, has become common parlance amongst those professionals concerned with the public realm as a counter to cities, towns, villages and any other human habitation which are uniform and ubiquitous - profit making housing estates made from pattern books, shopping malls containing nationwide chain stores, parks with the same municipal planting arrangements and so on. Local distinctiveness on the other hand aims to reintroduce "authenticity" through art and design which brings forward "the vernacular", "history", "identity" and "common place" (Common Ground, n.d.) as features in the public realm. These specifics of existing identity and common experience, a shared heritage, are therefore becoming foundational precepts for the commissioning of art in public space, part of "place-making" which brings the cultural together with the architectural. In the urban fabric they add character and interest however there is an argument that in rural spaces, which by definition have not been highly developed as built environments, local distinctiveness becomes a reinforcement of existing character and therefore an excuse to resist any sort of change to the public realm. This inclination is reinforced culturally through the framing of rural space by nostalgia for a past simplicity of life, the weight of an aesthetic history of landscape in art and increasing reference to environmental protection of disturbed ecologies. The idea of place-making then needs to be interrogated as part of any process which suggests change and progression.

5.1 ROMANTICISM, DISCIPLINE AND REGENERATION

Rural space in the UK tends to be produced as a space for the urban majority. This is apparent both geographically, as 90% of the UK's population live in urban environments, even if 80% of the land is rural (Jenkins, 2002), and historically, as the countryside has been the site of agricultural production and increasingly the site of the production of amenity for the city. Culturally the countryside still has an important symbolic position for sections of contemporary British culture grounded in 19th century Romantic literature and landscape imagery and now interwoven into a global idea of the English landscape. Readings of landscape, such as Anne Whiston Spirin's *The language of landscape* (1998), regularly refer to English landscape in attempting to deconstruct the mythological, narrative and symbolic meanings of contemporary modes of landscape production. It is also clear that the English countryside is responsible for many physical and perceptual ways of constructing urban identity and its built environment:

“The English landscape style spread throughout the British Empire and beyond. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century garden suburbs in England and North America adopted it, and so, more recently, have corporate office parks, asserting the power of property, the status of the owner, and alluding to the continuity of Western culture” (Whiston Spirin, 1998: p. 115).

Whilst part of the hegemonic order on one hand, the English landscape is also strongly associated with the individual and Romanticism, the idea of being inspired spiritually and intellectually by nature, wilderness and solitude. A contemporary re-interpretation of Romanticism as it relates to the English landscape can be found in the work of Richard Long. His walking artworks made from 1967 onwards explore transient, phenomenological responses to landscape. He identifies walking with spiritual enlightenment and transcendental traditions: “Walking itself has a cultural history, from Pilgrims, to the wandering Japanese poets, the English Romantics and contemporary long-distance walkers” (Long, 2002: p. 33). Through his walking works he is fulfilling a basic need to explore and to expand human understanding of the world and to reconnect to

nature, searching for spiritual experiences. Long could be seen in this light as an embodiment of artist as spiritual tour guide. As the geographer John Urry says in *The tourist gaze* (1990):

“All tourists...embody a quest for authenticity, and this quest is a modern version of the universal human concern with the sacred. The tourist is a kind of contemporary pilgrim, seeking authenticity in other “times” and other “places”, away from that person’s everyday life.” (ibid: p. 48)

The critic Rebecca Solnit suggests that Long’s work is also a response to particular national spatial qualities. Contrasting his work to American Land Art being made within the same timeframe by artists like Robert Smithson, which are of monumental scope, she states: “England on the other hand has never ceased to be pedestrian in scale, and its landscape is not available for much further conquest so artists there must use a lighter touch.” (Solnit, 2001: p. 270)

The utopian “green and pleasant land” of William Blake and the Romantics, still plays a significant part in constructions of national identity, as does its counterpart the dystopian polluted, industrial city. This has meant that the countryside is increasingly a contested political space as, for the first time since the industrial revolution, migration from the countryside to the city has been reversed over the past 10 years: “Very consistently... it seems that the more rural an area is, the more it gains migrants...the ‘quest’ for a rural idyll is stronger than the negative aspects of urban life” (Champion, 2000: p. 14-15). This idyll is a foundation stone in the productivisation of the countryside as a leisure space for visitors, domestic and international. It has a high economic value to rural communities and hence to those agencies and organisations responsible for conceiving and constructing the spaces of representation relied on for branding and marketing the countryside. In *The death of rural England* (2003) Alun Howkins suggests that the rise of leisure industries, along with the organic food movement and epidemics such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis and Foot and Mouth disease, will be a major contributing factor to a significant rethinking of the rural. He states that the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001 had

“revealed just how “non-agricultural” rural England had become...the English Tourist Board estimated that the tourist trade was losing £250 million a week while farming was losing only £60 million” (ibid: p. 231-2).

The competing and overlapping aesthetic requirements of agriculture and non-agricultural industries remain at the heart of this re-thinking process. Created in 2010 for the exhibition *Art, Ecology and Economy* at the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World, *Organic Ponyskin Rucksack* (Murdin and Piper, 2010), (Figure 19), (Appendix 4), was a commentary on the economics and aesthetic boundaries of landscape management, agriculture and leisure. It originated in part from my experience of working at the Devon Guild of Craftsmen, where I met a number of leather workers, including Tony Piper, the majority of whom have taken the sustainability agenda to heart (or were responsible for propagating it in the first place) by only using local materials, minimising travel miles and waste generally.

Made out of Dartmoor pony skin, this fully functional rucksack was based a contemporary rucksack design, a day pack that any one of a hundred walkers might take out for a ramble on the moors (Figure 20). The moorland ponies are a major part of the iconography and marketing of Dartmoor but are now mostly pets and used by the Dartmoor National Park authority for keeping vegetation under control on the commons for the benefit of walkers and other leisure users. Originally working animals, in the past 15 years human use of the ponies, and hence their economic value, has declined. With little market demand farmers are forced to cull older, infirm and unwanted animals each year in order to keep the whole population sustainable. The culled animals are sold for food for zoo animals or disposed of in landfill (Hickman, 2010). The rucksack is described on the www.ruralrecreation.org.uk website (where it was for sale) as: “An ideal accessory for the environmentally conscious walker. The bag is handcrafted by fine leather maker Tony Piper out Devon moorland pony skin, a waste product created by contemporary land management practices” (Murdin, 2010).



Figure 19. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack (2010), Alex Murdin and Tony Piper.



Figure 20. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack (2010), Alex Murdin and Tony Piper. Devon moorland pony skin, kid leather interior, cattle leather straps with tough polypropylene webbing and buckles.

The work was intended as a comment on the cultural fetishisation of walking and other leisure clothing and equipment that has accompanied increased access to the countryside since the 1950's in the UK and elsewhere. As Lucy Lippard notes: "...the revival of backpacking and back-country travel since the 1960's had been accompanied by the introduction (and fetishisation) of increasingly lightweight and high-tech gear" (Lippard, 1999). This is contrasted with the relatively recent ethical conformism against the wearing of any animal fur or skin (mostly from anthropomorphised and romantic mammal species). Whilst the ponies perpetuate the required landscape aesthetic of accessibility, the proposed aesthetic of their future sustainability within a certain economic framework is rejected: "Seriously? You are selling ruck sacks made from ponies? What's next? Cat gloves? Dog hats? Ugly stuff, folks" (Anonymous, 2012).

The implied freedom and accessibility inherent in the marketing of leisure spaces, like the use of the free roaming and photogenic Dartmoor pony, is also ultimately contradicted in practice by the hegemonic structures of large private estates and public sector land managers. In *Contested natures* (1998), Macnaghton and Urry undertake a Foucauldian analysis of these "landscapes of discipline". Assessing the language of government agencies (Sport England, the English Tourist Board and the Countryside Commission) they identify the continuing primacy of a Romantic gaze; "...the model of the person presented is of a privatised individual experiencing and consuming qualities associated with a national beauty (true England)" (ibid: p. 187). They go on to argue that this has the effect of disconnecting the subject from the object (landscape) through the mechanisms of leisured, aesthetic appreciation e.g. walking, motoring, caravanning, photographing and painting. These passive modes of experiencing and consuming the countryside are re-enforced through overt legislative codes and through self-surveillance. The Countryside Code ¹⁸ emphasises the transient nature of participation in rural spaces for the visiting public; follow the path, keep dogs under control, take home litter, etc. Even farmers who

¹⁸ In existence in various forms since the 1950's the Countryside Code is a governmental tool codifying behaviour for visitors to the countryside.

were “landowners” are now temporary “land stewards” in land management terminology. The invocation of the authority of environmentalist conservation agendas balancing regeneration and conservation (for instance in reconciling the oxymoron of sustainable tourism) is common, where it is also used to justify modes of passive consumption. Whilst spectatorship and passivity do not preclude engagement there is a case for arguing that all of these strategies decrease the likelihood of experiences of the countryside that can express alternative visions of its physical and social future, at a time when universal environmental stresses require a response. It is clear that this situation must be addressed culturally as well as politically, as Macnaghten and Urry say: “These issues need to be recognised as cultural dilemmas requiring political responses, before they can be addressed by management or a planning system primarily concerned with competing land uses and the negotiation of physical pressures” (ibid: p. 189).

Art in public in rural locations is also subject to the discipline of rural space. The Common Ground project the *Silkstones Heritage Stones* (incidentally the only rural case study of eight in a seminal study on the value of public art in the UK, *The benefits of public art* (Selwood, 1995)) shows this spatial structuring. One respondent to the evaluation of the project firmly locates art within designated parameters: “We have a very large sculpture park, approximately 3 miles away. If you wish to display your work there, we will go and see it! What we don’t want is to have to walk past it [a sculpture] everyday of our lives.” (ibid: p. 213). This attitude is informed by the zonal land management practices identified by sociologist Howard Newby as a form of apartheid: “Environmental *bantustans* are set aside where virtually unrestricted leisure activity is allowed and even encouraged, so that the surrounding area can be strictly controlled and rationed for those interested in a more solitary appreciation of the countryside” (Newby, 1979: p. 222).

Artists working in the countryside, and those that commission them, often re-enforce disciplined modes of visual consumption in spite of intentions to the contrary. Sculptor Peter Randall Page has been instrumental in bringing public art to the countryside through

his work for the independent trust Common Ground. Through one of their joint projects, which took place from 1990 to 1995, a series of stone sculptures based on trademark seed forms was created in and around Drewsteignton, Dartmoor on accessible sites, alongside paths such as the Two Moors Way and on National Trust land. Common Ground aimed to use art to develop a more particular sense of place in this rural location, challenging common understandings of beautiful landscape. Sue Clifford, the Director of Common Ground, stated:

“Through our work on Local Distinctiveness, we have tried to liberate us all from the preoccupation with the beautiful, the rare and the spectacular to help people explore, express and savour what makes the commonplace particular” (Chapman and Randall-Page, 1999: p. 72).

The project has been a success in that local people value the works empathy with their Dartmoor setting, as the Town Clerk commented at the time, the works were in the “...right place, doing what was intended, focussing my eye on a particular part of the landscape” (ibid: p. 82). Nevertheless there is a sense in which the work, by creating focal points in the landscape, inevitably counters the stated intention of the project in promoting the commonplace, as the objects created become destinations in their own right, the subject of publications, articles and catalogues albeit primarily marketed to the privileged cognoscenti of the art world. Complicity in this ordering of the potentialities of experiencing art in countryside contexts is now being questioned by some agencies, particularly through a shift in emphasis to socially engaged practice. The story of Grizedale Arts, illustrates this. Established in 1977 the Grizedale Society, as it was originally called, was developed by the regional arts board (the Arts Council) who proposed the idea to the Forestry Commission as part of the touristic offer to visitors. Initial projects were a sculpture trail and theatre. This coincided with an increased interest in the environmental art of the 1970's and 80's, Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy, David Nash and so on. This was “light touch” in Solnit's terms and came to be appreciated for its harmony with the landscape as: “The general public grew to love environmental art, as did the visual arts

fundress. It found a successful balance between the highbrow and the populist” (Griffin, 2009: p. 6).

However Grizedale Arts changed direction in 1999, rejecting the instrumentalised role of tourist attraction, embracing emerging socially engaged art practices, at the same time rejecting the sculpture park format and its “polite and less intellectually demanding” (ibid: p. 6) history. The rationale was to break out of the format of the park or trail as a “cultural silo”, as the Director Adam Sutherland puts it: “Rather than aiming to create a finished product for public consumption, the programme places an emphasis on process, the dissemination of ideas; we are currently trying to make this process accessible to a wider audience” (Sutherland, 2008). Sutherland also makes clear that these processes should have a social utility and that artists should “...start to come up with a few answers, rather than standing on the side-lines just criticising and pointing and making fun of things... to effect change...” (Griffin, 2009: p. 186). However Grizedale’s location in a protected landscape, a National Park, has made their desire to effect change through art problematic and sometimes confrontational as different communities of interest contest its sites, a “...fact that necessarily leads to such conservatism and stasis within the National Park in terms of planning applications and development, in order to allow visitors and residents the illusion of enjoying a place that appears absent of other people’s intrusion” (ibid: p. 88). The main reasons advanced for planning prohibitions in National Parks (and other protected landscapes such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, etc.) is that they are deemed ecologically and aesthetically sensitive by official agencies. The idea of artists actually effecting change is therefore discouraged. In the Arts Council England policy document *Arts in the protected landscape* (Arts Council England, 2008), a list of actions contained within the introduction shows that art “records” and “interprets” and although it is allowed that artists “create” and “explore” appropriate outputs are facilitatory, non-assertive, passive and interpretative - to “understand”, “share”, “make connections”, “communicate”, “knit together”, “define”, “reconnect”, “record”, “protect” and “promote”.

This obviously makes sense in terms of the remit of organisations responsible for managing protected landscapes as, by definition, their function is conservation, the prevention of most types of intervention or change. Where something new like a work of art is created the focus therefore also tends to be about the heritage, or past qualities of a location. For example public art guidance by Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, *Pride of place: Making the most of Dorset's environment* (2006) states that, "Public art as part of a new development can be a good way to reflect the character or heritage of an area and an opportunity to get the community involved in the design." This official predilection towards heritage as a starting point for public art works is also inextricably entwined in social objectives and in the new emphasis on ways of encouraging participation by the community in public art processes as part of place-making.

Place-making as a term has become an orthodoxy in the regenerative and urbanist canon over the past few decades as a reaction to the perceived impositions of modernism on the development of public space, in the same way as we have seen the shift away from "plop art" and "art and architecture" in the parallel field of public art. For the design professionals involved in making public space (architects, urban designers, landscape designers, planners etc.) it has come to mean a process that shifts its emphasis from design considerations only to bring together "...the design – or re-design- of buildings, groups of buildings, streets, spaces, landscapes, and the establishment of processes that ensure their functionality and sustainability." (O'Rourke, 2009: p. 1). Sustainability is used here to describe both low environmental impact and the idea of creating "belonging, distinctiveness and cohesion" through design and community participation, making "spaces" into "places".¹⁹

¹⁹ Artists and commissioners of artists have both influenced and responded to this agenda, as artist Chris Murray says: "In recent years artists have extended their role beyond architectural collaboration and design to an involvement in the creation of places and spaces. They are not just making art within public spaces, but also acting as 'place makers', and contributing to the whole development process.... [their role is] creative problem solving" (Murray, 2005: p. 163-4).

The processes of place making therefore to a certain extent conflate heritage, as what has established (local) distinctiveness, with outcomes like social cohesion. This becomes clearer looking at guidance on making art in public place: the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment's report *Artists and places* states: "The local communities that participated in events and discussions were forced into reflecting on who they are, and to identify and appreciate what is special or unique about the place they live. Such activities evoke and create memories that reawaken local pride, creating a shared sense of belonging that strengthens social ties" (Holding and Brookes, 2008: p. 6). In spite of admonishments to "take risk" (ibid) these are instructions to reflect on established identity, on what *is already* special or unique and link memory of the past to a reawakening of local pride. These tendencies all encourage a process which takes the past as the point in the departure and arguably this reinforces latent or overt conservatism within commissioning bodies where there is no incentive to create work which has an element of risk. With local authorities there is often a desire to avoid anything which may be politically controversial; with commercial property developers the issue is economic in that they wish to avoid anything that will detrimentally affect the potential purchase or hire of units (this critique of public art commissioning within regeneration projects in the UK appears in Malcolm Miles' *Art, space and the city: Public art and urban futures*, (1997) and more recently in *No room to move: Radical art and the regenerate city* by Slater and Iles (2010)). Therefore a large proportion of opportunities issuing from governmental structures and regeneration (i.e. through local authorities or commercial developers who must negotiate with local authority planning departments) encourage art that references local heritage, whether foregrounded or as part of a matrix of other themes. For example the following extracts from commission briefs all reference local history in some way:

- "Encounter will commission 6 site specific, temporary works of art that respond to the histories, communities and locations of North Kent". (North Kent Local Authority Arts Partnership, 2010: p. 3)
- "HISTORY OF THE SITE: The site has previously been used for a youth centre and the old Hamworthy Library, which have been demolished to make way for the new Library facility. More information on the site can be researched at Poole's Local History Centre..." (Borough of Poole, 2009: p. 1)

- “The aim of the full project is to create site-specific commissioned artworks in a variety of forms which respond to the landscape, biodiversity, history or heritage of the area and encourage people to explore and enjoy the landscape.” (Sustrans, 2010: p. 1)

One of the key academic advocates of place as a mode of developing and constructing socially, culturally and environmentally responsible art is Lucy Lippard. Her defining publication *The lure of the local: Senses of place in a multcentred society* (1997) sets out a place-specific art as an alternative to both plop art and the artist lead interventions of the international contemporary visual arts circuit, "My own short definition of public art: *accessible art of any species that cares about, challenges, involves, and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment*"(ibid: p. 264). For Lippard positive social change is the potential output and, as above, heritage is a significant vehicle in achieving this connection of people to place in a “multicentred society” along with land, culture, and a geophysical environment. She distinguishes though between a local understanding of history as intimate, personal and familial, in opposition to a heritage which has been commercialised as a “...hyped-up, idealised, no-place²⁰ or pseudo-utopia” (ibid: p. 85) Overall heritage is reinforced as part of an agenda of social inclusion and an ‘authentic’ life either as resident or visitor ²¹. Lippard though identifies one of the key barriers to the experience of heritage as part of a continuum of lived experience as nostalgia (homesickness), which is a sentimental longing for return to a place or time of happiness. Responding to Susan Stewart’s definition of nostalgia in *On longing: Narratives of the miniature, gigantic, the souvenir, the collection* (1993) Lippard notes that “bad” nostalgia creates a “refuge” (Lippard, 1999: p. 164) from the problems of the present, disavowing any authentic connection to place through history and heritage.

²⁰The debate on “place” has been heavily influenced by Marc Augé’s writing on the proliferation of non-places, airports, shopping malls and other undifferentiated, global spaces: “If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a nonplace” (Augé, 1995: p. 77-78).

²¹ As an American Lippard develops the critical approach of many to the “Disneyfication” of American history. This is set out lucidly by Umberto Eco for whom Disneyland’s re-creation of heritage makes it “an allegory of the consumer society, a place of absolute iconism... a place of total passivity” (Eco, 1986: p. 48).

This valuable point is backed up by Cameron Cartiere's analysis of the role of place-specificity in public art practices:

"The role of place-specificity in public art is not just to show us nostalgic views of the past. If artists, curators, and writers involved in the public art arena are willing to invest the time and energy to explore the potential of specific places, then socially engaged place-specific public art can connect us to valuable historical information, provide roots to community inspire personal connections, and provide direction into the future." (Cartiere, 2003: p. 153)

It is this more imbricated sense of heritage and place that independent agencies like Grizedale Arts are able to move towards. For Grizedale Arts there is of course much less of an imperative to conform to any pressure in working on heritage per se, as they work for the most part on temporary projects and therefore avoid the need to engage with the conservative planning policy with which they contend. It is though interesting to note that the only regeneration linked public art project engaged in by Grizedale in the Cumbrian town of Egremont has as its main focus and catalyst what can be seen as a heritage restoration project by artists Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane. The *Greasy Pole* (2008) (Figure 21) is the upgrading and reinstatement of a previous pole which was traditionally covered in lard and climbed on the occasion of the yearly Crab Fair. Closed originally due to health and safety concerns and the potential for litigation the new pole is safer and structurally sounder. According to Grizedale the idea of a greasy pole is now "entirely legitimised" because of its conferred status as a "permanent public sculpture" (Griffin, 2009: p. 187)²². The Egremont work draws on Kane and Deller's *Folk Archive* (2007), a documentary collection which includes an eclectic mix of fairground kitsch, contemporary graffiti and customised cars, alongside longstanding rural traditions and festivals such as gurning and carrying flaming tar barrels. As with the *Greasy Pole* it is this juxtaposition of a present/future heritage alongside a past heritage which negotiates a less polarised

²² This is an ironic reversal of the usual concerns with the creation of art in public by some police agencies which are seen as increasing risk physically in the environment or politically, needing risk assessments to mitigate against loss to life or property and consensual validation amongst a community or through a government system.

position within place and nostalgia, a mapping/pointing towards a grassroots assertion of what is valued aesthetically within rural communities.



Figure 21. Greasy Pole (2008), Jeremy Deller & Alan Kane. Photo: Alistair Hudson. Courtesy Grizedale Arts

5.2 HERITAGE, ECOLOGY AND NOSTALGIA

A predilection for heritage and history is often reinforced in a rural context by a paradigm which seems like an unlikely bedfellow on the face of it (as it is typically expressed in radical terms of present and future urgency) - concern for the environment and its ecologies. This is summed up neatly by Lippard: "Ecological crisis is obviously responsible for the current preoccupation with place and context, as in an ongoing nostalgia for lost connections. The Greek root of the word "ecology" means home, and it's a hard place to find nowadays" (Lippard, 2010: p. 142). This is most apparent in the work of artists who attempt, physically or politically, to "right" environmental "wrongs". A whole group of artists from the 1960's to the present day have aligned themselves with restoration ecology and the restitution of landscape heritage, sometimes called "ecoventionism" (Spaid, 2002). One of the first artists of the ecological/environmental art movement was Alan Sonfist whose 'breakthrough' project was *Time Landscape* (1965-ongoing) (Figure 22), where a number of derelict urban sites in New York City were cleaned and planted with native species, in contrast to the globalised planting of other city parks and gardens. Many other artists in America and the UK have worked in a similar way right up until the present - the Harrisons' *Art Park: Spoils Pile Reclamation*, (1976-8), PLATFORM's *Still Waters* (1992), Tim Collins & Reiko Goto's *3 Rivers 2nd Nature* (2000-5) are all projects that have aimed to restore land or water sites to previous states. However there is criticism of this approach – on the subject of Sonfist's work it has been said that "...such measures disguise the actual problems of modern-day environmentalism by fixing an image of the landscape frozen in the past, privileging one moment in ecological history over all others, and precluding more complex interactions with various inhabitants, native or other" (Kastner and Wallis, 1998: p. 33). Sonfist though defends his temporal choice and method by stressing that the work will evolve and that he is interested in the cycles of nature and not a fixed point in time (Grande, 2004: p. 216).



Figure 22. Time Landscape (1965-), Alan Sonfist. Photo: Wally Gobetz (Creative Commons 2.0).

However this sense of ecological nostalgia often seems inescapable in discourses on environmental art, particularly as it is sometimes connected to anthropological heritage. Canadian critic John K. Grande makes this link when he connects art, respect for ecology, a rejection of the cultural relativism of mainstream art commissioning structures (particularly where they marginalise native art and artists) and gender politics in his book *Art, balance, nature* (2004): “Today the “maleness” of appropriation and an emergent “feminine” procreative model for art which accept that which is unproven, searching, mysterious, and involves a process of self-discovery, of re-establishing our primary links to nature, are merging” (ibid: p. 77).

One organisation which focussed very specifically on the rural and its socius is Aune Head Arts, formed in 1999 by Nancy Sinclair and Richard Povall to work in “the context of contemporary rural lives and culture in a collaborative and inclusive manner...passionate

about engaging with people (residents, visitors, artists and others) in Dartmoor and Devon.” (Povall et al., 2007: p. 15). In one of their most recent projects *Focus on Farmers*, a series of artist residencies in the hill farms of Devon, it is possible to see an organisation attempting to unpick the links between heritage, policy and aesthetics. Born out of the Foot and Mouth crisis the work is premised on an uncovering of economic, social and cultural relationships created by farming in that environment, countering attributed perception by visitors of the area as a “...kind of theme park preserved by the DNPA [Dartmoor National Park Authority] for recreational and leisure activities” (ibid: p. 11). In this way Aune Head Arts suggests that conservationist policies managing landscape and heritage as leisure space is antithetical to an authentic experience of place, in this case a landscape created and managed for the future by the reality of agriculture and farmers who live in situ. There is a persuasive link then between art in public, heritage (natural and ethnic) and the social inclusion which is at the core of artistic processes that talk of place and locality. There are many different models for this. One developed by artists Tim Collins, Reiko Goto and public art academic Malcolm Miles is a method that puts forward a socio-ecological practice which combines lyrical expression (subjective), critical engagement (objective) and transformative action (collaborative), where it is:

“...in the artwork that falls in the nexus (the interstitial space) between the critical and transformative modes that we begin to see the breakdown of primary authorship, and new collective forms of creativity that were forecast by Joseph Beuys in his theory of social sculpture. This theory suggests that we are all artists with a role to play in the creative transformation of the social-political and aesthetic fabric of the world” (Collins, 2003).

In this model, collaborative methodologies and degree of closeness to a community, or landscape/ecology, provide authority for attempting acts of ecological transformation. Although Collins is fully aware of the ethical questions raised in assuming this position, he is ultimately unabashed in declaring that: “It is my hypothesis that the public realm is in need of interventionist care” (Collins, n.d.). Given that intervention is necessary, Collins has gone on to posit that it is in the area of politics, or in the strategic (overarching policy) realm, that the greatest potential to affect change is possible, albeit in a tactical (individual,

grassroots) manner ²³: “The question of policy is a slippery one. There are numerous artists that have the temerity to lay claim to policy, but few that actually have the power, ability and focus to see it through to conclusion. The other side of this instrumental relationship to policy would be that very good ideas have the potential to affect policy without declaring it as a primary intention” (Collins, 2003).

In the UK a number of organisations have come into being over the past 20 years that aim to develop politically orientated artistic projects in the rural environment to affect rural policy through interpretation, engagement and transformative action. Some have been established specifically with policy in mind, such as Littoral which was formed by Dr Ian Hunter and Celia Larner in 1989 to act as an agent for developing transformative projects. To date Littoral’s work has mostly responded to changing rural policy at a national and European level. Other organisations working in the context of rural art and policy approach the subject from different angles and methodologies - Wysing Arts in Cambridgeshire is a studio and exhibition space, Allenheads Arts in Cumbria operates on a residency basis, Grizedale a mixture of residencies, temporary and permanent commissions.

From a pragmatic as well as a political point of view most organisations need to develop a relationship with the authorities responsible for their location and therefore choose to

²³ One philosopher, Michel de Certeau, whose project has been to analyse the way in which marginal social groupings can reclaim homogenous public spaces, offers useful terms to describe the difference, setting out the term tactics (diversionary, practiced individual interventions) and their relationship with strategies (the power structures and relationships of organisations): “I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment.” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clientèles,” “targets,” or “objects” of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. I call a “tactic,” on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a border line distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The “proper” is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized “on the wing”” (de Certeau, 2002: p: xix).

collaborate. Resistance as such is therefore contained within a place-based process. Aune Head Arts says: “Intrinsic to the work of AHA is our work with people. AHA is a resident of Dartmoor – we are a member of the community, and as such it is important for us to be, and to be seen to be, a good neighbour” (ibid: p. 12). However within *Focus on Farmers* the actual effect is to produce an oppositional practice that makes sensible (or visible) the presence of a threatened indigenous group (hill farmers) to a leisured majority. This point of resistance is much like the interstitial space posited by Collins between critical and transformative processes. The overall tone though of these methods is collaborative and has the appearance of the consensual, as Lucy Lippard puts it in her essay for the *Focus on Farmers* catalogue: “Perhaps art about agriculture or nature itself will not be fully effective until it goes underground, until it is integrated into and almost disappears into local culture and nature itself.” (ibid: p. 45).

5.3 RADICAL RURALISM

Whilst collaborative and restorative methods appear to be successful in terms of engaging with local people (and local authorities) others call for more stridency, for a radical ruralism that both addresses pressing environmental concern and counters perceptions of art practices that take place in a rural context as geographically and culturally peripheral, to the art world and a wider public sphere. This is illustrated by an exchange between curator Virginia Button and artist/writer Rupert White where the politics of aesthetics and political (ecological) aesthetics both come into play. In a text by Virginia Button for the catalogue of the exhibition *Social Systems*, at the Newlyn Gallery, Cornwall in 2007, which brought in international artists to create socially engaged works in urban settings in the county, she cites Miwon Kwon’s writings to suggest that certain readings of place have become corrupt, nostalgic and instrumentalised:

“Although sympathetic with the widely held view that the erosion of local differences by the expansion of capitalism has contributed to a loss of identity and a growing sense of alienation, Kwon recognises that any desire to return to a by-gone and determinedly anti-urban sociality is itself equally open to appropriation by capitalist forces which thrive on the production of difference. The marketing of the rural idyll to wealthy second-homers

and urban refugees, which has undermined the ability of many in Cornwall to continue living in their native communities, is a case very much in point” (Button, 2007: p. 11-12)

Button here warns against the dangers of parochialism and sees external commentary by international artists on the rural as an answer: “My feeling is that many international artists making work in relation to ‘site’ accept that there is no turning back from globalisation, but instead use art as a means of proposing, imagining or celebrating a sense of the singularity of lived experience within the context of the universal, for mutual life-enhancing ends” (Button, 2007: p. 12). Rupert White, in his article *More vs Social Systems* (2007) uses the example of *More*, a simultaneous exhibition by local artists, to reject any implication that this situation is a *fait accompli* and that it is not possible for artists living in rural locations to resist the commodification of rural space. White argues the case for artists inhabiting a rural place to resist urbanisation and capitalist hegemony in the name of an urgent environmentalism:

“I object to the possibility that, as producers of culture, it is no longer possible, perhaps through a form of radical ruralism, to question, critique or resist the processes by which Western societies become urbanised, and culture becomes globalised... It remains true in general terms, however, that urban-centric cultural discourse and art practice in general, threatens to sideline the question of our relation to the landscape, and the experience of rural living, at a time when, due to impending environmental disaster these issues become more not less important.” (White, 2007)

In opposition to both is the integrated and self-effacing practice of place of Aune Head Arts which asserts the social as primary. The common factor however is an overt or covert sense of the value of forms of dissensus in the mapping of social and environmental futures. The difference is in which of these types of practices can be considered aesthetically valuable. Certainly in Rancière’s definition of aesthetic dissensus the work of Aune Head Arts would be dismissed for its approach of attempting to integrate art into real social situations where the art and artist start to merge with the place. Even so it does actually make visible marginalised ways of living which are environmentally sensitive and oppose conservative tendencies to treat heritage as a metonym for place and place as a

form nostalgia, in this way achieving a “redistribution of the sensible”, making apparent the voice of the marginalised.

5.4 FLUIDARITY

In conclusion simplistic notions of heritage, place making and ecology and their combination need to be carefully scrutinised for a hidden nostalgia which acts as a barrier to developing new understandings of the rural as a place of future development and as part of an environmental and territorial commons. The critic Grant Kester offers an approach to site that is of place but at the same time does not succumb to nostalgia: “Site is understood here as a generative locus of individual and collective identities, actions, and histories, and the unfolding of artistic subjectivity awaits the specific insights generated by this singular coming-together. As I’ve already noted, this entails a movement between immersion in site and distancing from it. Dialogical practice thus remains open to the transformative effects of site while resisting the tendency to romanticize local knowledge as an almost mystical, uniform, good” (Kester, 2011: p. 139)

The key point made here is that art is able to negotiate many individual and collective identities, here linked to conversational, dialogical practices that can encompass different voices thus avoiding restriction to the official versions of the heritage of a particular place, over simplified views of the needs of a local ecology (to be preserved in a particular time for instance) or the idea of local knowledge as the only authentic experience of place.

Organic Ponyskin Rucksack attempts to avoid these consensuses to present a controversial object which has the form of a heritage craft (leatherworking) but that talks of the contemporary reality of maintaining an ecologically protected landscape, Dartmoor National Park, as site for recreational human use. It would be hard though to describe *Organic Ponyskin Rucksack* as dialogic work, although it is a tool for conversation and it was deliberately put into the media to do this, it is a tool for provocation, whereas dialogism tends to rely on more consensual operations as discussed in Chapter 3.

Whatever the methodological disagreements there is still a general agreement amongst the writers cited that nostalgia needs to be negated if progress is to be made in environmental and ecological terms and for this reason place also needs to be considered carefully. Felix Guattari, one of the fathers of environmentalist political philosophy, said, "Rather than looking for a stupefying and infantilizing consensus, it will be a question in the future of cultivating *a dissensus* and the singular production of existence" (Guattari, 1989: p. 33). I suspect what is needed is a recognition of this joint objective in the face of a "stupefying" political consensus on place. Pragmatically radical ruralism will need to be addressed through what Guattari translators Pindar and Sutton describe as a point of solidarity in dissensus, a "fluidarity" of aesthetic positions where, "...a plurality of disparate groups come together in a kind of unified disunity, a pragmatic solidarity without solidity" (ibid: p. 10). We can extrapolate this term to an individual artistic practice where fluidarity would mean both the incorporation of different political positions (as postulated by a complementary practice) as well as the use of a number of tools in different contexts, some with political efficacy, some with aesthetic emphasis, and their combination.

6 ACCESS AND ENVIRONMENTALISM: THE IMPOSSIBLE GAZE OF THE ECOLOGICAL SUBJECT

"I am afraid you have been long desiring my absence, nor have I anything to plead in excuse of my stay, but real, though unavailing, concern." (Austin, 1983: p. 249)

In previous chapters, 4 and 5, I have identified some wider cultural issues in making art work with agency in a rural context, the pursuit of desire in leisure time, the cognitive dissonance this produces for the environmental subject and the barrier of nostalgia to changing the rural environment. This chapter develops these observations by considering some of the psychological inhibitors to an art of environmentalism, particularly a still prevalent conception of "wilderness" which retains currency in ecological and popular thinking and can be another form of nostalgia. Methodologically the projects described here continue to define the complementary practice set out, but negatively by testing out subtractive propositions that withdraw from a contested site.

6.1 ANTHROPOSCENERY

We now are living in the Anthropocene. This informal term, coined in 2000 by Paul Crutzen is now common currency amongst scientists and describes the current time period in the geological scale (Jurassic, Pleistocene, Palaeozoic and so on) where humankind has acquired the status of geological agent in the scale of its interventions. Some remain sceptical of the applicability of this term. How can man influence the planet at the same level as other events which define these periods, meteors that can cause mass extinctions, moving continents and ice ages thousands of years long? In environmental terms though the impacts are demonstrable, melting ice caps, sea level rise, acidic oceans and increased extinction rates - the current rate makes it the 6th largest extinction event in geological terms (Zalasiewicz et al., 2010).

For many then the Anthropocene will mark a zenith in awareness of sheer size of the impact we are now having on the earth and its physical processes. This is now a cause for

immediate and pressing concern as it becomes apparent that it is a threat to the survival of at least some or quite probably all of humankind; hence the rise of environmentalism as a political movement from the mid-20th century onwards. The environmental movement covers a broad range of issues and positions but the typology of response could be characterised by two basic poles of thought. At one end are those that perceive 'earth', 'nature', 'ecology' and so on, as a holistic system, the "deep ecology"²⁴ of Arne Naess (Naess, 1973: p. 95), or the Gaian thesis of James Lovelock that earth is a self-regulating entity would be examples. Lovelock has been deeply influential in this respect with his theory which is:

"...the hypothesis that the total ensemble of living organisms which constitute the biosphere can act as a single entity to regulate chemical composition, surface pH and possibly also climate. The notion of the biosphere as an active adaptive control system able to maintain the Earth in homeostasis we are calling the 'Gaia' hypothesis, Lovelock (1972). Hence forward the word Gaia will be used to describe the biosphere and all of those parts of the Earth with which it actively interacts to form the hypothetical new entity with properties that could not be predicted from the sum of its parts." (Lovelock and Margulis, 1974)

At the other pole is what Naess calls "shallow ecology" (Naess, 1973: p. 95) in which the earth is externalised as a mechanistic system, human resource or object of study, supported by scientific rationalism which decries what genetic biologist Richard Dawkins calls, "...the temptation of 'Gaia': the overrated romantic fantasy of the whole world as an organism; of each species doing its bit for the welfare of the whole" (Dawkins, 1998: p. 222).

In many respects though these poles can be said to share a position which requires a dialectic object, an original or underlying state of the earth or nature (sometimes called wilderness). For science the original state provides a benchmark of how it, and its co-

²⁴ Deep ecology is the "Rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total-field image. Organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations. An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things. The total-field model dissolves not only the man-in-environment concept, but every compact thing-in-milieu concept — except when talking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication." (Naess 1973: p. 95-100).

dependent technology, can fix environmental problems with solutions for the future. For the more holistic the original state is also required so that there can be a return to the past where all was harmony, or the imbalance can be rebalanced. Both require to some extent the utopic “world without us”, an extrinsic other that provides the measure of action, or inaction. In *Living in the end times*, (2011), Slavoj Žižek contends that both positions described are dangerous in that they are utopic and unrealisable in any truly egalitarian sense, egalitarianism being an essential prerequisite of any way of thinking about an issue in common globally. He argues that: ““Nature” on Earth is already “adapted” to human intervention to such an extent - human “pollution” being already deeply implicated in the shaky and fragile equilibrium of “natural” reproduction on Earth - that its cessation would cause a cataclysmic imbalance” (Žižek, 2011: p80). Therefore the danger of both ways of thinking environmentalism as set out above is that are founded on “the impossible gaze”, the “...fundamental subjective position of fantasy: to be reduced to a gaze observing the world in the condition of the subject's non-existence...witnessing the Earth in its pre-castrated state of innocence, before we humans spoiled it in our hubris.” (ibid: p80).

6.2 PRESENCE AND ABSENCE IN THE LANDSCAPE: INCLUSIVE PATH

Inclusive Path (2007) (Appendix 5) was one of the first artworks of this research programme and was designed to test a dissensual and tactical methodology, that is to say diversionary, practiced individual interventions which disrupt the sensible order. It was developed from a call for proposals as part of the FRED festival, 2007. The commissioning organisation, a gallery called FOLD (now closed), described itself on its website as, “...an artist-led initiative based in Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria. It is a not for profit organisation dedicated to promoting and providing access to contemporary art in rural locations across the north of England” (Fold Gallery, 2008).

Its objectives were:

- “...to provide an opportunity for rural artists to join together for mutual support
- to share information, experiences and ideas.
- to raise the profile of rural contemporary artists.
- to showcase the work of rural contemporary artists.
- to bring contemporary art to rural communities.
- to showcase the work of contemporary artists in a rural environment.
- to develop community involvement and understanding of contemporary arts.”
(ibid)

The brief called for artists to create site specific work in Cumbria over a two week period, funded by Arts Council England, the Northwest Development Agency, Cumbriavision and the Northern Rock Foundation. Other corporate and public sector supporters included the National Trust, Cumbria Tourism and various local authorities from the area. Selected as part of an open competition process, *Inclusive Path* took as its starting point the tension between the conservational remit of contemporary land management authorities and the economic driver of tourism. This tension is implied in the rhetoric of the organisation Fix the Fells, a project funded by a consortium including the Lake District National Park, the National Trust and Natural England, in order to repair paths created by “...over 12 million visitors each year enjoying the beauty of the fells... the sheer number of visitors leaves a mark on the landscape” (Fix the Fells, 2007). Their website goes on to state: “Our high level paths are surprisingly fragile, and with millions of visitors each year, grass is compacted by feet, and worn away. You can help by treading more carefully.” A sense of urgency is created by celebrity supporter Kim Wilde who is quoted on the Fix the Fells website as saying: “Once these footpaths have been destroyed there is no going back. We have to fix them now” (ibid).

Inclusive Path therefore proposed a ‘solution’ to this problem with its implicit criticism of walkers. The following is from the original proposal for this project: “Eco Tourism Comes to Cumbria. The Pike Without The Pain. Can’t Walk ? Don't Walk ! Free souvenir photos of your virtual visit to Scafell Pike. Worried about the impact of tourism on the environment? Path erosion is a serious problem in the Lake District where 12 million tourists visit each

year. The Inclusive Path proposes un-tourism where visitors will be able to visit sensitive sites like Scafell Pike without the need to walk on them, and yet still take away precious memories of the experience. In addition the Inclusive Path will enable the owners of Scafell Pike, the National Trust, to offer an alternative to costly level access to the Pike by providing virtual access for the 3 million registered disabled, a high proportion of the 20 million people over 65 and growing numbers of overweight schoolchildren in the UK” (Murdin, 2007).

The form of the project was a series of boards showing self-portraits as a standing male, a male in a wheelchair and two children set against a rocky backdrop. Holes cut where the faces should be, reminiscent of old seaside attractions, allowed the user be photographed as the artist (Figure 23). The piece was proposed to take place over four days in October in Keswick, a small market town, and Grasmere, a picturesque village which is a tourist honeypot.



Figure 23. Inclusive Path: Grasmere (2007), Alex Murdin

However when permission was sought by FOLD to have the work temporarily installed on the village green in Grasmere, the National Trust, which owned the land, refused. A press release was then issued by me to local and national media as part of the project, with the headline: “Artist’s Bid to Encourage ‘Un-Tourism’ Falls Foul of the National Trust”. The organisers of the project were concerned that any press coverage would jeopardise their relationship with the National Trust which was one of its official supporters, which it did with an officer of the National Trust press officer describing herself as “naffed off”

(National Trust, 2007). The BBC reported the project as: "An artist has been banned from displaying his card-board cut-outs of people on National Trust land over claims they are "anti-tourist"" (BBC, 2007). The National Trust was quoted by the BBC as saying that: "...the fundamental point is that the Trust is an organisation that promotes public access and therefore does not wish to be associated with phrases such as "anti-tourism" (ibid). However the opportunity for the Trust to present itself in public as a staunch defender of the livelihoods of local people resulted in the press officer for the Trust stating in an e-mail to the author: "...thank heavens we live in a democracy ! This will go in my 'never a dull moment' category and does explain why I love my job!" (National Trust, 2007). It is not known whether this sentiment reflects the attitude of the organisation as a whole however this mini paradigm shift from a fear of the argument ad populum²⁵ to recognition of opportunities for discourse must have impacted on the strategic body to some extent.

In terms of the response to the work by the public placing the boards in Keswick market square contextualized it for many passers-by as a transactional relationship, perhaps reinforcing the sense of spatial restriction the boards attempted to make visible. There were 249 direct participants in the *Inclusive Path* project who demonstrated a range of responses in their use of the photo panels. Children, particularly groups of students from urban environments, were the most unabashed in their use, betraying no significant self-consciousness, even when acting out their perceptions of the stereotypical occupant of a wheelchair by grimacing and gurning at their friends (Figure 24). The vast majority of adults participating chose not to use this board with the few that did usually making a conscious decision to do so after they had some background knowledge of the work, supplied in the form of a leaflet.

²⁵ From the Latin for "appeal to the people", therefore something that is only true because many people say it is.



Figure 24. Inclusive Path: Grasmere (2007), Alex Murdin. Composite of participant photos.

In Grasmere, where more people came to set off on their proximate walks into the hills, comments in the vein of “I’m off to do the real thing” suggested the need for what they perceived as unmediated, self-directing experience, the “disorganised tourist space” (or Lefebvre’s counter-space) as opposed to the “enclavic tourist space” of a city (Urry, 1999: p. 53).

As well as participants in *Inclusive Path* having their photo taken, some were asked to fill in a questionnaire. This tool, well recognised in public spaces, was used performatively in order to elicit a dialogue with the artist, rather than in an attempt to gather sociologically valid information. The questionnaire asked whether the respondent agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

“Do you:

- Believe that the landscape we have created over the past few thousand years should always remain the same (conservationism)
- Assert that the land is better when it is managed by professionals (environmental instrumentalism)
- Think that we should allow nature to take back the land (environmental determinism)
- Have realised that the grass is greener on the other side (capitalism)
- Know that the countryside is a playground (urbanism)
- Walk with their family and dog on a Sunday (theism)
- Don't see the wood for the trees (consumerism)
- Feel that mountains are terrible (romanticism)
- Need to live off the land (tourism)
- Are out of place (scepticism)
- Can't walk outside (realism) “

The playful attempt to subvert the typical expectations of the questionnaire format with its quantitative, rationalist closed responses succeeded in gaining open, discursive replies, which were then closed by forcing an agree/disagree response. This obliged the participant to move from relaxed expectation of the simplistic, to become an active interpreter and then move back to a passive “yes” or “no”. This in turn developed recognition by the participant of the limitations of the mechanism being employed for recording complex responses requiring qualitative methods.

Equally this project disrupted the relationship between the organisers of the festival and its partners in jointly promoting certain socio-economic interests through a rural art festival. *Inclusive Path* could therefore be seen as the appropriation of official “commissioned time” for the purposes of an unauthorised agenda, analogous to de Certeau's concept of *La perruque* (de Certeau, 2002: p29), whereby the worker uses the time of his or her employer to create his or her own work (a tactical subversion of the

strategic body). The project would also seem to show elements of the utility ascribed to artistic practices by the organisers and funders of the programme of work; it apparently promoted images of access and environmental positivism whilst continuing to challenge a disciplined articulation of space in the countryside in the service of the leisure paradigm.

6.3 UNMANAGEMENT OF THE FUTURE NATURAL: ONE MILE WILD

Inclusive Path sited itself within contemporary land management discourses on the environmental/physical impact of access to the leisured landscape without any particular reference to the temporal characteristics of the site. An unrealised proposal, *One Mile Wild* (2009) (Appendix 6), took the general parameters of *Inclusive Path* but added a further dimension, the historic development of political action in the name of access to the countryside. It also offered the counter premise of a work which was more strategic in de Certian terms, i.e. which would function within the public and political sphere of rural hegemonic practices. The proposal was made as part of an open competition for *Re:place*, a programme of site specific work being commissioned by the Derbyshire Arts Development Group from 2008 to 2011 in that county. The proposal was rejected – no reason was given.

Derbyshire itself, surrounded by some of the largest conurbations in the UK, has been at the forefront of the appropriation of the countryside in the name of an urban majority for leisure. In the 1932 it was the site of a mass trespass on private land at Kinder Scout and in 1951 became part of the Peak District National Park, one of the first National Parks. The mass trespass was also part of on-going processes of political conflict in the countryside stemming from enclosure of common land as part of the industrialisation of agriculture in the 18th century. The trespass was organised by the British Workers Sports Federation (BSWF), which included communist party members, as a protest against the laws which forbade them to walk on hills and moors in the area, preserved at the time for the recreation of wealthy landowners such as the Duke of Devonshire, e.g. for hunting, shooting and fishing. It was not however a purely localised matter and occurred at the same time as a more general preservationist politicisation of the countryside was

occurring, for instance the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) was founded in 1926. The membership of the CPRE was made up of “learned societies and voluntary bodies” (Howkins, 2003: p. 106) and were not necessarily sympathetic to the egalitarian politics of the BWSF. Sections of the CPRE opposed the encroachment of the built environment and the expansion to recreational use through a synthesis of aesthetic and class based spatial demarcation:

“From the late 1930’s the Isle of Wight Branch campaigned vigorously against holiday camps on the island as, although the branch was in ‘general sympathy’ with camping, they ‘do not consider that permanent holiday camps should be placed in or near a good class residential area, or in an area of outstanding natural beauty.’” (Howkins, 2003: p. 107)

Faced with opposition a wide social spectrum the mass trespass of 1932, which saw ramblers singing the communist anthems *The Red Flag* and *Internationale* struggling with gamekeepers and police, was nevertheless successful in asserting the right of access of this group to the “...fine country presently denied us” (Manchester Guardian, 1932) and the resonance of this event over time has meant it has now become appropriated within the symbolic and economic order of this landscape’s management. Amongst other memorials and publications, the Peak District National Park Authority, Ramblers’ Association and Natural England produced an official leaflet in 2007 describing a walking tour of the sites involved in this conflict (Doughty and Smith, 2007). A mark of the site’s ongoing importance was a public apology by Andrew, the 11th Duke of Devonshire, on the 70th anniversary of the event for his grandfather’s “great wrong” in 1932 (Ward, 2002), remarkable in the use of the term “public apology”, usually reserved for admissions by governments for gross misdemeanours such as corruption.

Here then is an original act of transgression and aspiration to free movement within the landscape in order to access the aesthetic qualities of the “fine country” that has subsequently been commodified within a heritage and tourist re-structuring. Also this emancipatory act, the assertion of this right, is an aesthetic act and vice-versa. Rancière notes that the right to participation in leisure activity, the becoming of those who work

into spectators, visitors or tourists is able to reformulate the established relations between seeing, doing and speaking (i.e. the aesthetic regime). He considers leisure in this sense as the opportunity provided by the system of production for workers to replenish mental strength for work:

"By making themselves spectators and visitors, they disrupted the distribution of the sensible which would have it that those who work do not have time to let their steps and gazes roam at random; and that the members of a collective body do not have time to spend on the forms and insignia of individuality. That is what the word 'emancipation' means: the blurring of the boundary between those who act and those who look; between individuals and members of a collective body." (Rancière, 2009: p. 19)

However, the aesthetics of this political act continue to compete with traditional landscape preservationist²⁶ aesthetics, ecological sensibility and environmental politics. The result of Kinder Scouts' popularity has led to a physical inscription onto the landscape through the actions of walkers. The following is from an article in the Observer newspaper which includes an interview with a project manager from the National Trust:

"...it is, perhaps, inevitable that hundreds of thousands of modern-day ramblers still descend annually on the bleak but beautiful scene of this significant event in the battle for the 'right to roam'. It is perhaps ironic then that the birthplace of the rambling revolution is falling victim to the ramblers themselves. Millions of footfalls have contributed to such horrific erosion that conservationists are now fighting a desperate battle to save this iconic spot....'It really is very urgent. Time is ticking away,' said Mike Innerdale, the trust's project manager in the Peak District. 'If we don't act now the whole place will be bare rock in 50 years. Kinder Scout holds a very special place in people's hearts. The Mass Trespass is historic. And it really cannot be lost to the nation...'... Today it is believed to be the worst degraded area of blanket bog in Britain." (Davies, 2008)

Other causes apart from the activity of walkers are cited as reasons for this decline, over grazing by sheep, fires and air pollution. The main reason for the National Trust (as current owners of the site) being concerned is cited as the bog's value for carbon sequestration, its ability to capture human carbon emissions: "Conservationists believe

²⁶ "Preservation(ism)" is generally defined as the protection of heritage or environment from human action, as distinct from "Conservation(ism)" - the management of heritage or environment as a usable resource.

improving the management of our upland peat bogs alone could reduce our carbon emissions by up to 400,000 tonnes a year.” (ibid)

Underlying the economic and environmental rationale is the preservationist politics and aesthetic position of the National Trust: landscapes must be unspoilt, timeless and morphologically static - “bare rock” is equated with the site being “lost to the nation”. Interesting also is the application by the reporter of the word “degraded” as its meaning allows for both an empirical reduction in quality or value (biophysical/utilitarian/productive) and its subjective sense of moral characteristics which are corrupted or depraved. In this case the depravity of the bog cannot be attributed to its own inclination and therefore, by association, the responsibility for its corruption rests with the moral subjectivities of human users of the site. We therefore have a site which hold visitors in tension between two moral poles, a point of moral oscillation, caught between desire for presence and absence; its users are both sensible of freedom of gaze, movement and so on, at the same time as being morally culpable for acting to its detriment in environmental terms. This culpability extends from the specificity of walking on the site and therefore eroding its surface, to the more generalised complicity in the production of excess carbon as part of a population.

The penitentiary act required by the conservationists (preservationists) is the restoration of the bog, implicitly of a greater aesthetic and/or biophysical value than bare rock, so that the area exists in a closed loop, i.e. it is restored to its state as it was before the Mass Trespass occurred (the event of the Trespass itself marks the point of expansion of access and therefore becomes the start of erosion) and then presumably it is degraded again, then restored... The threat is that if this cycle does not occur that the event becomes “lost to the nation”. The counter argument is that the heritage of the mass trespass is lost in the act of proposed ecological restoration which will smooth over the landscape palimpsest it has added to, in favour of its productive value as a carbon sink and the preference for a visual toupee of cotton grass. In any case the Trespass ensures this interminable cycle of

ecological degradation and restoration, as the rights of access created are now enshrined in the Countryside Rights of Way act of 2000 and therefore are politically ineradicable at this point. What then would be the radical response to this situation that retains a fidelity to this emancipatory act of the past?

As with *Inclusive Path*, *One Mile Wild* extended the logic of ecological restoration to one of its end points in order to critique the compromises of restoration ecology policy. The proposal was for a “study” to examine the enclosure of a square mile of land encompassing Kinder Scout (Figure 25).

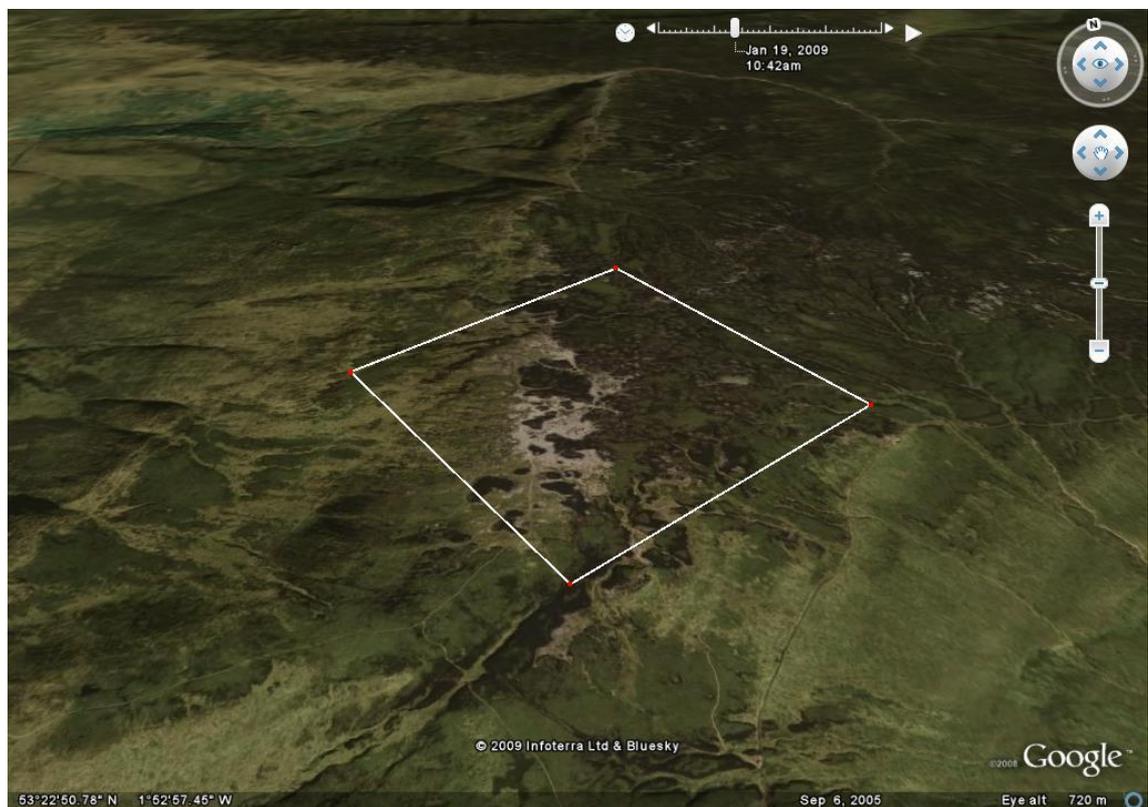


Figure 25. One Mile Wild: satellite view (2009), Alex Murdin

In detail:

“...the project would involve some or all of the following actions:

- Establish legal/planning framework required for **disowning** land e.g. in trust, or as “commons” ...
- Investigate who will manage the **unmanagement** of the land.
- Develop the proposal and distribute to potential partners, e.g. National Trust, farming communities, local authorities...” (Murdin, 2009b)

Here it will be useful to introduce some terms to describe the temporal variants of ecological states. The ecologist George Peterken describes five temporal states of nature in the context of land management:

“(1) Original-naturalness. The state which existed before man became a significant ecological factor... (2) Present-naturalness. The state which would prevail now if man had not become a significant ecological factor. (3) Future-naturalness. The state which would develop if man’s influence were completely and permanently removed... (4) Potential-naturalness. The state which would develop if man’s influence were completely removed, and the resulting succession were completed in a single instant. Unlike the other forms of naturalness which did, could have or would exist, potential-natural states cannot actually exist. Nevertheless, this is a useful concept which expresses the existing site potential under the prevailing climate, unaffected by any future changes of climate and soil (to which future-naturalness is subject)... It is useful..., to have a fifth term, ‘past-naturalness’, to describe existing natural features which have descended directly from original-natural conditions.” (Peterken, 1993: p. 42-3)

The “*future-natural*” is a characteristic of many ecological artworks that have at their core the notion of restoration or reparation. For example Herman de Vries’ *Sanctuariums*, built in various cities from 1993 to 2002 are brick walls or wrought iron railings that enclose in a circle a small plot of land in a park, or derelict suburban land that exclude human presence. Some of them contain “oculi”, holes in the wall that allow people to see what is within. Of the works de Vries asks us to “...imagine the possible, enriching experiences that might exist if nature were allowed to develop freely here. or aspect of my utopia” (de Vries: n.d.). It is obviously important from de Vries’ point of view that the sanctuariums are visually permeable (the oculi and gaps between railings) in order to allow the audience to have an external perspective of the natural space being created within. De Vries’ states his intent that this gaze into the site will create the potential of “enriching experiences” and vision of his utopia, also called by him “terrain vague” (ibid) as they are sites of human absence. Just so we are in no doubt about the utopic aspirations of the work one of the sanctuaries, built in a suburban park for Skulptur Projekte Münster in 1997, includes the inscription above the oculi in Sanskrit, taken from the Isha Upanishad one of the earliest philosophical works of the Upanishad, a foundation for Hinduism, and generally translated as: “Om. This is perfect. That is perfect. Perfect comes

from perfect. Take perfect from perfect, the remainder is perfect”. Images of the work soon after completion (Gooding and Furlong, 2002), show an immaculate brick wall capped with a light sandstone and containing wild grasses and other non-cultivated plants (Figure 26).



Figure 26. Sanctuarius: Münster (1997), Herman de Vries. Photos: libarynth.org (Creative Commons 3.0).

On my own visit to the work in 2007 the wall had been covered in graffiti and within the walls natural succession had produced a bramble threaded thicket, liberally studded with plastic bags, drinks cans and other human detritus (Figure 27). As the non-human element of the ecological system has fulfilled its entropic destiny, so too have the users of this area, some at least seemingly unaffected by the potential or actuality of an “enriching experience” in the face of “perfect” nature. The cultural conditioning of capital which says that the bramble and scrub is not of value, particularly in aesthetic or economic terms, is of course pervasive, the scrub it is neither productive nor spectacular²⁷.

²⁷ Richard Mabey, champion of “unofficial” nature, sums up the cultural threat: “Plants become weeds because people labelled them as such. For more than 10,000 years farmers, poets, gardeners, scientists and moralists have grappled with the problems and paradoxes they present. It is a huge and ongoing saga... The development of cultivation was perhaps the single most crucial event in forming modern notions of nature. From that point on the natural world could be divided into two conceptually different camps: those organisms contained managed and bred for the benefit of humans, and those which are ‘wild’, continuing to live in their own territories on, more or less, their own terms” (Mabey, 2010: p. 21).



Figure 27. Sanctuary: Münster in 2007. Photo: Herman Schlickman (Creative Commons 3.0).

According to Slavoj Žižek the spectacular characteristics of nature as portrayed in the public sphere are a significant barrier to the construction of the ecological subject. In *Living in the end times* (2011), he discusses the political ramifications of imminent environmental catastrophe and invokes Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to analyse continuing societal and individual distance from the consequences of human threat to the environment. He gives as an example the popularity of nature documentaries, safaris and ecotourism as due to nostalgic desire to experience a “natural order” where the social / subjective order is predetermined and our position is that of “...spectral entities observing the “world without us.”” (Žižek, 2011: p. 82).

This distance is visually mediated and is constituted as the impossible gaze:

"...the fantasmic narrative always involves the *impossible gaze* by means of which the subject is already present at the scene of its own absence. When the subject directly identifies its own gaze with the *objet a*²⁸, the paradoxical implication of this identification is that the *objet a* disappears from the field of vision. This brings us to the core of a Lacanian notion of utopia: a vision of desire functioning without an *objet a* and its twists and loops. It is utopian not only to think that one can reach full, unencumbered "incestuous" enjoyment; for it is no less utopian to think that one can renounce enjoyment without this renunciation generating its own surplus-enjoyment." (ibid: p. 84)

This is the core issue with restorative environmental utopias, such as that anticipated by de Vries, in that as soon as we see a place or ecological site it evaporates from view and becomes a mirage, a fantasy based on a relationship with ecology as "wilderness" ("the world without us" – the *objet a*). Žižek is however also pointing out the trap of the inverse fantasy, which is that our absence from an environmentally problematic site inspires a moral rectitude which is equally compromised – after all we should be doing something about the situation. This is the double bind of the environmental subject, the vibrating point of moral oscillation identified earlier in this chapter.

Returning to *One Mile Wild*, whilst it's stated intention is future-naturalness, that is to say to the establishment of a site which would exclude any human access to Kinder Scout, all that is actually offered is a discrete action (a "study" - as in "feasibility study"), to be disseminated within the strategic (hegemonic) order of land managers like the National Trust. It is a process of investigation into how exclusion would be achieved through the legal system and a framework as to how it would be maintained in the future from the outside, its "unmanagement". It is in the action of making the study therefore that the potential naturalness of the site would come into being, as opposed to attempting to actualise its future-naturalness as de Vries has done. Likewise it is the "unmanagement" of the location (the boundaries of the space would have to be repaired and policed) which also proposes a resolution for the moral ambivalence of the environmental subject. For the

²⁸ The *objet a* is a Lacanian term for the Other, the unattainable object of desire.

viewer of the site at its boundary, it would exist both in a state of wildness (absence) and as an object of land management (presence) at the same time²⁹, thus creating a stabilised moral point where the *objet a*, the ecological site, is maintained in its visually unobtainable state as an object of pure desire. Looking back to *Inclusive Path* the project would work in a similar way as a response to the impossible gaze of the environmental subject, providing an outlet for an audience to both enjoy this fantasy and acknowledge its fallacy.

6.4 SUBTRACTION?

What becomes though of the heritage of the site in *One Mile Wild*? How does this respect or maintain fidelity to the “revolution” of access that took place here if it is premised on a radical exclusion? Žižek’ continues his discussion of the impossible gaze with the injunction “...not to abandon the topos of alternate reality as such” and concludes that, “...the task is rather to unearth the hidden potentiality (the utopian emancipatory potential) which was betrayed in the actuality of revolution and its final outcome (the rise of utilitarian market capitalism)” (ibid: p. 84). The “actuality of revolution” in this instance was that right of access created by the Mass Trespass, which allowed those that came after to freely consume the landscape changing its visual aesthetics and its ecology, a “betrayal” of both the aesthetics of the act itself and of their conception of the “fine country”, the objective of the transgression. The “hidden potentiality” was the addition of new common landscapes (paths and tracks) previously owned by a privileged minority, in the name of the public. In the intervening 75 years though the notion of a common land(scape) and its value to the public has been expanded to become the “environment”, which is landscape plus : land, soil, air, water, bio-genetic diversity and so on. *One Mile Wild* is therefore true to this new idea of the commons, as an environment held in common for the people, generating oxygen, capturing carbon and so on. The method though is not the addition of

²⁹ Quantum physics gives an example of thinking through this dual state with the “thought experiment” of Schrodinger’s cat where two states of matter can be said to be in superposition, coexisting as states x and y at the same instant, until observed.

new public space, as the Mass Trespass achieved; both *One Mile Wild* and *Inclusive Path* are subtractions of that environment from the public realm, landscape minus.

This thesis of “subtraction” appears in the work of philosophers Alain Badiou and Steven Critchley, as a strategy of resistance to hegemonic practices and capitalism. Badiou describes each revolutionary Event as “something that can occur only to the extent that it is subtracted from the power of the State” (Badiou, 2010: p. 244). In environmental terms we can think of a range of practices - nomadic lifestyles, alternative communities, subsistence smallholders and living off grid (i.e. without the use of corporate sources of energy). Žižek provides a definition of subtraction, suggesting that:

"Badiou's subtraction, like Hegel's *Aufhebung*, contains three different layers of meaning: (1) to withdraw, disconnect; (2) to reduce the complexity of a situation to its minimal difference; (3.) to destroy the existing order." (Žižek, 2009: p. 129)

Both *Inclusive Path* and *One Mile Wild* to a greater or lesser extent construct themselves on all three layers of subtraction:

- they withdraw from the site
- they follow the logic of *reductio ad absurdum*³⁰ to a nominal ‘solution’
- they aim to destroy the existing aesthetic structures of land management practices

This type of spatial subtraction remains though a very unlikely option for land managers: in 2011 the National Trust started work on enclosing approximately 5½ square miles of Kinder Scout within a post and wire fence, its purpose is to keep out the livestock, but it has stiles for human access roughly every 100 metres. Given this the question remains - is subtraction enough given the urgency of the environmental situation which drives these agendas or should we be engaging the system from within?

³⁰ An argument where the premise is extended to extremes, “reduced to absurdity”, in order to refute or satirise.

Žižek thinks not and that a way of resisting from within might have the characteristics of an aesthetic action:

"...there is no way - but also no need - to fully subtract ourselves from the "corrupted" order of the State: what we have to do is introduce a supplementary torsion into it, to inscribe into it our fidelity to an Event. In this way we remain with the State, but we make the State function in a non-statal way (in a way similar to how poetry, say, takes place within language, but twists and turns it against itself, thus making it tell the truth)." (Žižek, 201: p. 201)

This "supplementary torsion" is another description of a complementary practice that introduces a poetry into a context in order to introduce tensions within it. In the case the projects outlined above it produces an internal political conflict between open access to territory on the one hand and the protection of environmental commons on the other.

7 POPULATIONS: ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLICS

In the previous chapter there was a discussion of some of the spatialities (commons, enclosure, exclusion, access etc.) involved in public rural space, as well as some of the foundational individual psychology relating to its contemporary perception, particularly the impossible gaze and the desire for wilderness. In the UK these spatial and perceptual qualities are the result of the fight for access born out of the history of the enclosure of common lands in the 18th century to suit the methods of an increasingly industrialised agriculture which was necessary to support a biological expansion of the human population. As the population expanded so access to nature/wilderness decreased as rural agriculture took over the commons and whatever land might still have been wild (even in the 18th century very little would have been untouched if any), and in doing so excluded wider society from accessing it. Population then increasingly becomes a factor in both the spatial and aesthetic shaping of the countryside, in its productivisation and its political positioning. In present times population as a term is usually used to describe a group of life-forms in a biologically or socially analytic way - population numbers or characteristics. It is equally used of people, animals, plants and other forms of life and is therefore distinct from other collective terms for people like the "public" which refer to the political characteristics of a group. Population becomes ultimately political in the context of environmentalism, as it is usually conjoined with "growth" (the latest figure for global humankind in billions). It has therefore become a feared term which represents pressure on resources from unimaginably large numbers, forming the backbone of a sense of contingency discussed in previous chapters, "what can I as an individual do to change what is being caused by billions of people?" Addressing population as the basis of environmental pressure in any way is enormously problematic as well. Any form of population control for instance opens complicated practical and ethical questions - which population to control, how that control happens, who is born, who dies... Nevertheless this is the socio-political territory of access and environment at the macro level which shapes the aesthetic character of the rural and elsewhere.

7.1 THE HUMAN SPECIES

Arguably population growth only starts to become significant politically in the UK in the 18th century. The enclosure of common land around this time was to improve agricultural production in the pursuit of profit and to supply the demands of a growing and increasingly urbanised population. This demographic change and its relationship to the environment and agriculture did not go unnoticed. Writing at the start of the Industrial Revolution the Reverend Thomas Malthus, a Church of England priest, suggested that unlimited, or exponential, population growth would eventually outstrip food production which progressed only at a geometric rate. He identified further controls to population as both externalised and internal to mankind, presenting a kind of sublime perspective of the power of nature to overwhelm the technological and scientific progression of the period. In his famous treatise of 1798, *An essay on the principle of population...* he says:

“Famine seems to be the last, the most dreadful resource of nature. The power of population is so superior to the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race. The vices of mankind are active and able ministers of depopulation. They are the precursors in the great army of destruction; and often finish the dreadful work themselves. But should they fail in this war of extermination, sickly seasons, epidemics, pestilence, and plague, advance in terrific array, and sweep off their thousands and ten thousands. Should success be still incomplete, gigantic inevitable famine stalks in the rear, and with one mighty blow levels the population with the food of the world.” (Malthus, 1998: p. 44)

Using Adam Smith’s free market economics (an early theorisation of capitalism set out in *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (Smith, 1776)) to support his Christian ethical position he questioned the premises of the Enlightenment thinkers of the time, that society and humankind were able to attain a utopian state politically or economically in this life. He contended that charitable support of the poor only made “the peasantry” dependent on handouts (and therefore lazy), inflated food prices and increased the population of this “class” who could not be fed. The solution was hard work, reproductive restraint, sobriety and moral rectitude which he sees in the cycle of agriculture as a spiritual, intellectual and moral development of humanity: “The processes

of ploughing and clearing the ground, of collecting and sowing seeds, are not surely for the assistance of God in his creation, but are made previously necessary to the enjoyment of the blessings of life, in order to rouse man into action, and form his mind to reason” (Malthus, 1998: p. 114). The way in which Malthus’s conception of poverty was part of the spiritual order (which made social intervention unnecessary and damaging to both the poor and rich) influenced the thinking of Charles Darwin who extended the premise through his conception of natural selection, although eventually eliminating any divine attribution to this process. Natural selection was the application of Malthus’s basic ideas about natural population control applied more widely. For example Darwin points out the way in which plants and animals produce more offspring than necessary to maximise survival and are then eliminated if resources are unavailable to sustain that number. By saying that natural selection instead of God was the mechanism of establishing life and regulating populations, Darwin’s evolutionary theories generated a conflict between religion and biological science. At the same time the idea of natural selection fed into the socio-political/economic thinking of the time. Just prior to Darwin’s publication of *On the origin of the species* in 1859 Frederick Engels, the intellectual founder of communism, attacked Malthus’ “Christian economics” as the rationalisation of entrenched privilege and wealth. This theory represented humans as an objectified “manpower” of which there might be a “surplus” to be disposed of, or suppressed at will. Engels thought that technological progress harnessed to agriculture was the answer to supporting the poor and hungry:

“The productivity of the soil can be increased ad infinitum by the application of capital, labour and science... Capital increases daily; labour power grows with population; and day by day science increasingly makes the forces of nature subject to man. This immeasurable productive capacity, handled consciously and in the interest of all, would soon reduce to a minimum the labour falling to the share of mankind.” (Engels, 1844: p. 2)

Both Engels and his contemporary Karl Marx took issue with the emerging capitalist interpretation of Darwinism which attributed to this biological theory the notion of

“survival of the fittest” as a justification for an economic theory, the laissez-faire (free market) model. Engels denounced the application of a biological premise to a socio-economic one as naivety: Marx nevertheless found in the concept of evolutionary progress through natural selection support for the dialectical materialism he advocated, the process of the proletariat’s movement towards emancipation and freedom in spite of restraint by the established interests of religion and capital. Marx wrote in 1861: "Darwin’s book is very important and serves me as a natural scientific basis for the class struggle in history. One has to put up with the crude English method of development, of course" (Grant and Woods, 2002: p. 107). Marx goes on to say that this was a “death blow to teleology”, that is to say it negates the basic idea of there being an extrinsic or intrinsic purpose in nature such as the design of God. This, along with faith in the “application of technology, capital and science”, represents the predominant paradigm by which all ends of the political spectrum considered the human population in ascendancy over nature.

In the 20th century population, as the biological mass of humanity enters, thanks to Michel Foucault, a biopolitical phase. For Foucault Darwin’s contribution to politics is the recasting of “humankind” as the “human species”, in turn making the biological characteristics of humans collectively and individually the object of political strategies of power and control. For Foucault the meaning of population shifts during the time of Malthus and Engels from denoting the subjects of sovereign control to the productive figures of Habermasian bourgeois mercantilism (see p. 61), which in turn become the object of radical emancipatory political thought. In Foucault’s series of lectures on *Security, territory and population* from 1977 onwards he postulates that biopower is the foundation for a new conception of the public:

“With the emergence of mankind as a species, within a field of the definition of all living species, we can say that man appears in the first form of his integration within biology. From one direction, then, population is the human species, and from another it is what will be called the public. Here again, the word is not new, but its usage is. The public, which is a crucial notion in the eighteenth century, is the population seen under the aspect of its opinions, ways of doing things, forms of behaviour, customs, fears, prejudices, and requirements; it is what one gets a hold on through education, campaigns, and convictions. The population is therefore everything that extends from biological rootedness through

the species up to the surface that gives one a hold provided by the public. From the species to the public; we have here a whole field of new realities in the sense that they are the pertinent elements for mechanisms of power, the pertinent space within which and regarding which one must act.” (Foucault et al., 2007: p. 105)

So, contrary to Marx, Foucault believes that the biological attributes of populations underpin the essential political character of how publics are constituted and hence the basis for the contestation of public space. For example he suggests that only by abstracting the public as a population is the State able to implement measures of control and discipline in order to maintain the population as the source of continued productivity. Conversely and ironically it is only by acting en-masse as a population that the public is able to counter this abstraction.

In this sense his theoretical position prefigures the environmental politics of the late 20th century as a reassertion of a Gaian earth (see p. 126) as the whole compass of public space. Gaia as a globalised environment is reasserted in its Malthusian function of regulating population levels with ecological limits on food production, which means more competition related to food and other resources, resulting in war and other population controls. Therefore a literal revolution has occurred since the industrial and agrarian revolutions of the 18th century when it appeared there was the potential for a human technological and scientific mastery over nature. Nature has come full circle culturally, socially and politically to again be regarded as the ultimate and sublime master capable of wiping out current and future populations.

In *Straw dogs: Thoughts on humans and other animals* (2002) philosopher John Gray works through James Lovelock’s identification of the human species as a pathogen on the surface of the earth to conclude that, as the human global population reaches 6 billion (predicted to rise to 9 billion by 2050 (Zalasiewicz et al, 2010: p. 2228-9)) the future can hold only “...four possible outcomes... :’destruction of the invading disease organisms; chronic infection; destruction of the host; or symbiosis – a lasting relationship of mutual benefit to the host and invader” (Gray, 2002: p. 8). In his opinion the chance of a positive outcome, a

balanced relationship, is highly unlikely and at the other end of this spectrum it would be impossible for mankind to eradicate the planet itself. This leaves only the pessimistic conclusion that the disease will be cured by a reduction in human numbers in the ways set out by Thomas Malthus almost exactly 200 years earlier. To think of humankind as a pathogen needing a cure though seems a dangerous extension of biopolitical logic. Gray is content to rely on Gaia as the ultimate arbiter of optimum population but this seems to abdicate human responsibility and agency in this situation, not to mention the potential for enormous human suffering. On the other hand what are the options? Direct control of population growth by human agency in the past has often been directly associated with totalitarian projects. Examples include the eugenic systems of Nazi Germany which sterilised 'undesirables' such as the mentally ill or physically deformed, the one child policy introduced in communist China in 1978 in order to curb demand on resources and the forced sterilisation of women which is happening even now in Uzbekistan (Antelava, 2012). In contrast reproductive rights are asserted in most democratic neo-liberal countries, "...the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children" (United Nations, 1994). Ironically then an environmental concern for the welfare of humanity by curbing population growth would contain an inherent social and political tendency, or the actuality, of forms of oppression or suppression of human rights. The only alternative is self-suppression or negation of individual reproductive rights, an act which flies in the face of neo-Darwinian thinking which gives primacy to the perpetuation of genetic material within populations as the function of life and procreation. Richard Dawkins seminal book *The selfish gene* (1978) proposes, in simple terms, that the gene is the basic unit of life and evolution has simply provided ever more adapted ways of facilitating its survival. He considers biological populations and their regulation, concluding that, "...individual parents practice family planning, but in the sense that they optimize their birth-rates rather than restrict them for the public good" (Dawkins, 1978: p. 131). There are however others who are prepared to act against this imperative and enact voluntary population control. One such

group is The Voluntary Human Extinction Movement which suggests that: "Phasing out the human race by voluntarily ceasing to breed will allow Earth's biosphere to return to good health. Crowded conditions and resource shortages will improve as we become less dense." (The Voluntary Human Extinction Movement, 2013)

For these reasons "population" is problematic in environmental politics. How then should it be dealt with? Returning to Foucault, population has at its heart the notion of economic and bio-political "mastery" - of population over environment, of state over population and of environment over population. This returns to the Hegelian point about the master and servant (see p. 85), how the servant through mastery over nature/environment is ultimately able to supersede his or her master (capital). Both the master and servant rely on mastery over the environment to negotiate their positions. In this way environmental politics is about social and political relationships and progress to equality within a population. Without the master and servant relationship changing there is a continuing need to exploit natural resources and restorative, ameliorative or other environmentally positive actions cannot take place. Slavoj Žižek discusses this point:

"The general productive relationship between humankind and nature is that between subject and object (humanity as a collective subject asserts its domination over nature through its transformation and exploitation in the productive process); within humankind itself, however, productive workers as the living force of domination over nature are themselves subordinated to those who are agents of, or stand-ins for, subordinated objectivity. This paradox was clearly perceived already by Adorno and Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, there they show how domination over nature necessarily entails class domination of people over other people... the way to rid ourselves of our masters is not for humankind to become a collective master over nature, but to recognize the imposture in the very notion of the Master." (Žižek, 2011: p. 242-3)

The point being made here is that capitalism and environmental politics are on a collision course and this situation can only be addressed if social inequalities are resolved. If, as in Žižek's view, these social inequalities are the result of productivising populations they can only be resolved by questioning and ultimately replacing capitalism as a global paradigm:

"...the Whole is contained by its Part, that the fate of the Whole (life on earth) hinges on what goes on in what was formerly one of its parts (the socio-economic mode of

production of one of the species on earth). This is why we have to accept the paradox that, in the relation between the universal antagonism (the threatened parameters of the conditions for life) and the particular antagonism (the deadlock of capitalism), the key struggle is the particular one: one can solve the universal problem (of the survival of the human species) only by first resolving the particular deadlock of the capitalist mode of production." (p. 333-4)

Therefore forms of socio-political organisation which are founded on a more radical social equilibrium are a prerequisite of restoring environmental equilibrium now we are in the age of the Anthropocene. Population growth as an issue must therefore be tackled by recognising the "imposture of the master" both in human relationships and in the relationship between the human species and nature.

7.2 CONTRA – IMPOSTURE: IMMERSION

The "imposture in the very notion of master" still threads its way through the rural and rural politics. A good example are the rural "structures of discipline" described by Macnaghton and Urry (see p. 108) which are not purely limited to the environmental management practices and productive spatialities, such as enclosure, but relate back to the forms of knowledge that underpin them - with contributions from fields such as sociology, ecology and other biological, geographical and environmental sciences. The methods and processes of these sciences contribute to the languages, processes and forms of authority which maintain a sense of scientific "mastery" of the environment. For example in the Foucauldian vein there is the medicalisation of language used of ecological systems where they are "sick" or conversely "healthy" in quantifiable terms, as in the following from the scientific ecological journal *Endangered species*: "The potential costs of healing sick ecosystems are likely to spiral and to soon become impossible to pay for." (Kinne, 2004: p. 2). Equally the forms of authorisation for environmental management manifest as objective reports based on empirical research, the science legitimising practical changes to landscapes. Applied environmental management methods might include measurement and data analysis - which in turn would be the subject of a final report which might include practical assessment, wider policy contexts, cost-benefit analysis, recommendations and so on. These reports are forms of scientific/managerial authority and therefore intrinsic

interventions in what de Certeau would describe as the “strategic” field of operation of organisations and policy, as opposed to a practised “tactical” intervention - where an extrinsic event intervenes in the field of “strategic” operation (see p. 120). The project *Immersion* originated out of the idea that it might be possible to make a dissensual intervention in the policy of strategic environmental and other agencies through the language and forms of authority, i.e. a research report, which utilised a scientific foundation to validate aesthetic conclusions.

Immersion (2007-9) (Appendix 7) was commissioned by Landscape Arts and Network Services as part of a programme entitled *Bright Sparks 3* in 2007. The stated aim of this programme was that it:

“...supports art and design led research and development projects which explore the physical and social aspects of public open space in both urban and rural contexts... transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, consider contemporary cultural trends, and explore new or experimental materials in new situations.” (Marques and Woods, 2008: p. 3)

A proposal was submitted to *Bright Sparks 3* to consider a particular site at Mothecombe Bay in Devon, a disused tidal swimming pool built for the adjacent estate and, using the same methodology as *Stairway to Heaven*, to be accompanied by a planning application for its conversion into an aquarium. Whilst the proposal was accepted it was suggested by the organisers that there should be a step back from the specific site and proposal to undertake a wider investigation into marine/water environments as public space. Nevertheless the original conception of an educational facility made from a converted leisure facility, in the context of a leisured landscape (a beach) informed the artistic research - an investigation into an interstitial point located between leisure practices, ecological science and politics.

More open ended research was therefore undertaken in consultation with the Marine Institute at the University of Plymouth and the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth. In particular attention was paid to the work of scientists at the Marine Institute who had

been participating in the European Lifestyles and Marine Ecosystems initiative which directly relates marine ecological welfare to human welfare. According to their research (Langmead et al., 2007) in ecological terms the coastal area of the sea makes up only 10% of the ocean environment but it is home to over 90% of all marine species and of the 13,200 known species of marine fish almost 80% are coastal. Set against this around 3.6 billion people, or 60% of the world's population, live within 60km of the coast and 80% of all tourism takes place in coastal areas. Pollution, eutrophication and overfishing of wild stocks are just some of the consequences of this extensive human habitation which is particularly acute in Europe due to the density of population. Human migration and economic activity also have consequences and have resulted in the introduction to the UK of "alien", "invasive" or "non-native" species which are either imported purposefully or arrive accidentally through shipping or air freight. English Nature's *Audit of non-native species in England* (2005), in a manner typical of science reporting for policy development, puts the issue of "non-natives" in economic instrumental terms:

"The economic and environmental effects of introduced species are generally unfavourable. Only four animals were rated as having a strongly positive economic effect, namely the quarry species common pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, greylag goose *Anser anser* and redlegged partridge *Alectoris rufa*, and the predatory beetle *Rhizophagus grandis*, which is a biocontrol agent of the great spruce bark beetle *Dendroctonus micans*. Many plants of wild or wild-type seed origin are cultivated, especially by foresters; these have a strong positive economic impact. Nineteen species have been identified as having strongly negative environmental impacts. The animals include six mammals, two birds and one fish. The other two are the slipper limpet *Crepidula fornicata*, and the Chinese mitten crab *Eriocheir sinensis*, which spends most of its life in freshwater and estuaries. Three pathogens were noted for their major impact. Six vascular plants were in this category, but the number could be larger if different selection criteria were applied." (Hill et al., 2005: p: 6)

It is interesting that there has been a shift over time from the use in official terminology of "aliens" and "invasives" to "non-natives". In terms of scientific accuracy all "non-natives" are not necessarily "invasive". Semantically it is obvious that "non-native" is a less emotive term in comparison to language associated with either extra-terrestrials (not scientific) or active hostilities (too emotive). Even "non-native" though is still inscribed with a set of geo-political values about human national identity which seems to ignore species

migration as a natural phenomenon which occurs over millennia and the ecological principles of all living systems on Earth being interconnected³¹. This language reinforces the primacy of a cultural perspective which suggests that human agency is a non-natural phenomenon, when humans become scientific observers they also become arbiters of the proper place of other species. This is also implicit in the term used for measures against unwanted non-natives amongst other pathogens etc, bio-security. Bio-security is the security of humans from unwanted aspects of the environment as opposed to the security of environment itself (Meyerson & Reaser, 2002). This terminology suggests an underlying anthropocentrism deployed by biological science in support of environmental management.

The research for *Immersion* also reviewed cultural attitudes to water environments in the context of leisure which, in spite of the attractions of living by the sea's edge, can be equivocal. Simon Schama's brief history of water, culture and religion in *Landscape and memory* (p: 245-382) talks of water bodies in the landscape and on the coast as liminal zones, places of transition from one state to another which have historically represented gateways to other spiritual worlds.. Visually water as material reflects land and sky. Where clouds are commonplace this makes it an opaque non-space generating an accompanying primal fear of what lies beneath the surface. This fear is manifest in literature and stories of the sea: one of the most well-known contemporary myths about water is of man eating sharks, made particularly popular by the movie *Jaws* in 1975. This myth is occasionally reinforced by sensationalist media, Great White shark sightings off Cornwall are still reported in the tabloids although these sharks are practically unheard of in Northern waters. Likewise perennial television documentaries voyeuristically show survivors with the semi-circular scars of shark attack. Less spectacular but still potentially lethal at a

³¹ "Ecological global interconnectedness" can often sound like an matter of faith, philosophy or spirituality but as an assertion it also receives support from physical and mathematical sciences, through ideas such as chaos theory (Gleick, 1987) which reinforce the notion that there are global systems in which all things are ultimately connected over space and time. An example would be Edward Lorenz's thought experiment, the "butterfly effect", where a butterfly flapping its wings causes a hurricane a few weeks later due to the chaotic interaction of air molecules started by the butterfly's action.

microscopic level cryptosporidium and campylobacter discourage many people from entering “wild water”, having been taught to swim in warm, chlorinated indoor pools. Open air lidos and the use of tidal swimming pools, such as that at Mothecombe, have also declined as the rise of cheap package holidays has acclimatised people to warmer water. In *Liquid assets* (2005) Janet Smith observes that: “As of 2005, around 100 open-air pools remain in operation, less than a third of total recorded half a century ago” (p. 25). Interestingly this developing aversion to engagement with water environments has been compounded by environmental messages which reinforce the idea of the sea (and rivers) as dirty, dangerous and polluted (see p. 94).

The stated aim of *Immersion* therefore evolved into an exploration of how water ecologies can benefit from the economic, social and political impetus behind leisure and recreation. The final form of *Immersion* brought together these scientific and cultural themes into a report with the title, *Immersion: A strategic framework for eco-recreation in British waters* (the report is attached in full as Appendix 7). It incorporates material from agencies working in marine ecology, landscape management, regeneration, public health and tourism, as well as wider cultural references. The report runs through in more detail the ‘evidence’ set out above in order to suggest the need for the reutilisation of tidal pools and lidos across the UK as new locations for aquaculture, as public swimming and diving pools and as repositories for invasive, water-based plant and animal species in order to curb their spread (Figure 28). This would combine educational and leisure facilities where people might for instance swim with and then eat invasive species.



Figure 28. Mothecombe Aquarium (2008), Alex Murdin. Photomontage.

Visualisations of facilities were developed in collaboration with Nick Childs and Mike Cox from Childs and Sulzmann architects with concepts such as a panoptical rapid response floating repository to be towed to non-native species marine infestations (Figure 29). These were based on Foucault's theorisation of the panopticism of structures of power - prisons, hospitals and so on where the subjects are always on view to the observers (Foucault, 1977: p. 195-228) and on the idea of the scientific/environmental management gaze mastering and controlling other species populations based on their geography and economic impact. Controlling "non-natives" is an instrumental issue – the animals and plants are after all unaware of their geo-political surroundings and migrate/colonise purely on the basis of a suitable environmental niche being available which will enable individuals to reproduce and populations to grow³².

³² In this way *Immersion* is equally an observation on human migratory politics and the regulation of human population flows.

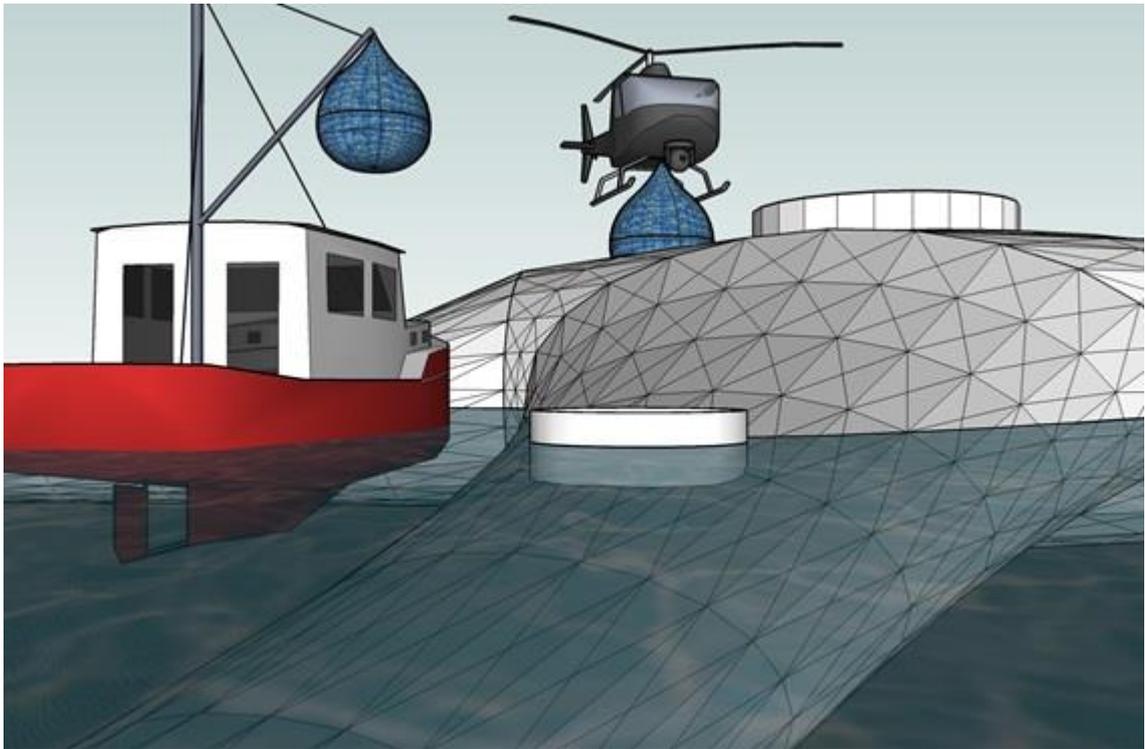


Figure 29. Immersion: Loading a rapid response unit from sea and air (2008), Mike Cox and Nick Childs.

As a report *Immersion: A strategic framework for eco-recreation in British waters* became a printed and electronic document which was distributed to the same organisations whose research was used, the Environment Agency, Natural England, scientific institutions etc. Recognising that the report could simply be ignored there was also a deliberate public relations strategy of distributing to the media and other groups. Press coverage was obtained from newspapers, TV and even specialist media such as *Practical Fishkeeping* (Craig, 2009).

Investigative media such as the BBC and the *Western Morning News* were able to put the proposals to some of the authorities involved, in this way obliging some response:

"Plymouth City Council owns the city's Tinside Lido. A council spokeswoman said the lido, a grade II-listed building, underwent a £3.5m refurbishment in 2003 and was used by swimmers during the summer months. "We don't see how it would work," she said. A spokesman for DEFRA said non-invasive [sic] plants and animals cost the UK economy £2bn a year. He said: "We're looking to control the spread of non-native species and launched a strategy in 2008, but we are not looking to turn lidos into reserves." (BBC, 2009)

“In a statement, the Environment Agency said it was working with the Government to limit the spread of non-native species, and was keen to raise awareness of the issues. But it said it was illegal to keep some non-native species, a possible snag to Mr Murdin's idea. The agency added: "Schemes would also need to ensure that they are not increasing the risk of spread of non-native species – such as introducing highly invasive species to parts of the country where they are not already present." A Defra spokesman said the Government had no plans to turn lidos into attractions like those proposed.” (Western Morning News, 2009)

It is unknown whether the “report” did affect the thinking of these organisations but it is at least possible to say that the method for introducing a level of aesthetic dissensus into these governmental systems and a wider public sphere was successful.

7.3 LYME LIGHT: PRIDE OF PLACE 3.0

Following the rejection of the initial Pride of Place project proposal for Lyme Regis (*Sites of Reception*) two further proposals were made. The second proposal (*Pride of Place 2.0*), entitled *Persuasion* (2008), was rejected as it was also for a temporary project. *Persuasion* was to consist of a sound installation in the Shelters area of the town which was to be redeveloped, featuring the words of young people in Lyme talking about their vision for the future of the public realms and environment in Lyme. Their words would be re-styled in the language of Georgian England as a reference to the association of the town with Jane Austen’s novel *Persuasion*. The third proposal (*Pride of Place 3.0*) was however accepted. It addressed the input of the Turn Lyme Green group which valued a “permanent”, “low maintenance” feature. With the working title of *Lyme Light* (2008-) (Appendix 8) it took the essential brief of creating an artwork that creatively raises awareness of key environmental concerns, sustainable energy use and human impact on the natural environment, and introduced the issue of population. The project was developed in collaboration with Mike Stevenson, Lecturer in Design at Plymouth University, and an internationally recognised lighting designer.

One of the most obvious ways in which energy consumption is manifest in the public realm is through street lighting. Lighting is a major source of electricity consumption -

nineteen percent of global electricity generation is for lighting (Black, 2006). The carbon dioxide produced by generating all of this electricity amounts to 70% of global emissions from passenger vehicles, and is three times more than emissions from aviation. The largest usage of lighting systems is in commercial and public buildings, followed by residential lighting, industrial sector lighting and outdoor/street lighting. This level of consumption could be substantially reduced for the same level of lighting service if less energy wastage occurred from the use of inefficient lighting technologies, a lack of adequate controls, a failure to make better use of natural daylight and wide variations in recommended lighting levels.

Public lighting itself can be split in to two types – functional and amenity (primarily decorative) lighting. There is a particular association of amenity lighting and seaside towns which has become a way of attracting and entertaining tourists. The first seaside lights in the UK were the Blackpool illuminations which started in 1879, “...when just EIGHT arc lamps bathed the Promenade in what was described as artificial sunshine” (Visit Blackpool, 2013) - this event preceded Thomas Edison's patent of the electric light bulb by twelve months. Although Lyme Regis was the first place in Dorset to have its own municipal electricity supply (Greene, 2006) it has never had the same level of lighting as Blackpool. It still relies though on electric lighting to allow tourists to wander the Esplanade at night and provide decoration. How though is it possible to reconcile the use of energy in this way for non-essential purposes, given the environmental consequences? What is the place of this type of display now in an age when energy is becoming more precious?

Another issue with excessive public lighting is “light pollution”, also known as photo-pollution or luminous pollution. The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), defines light pollution as, “...any adverse effect of artificial light including sky glow, glare, light trespass, light clutter, decreased visibility at night, and energy waste” (International Dark Sky Association, 2009). It obscures the stars in the night sky for city dwellers, interferes

with astronomical observatories, and, like any other form of pollution, disrupts ecosystems and has adverse health effects. Light pollution can be divided into two main types: 1) annoying light that intrudes on an otherwise natural or low-light setting and 2) excessive light (generally indoors) that leads to discomfort and adverse health effects. The case against light pollution is strengthened by a range of studies on health effects, suggesting that excess light may induce loss in visual acuity, hypertension, headaches and increased incidence of carcinoma. Since the early 1980s, a global dark-sky movement has emerged, with concerned people campaigning to reduce the amount of light pollution. In Britain this is run by the Campaign for Dark Skies, part of the British Astronomical Association. Against this there are the positive benefits of street lighting levels which are that it improves the night-time safety of road users and pedestrians and that it reduces crime and the fear of crime during the hours of darkness.

The aims of *Lyme Light* were therefore to highlight both the relationship between reducing energy consumption and reducing light pollution in both countryside and towns, encouraging a sense of individual and collective environmental responsibility, enhancing the uniqueness of Lyme Regis as a place and contributing to its economic and social sustainability. The concept for this project was basically to eliminate the distinction between lighting which was deemed to be purely functional, i.e. street lighting, and lighting which served a decorative purpose, i.e. amenity lighting. Using LED and computer technology it is perfectly possible to have lighting that changes according to purpose. LED technology also means that colour and intensity of light can be changed according to the specific place it is sited, reflecting the particular environment and using a better energy profile (e.g. switching itself off when not needed). These attributes are easily controllable via computer technology. Currently most street lighting is based on decades old low energy sources that offer economy only and compromises on the wavelength of the light output to get some optimisation. The most common form of street lighting is low pressure sodium, the characteristic yellow street light.

Artistically the first iteration of Lyme Light was the proposal to create anamorphic images of stellar constellations across the town's street lighting system. Lights across the townscape would change colour and, when viewed from a particular vantage point, create an image of the Haywain, Orion, etc. (Figure 30). This relates to the idea of light pollution obscuring the night sky and also becomes a temporal reference to Lyme's particular association with vast (geological) timescales due to the famous Jurassic fossils collected from the local cliffs, comparing this to the even longer timeframes inherent in considering light travelling from stars to the earth, the light of which can date back to the origin of the universe.

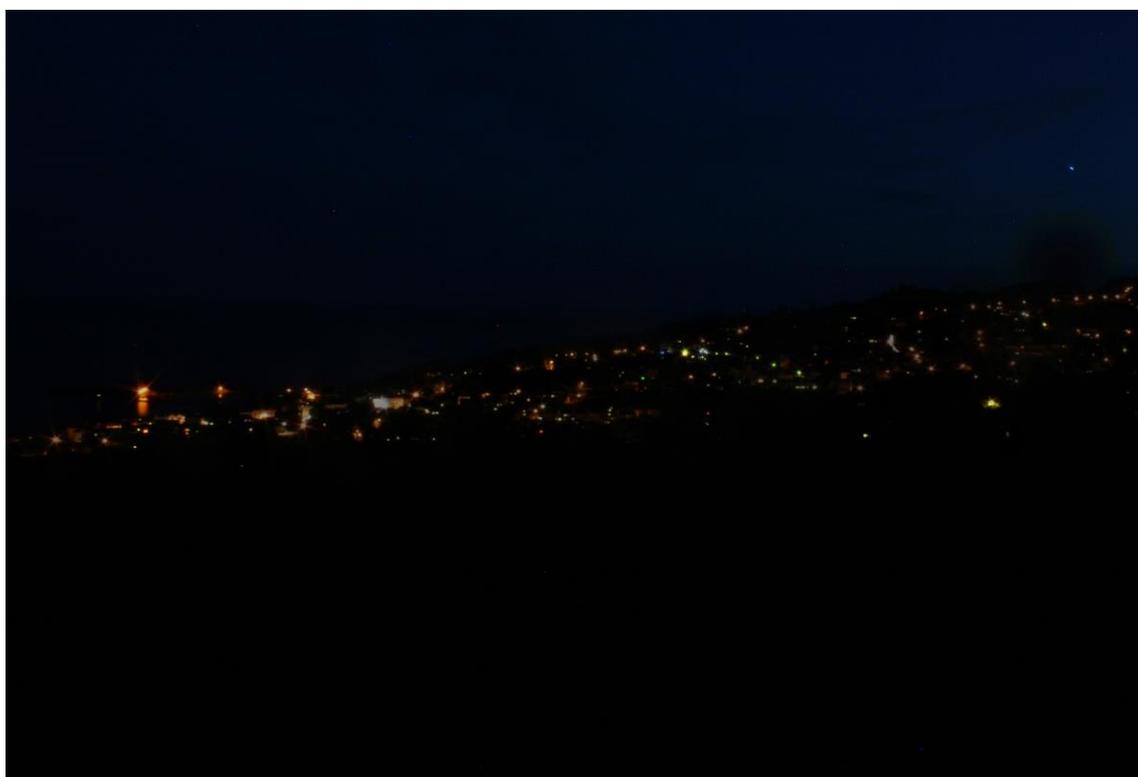


Figure 30. Lyme Light: The Haywain (2008), Alex Murdin. Green streetlights form the constellation of the Haywain when seen from a particular viewpoint.

This proposal was however rejected by the local authority involved, Dorset County Council, over fears that the change in colour would affect the functionality of the lights as colour value can be a concern for some vulnerable people, specifically those with different visual capabilities (even though traditional street lighting, especially sodium lighting is

already very poor indeed for colour blind and sight impaired people as either pedestrians or drivers). This meant that the project had to be restricted to locations where light was provided primarily as an amenity, for example public areas such as car parks, the seafront and recreational parks. Car parks in Lyme were explored as a site however the financial pressures on local authorities caused by the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2011 by the Conservative/Liberal government meant that negotiations with West Dorset District Council who owned the car parks collapsed. Equally this meant that the project needed to be absolutely minimal in scale and the idea of working across a large area became unfeasible. At the time of writing Lyme Regis Town Council has identified a site at Langmoor gardens on the seafront, near the famous Cobb harbour arm, and a revised proposal developed *Lyme Light: Light Year* (2008-).

This iteration will install a new LED head on a recycled street lamp column (Figure 31). It will appear to be just another part of the existing lighting until the typical yellowish light bursts into life. The light will use data from Dorset County Council Registry Office in Dorchester to gather data for the life events of people in Lyme, specifically births, deaths and marriages. Data gathered will be uploaded to the light every 6 months and the light will therefore mark the anniversary of the event in question. The light will change to pink for a girl's birth, or blue for a boy's (Figure 32) and white for a wedding. More sombrely it will flicker off as it observes a minute's darkness to mark a death. Events will be overlaid over the lifespan of the project and create new patterns of life in light over time.



Figure 31. Two possible locations for Lyme Light: Light Year on Lyme Regis seafront (Langmoor Gardens)

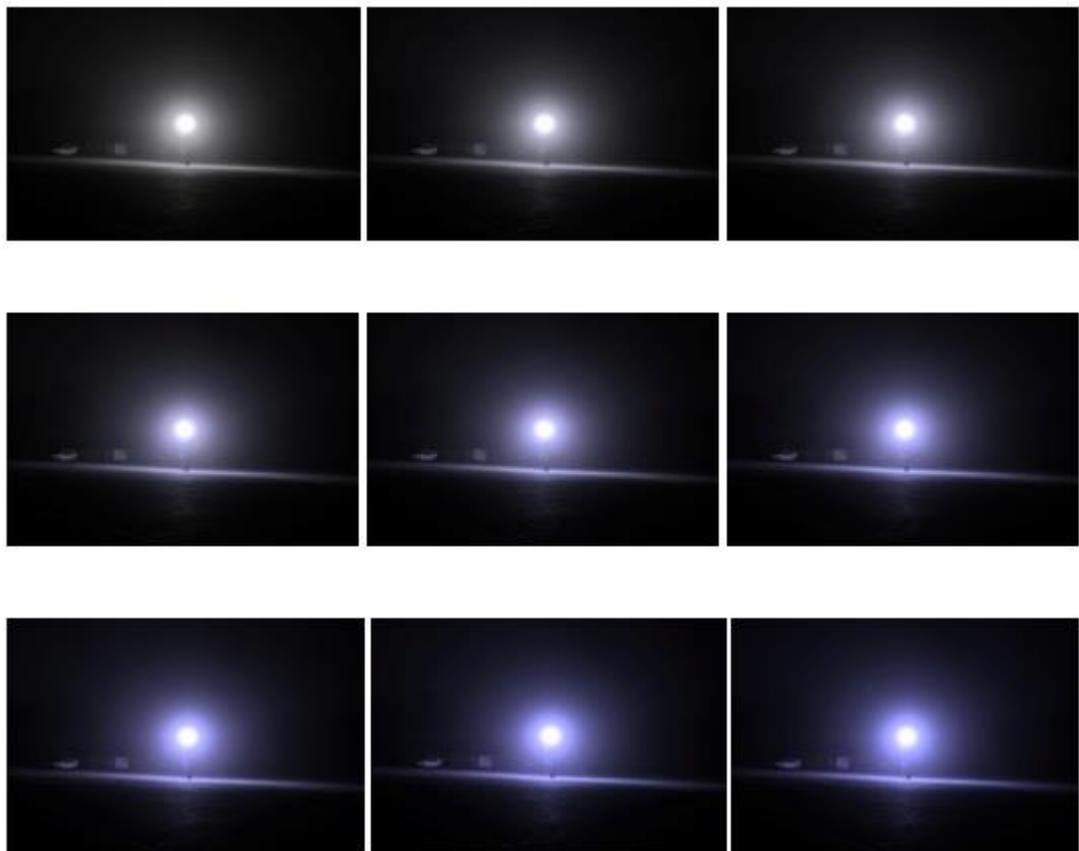


Figure 32. Lyme Light: Light Year: blue for a boy (2008-), Alex Murdin.

Lyme Light: Light Year will therefore create an image of changes to the town's population by connecting to the official mechanisms of population recording. In a town where time is usually measured in millions of years and eons this lamp will pulse to the shorter span of human time, becoming a light which writes the anniversary of three key events in an individual's life into a part of the public realm. The intention, if the project is a success, is that this type of intervention could also provide a platform for changing and evolving light art in a public space, used by schools, artists and the local community for performance or festival. This is a way in which the wider public can start to be included in and take control of its local infrastructure.

7.4 OUT OF CONTROL

These two projects, *Immersion* and *Lyme Light* consider some of the biopolitical specifics of rural public space as they relate to populations, control of other species populations by humans and control of the population of humans by humans (or its final control by nature). In the first project, *Immersion*, there is a questioning of the continuing disassociation of the human species from other species (anthropocentrism), a cultural paradigm originating in Christian belief of a nature gifted to mankind and in the scientific era paradoxically both disavowed by basic Darwinian scientific premises (the fact that humans are also a biological species) and perpetuated by scientific objectification which reinforces the power of land managers to manage (and master) "sick" environments. The illogical twists in the proposal, such as solving problems by eating them, ironically flag up the contradictions of directives from a technocratic governance of nature which asks us to love and learn about nature, but only the parts that are decided to be in their proper place. The point is therefore that the acknowledgement of humans as an intrinsic part of nature is a prerequisite of biopolitical awareness and the start of developing new attitudes that reject the exploitation of a habitat in common.

The final form of the Pride of Place project, *Lyme Light: Light Year*, approaches the same subject by developing a further perspective on the basic Žižekian connection between egalitarian political inclusivity (metaphorically becoming part of the infrastructure of public space in its lighting) and the things which are identified as threats to an

environment held in common amongst global populations (e.g. hedonistic consumption of energy). Methodologically both projects continued to develop as interventions which accept the inherent political and ethical contradictions of contexts. In *Immersion* the concept of an educational facility like an aquarium which is also an aquaculture farm acknowledges the conflicted parameters of engagement with nature experienced in contemporary culture (an experience like enjoying a plate of fish and chips at the National Marine Aquarium). In *Lyme Light: Light Year* it is the offer of death as a final energy saving measure.

8 DISSENSUAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Whilst part of the research question has dealt with the concept of an “aestheticised political process”, a process of engagement with politics as an engagement with others (e.g. *Stairway to Heaven, Inclusive Path* or *The Jaywick Tourist Board* which have tested various means of engagement/activism), the other part of the question is about the way this process might actually manifest in the public realm. The inherent issues raised in this move from the public sphere to the public realm though are about how a fixed object can reflect the movements of a changing field of power in flux, and whether the objects created must always necessarily represent the choices and victories of ideology of those in power. If, as suggested, there is an aesthetic political process capable of holding in tension different perspectives complementarily but still with a sense of reaching out to the universal, what would that look like and where could it be located? To answer this one must first answer the two main objections to creating work in the public realm in the first place, as set out in the introduction. The objections come from both the artists involved and from the guardians of public space and are temporal, objections to permanence, and to do with risk and liability, the fear of difference.

8.1 THE CON OF TEMPORARY ART?

Much of the debate about art in public and public art has flowed from objections to the fixity of the outcomes, particularly where they are physically located as immutable objects in public space. The argument goes that, as static signifiers, they can only be received by certain groups whose culture matches that of the art that is produced, that their longevity contributes to this as they become irrelevant, ignored or co-opted by political, economic or social forces for other purposes (branding of place at best and political propaganda at worst). Artists tend to resist this. For instance James Young identifies the rise of the German counter-monument in his eponymous essay where new forms of monument

embrace their own degradation over time, or enforce their own disappearance³³, in an act of atonement and recognition that time and society change form and meaning: "...by formalising its impermanence and even celebrating its changing form over time and in space, the counter-monument refutes this self-defeating premise [of permanence] of the traditional monument... resisting its own reason for being the counter-monument paradoxically reinvigorates the very idea of the monument itself" (Young, 1990: p. 77).

Nevertheless both government and commercial entities continue to focus on permanence, prioritising discrete, readily identifiable works by well-known artists whose association with a project adds value to the cost/benefit equation. The resulting object can be readily pointed out as the outcome, as opposed to any of the soft social outcomes put forward as an alternative legacy. Thus there has evolved a polarisation between the permanent work desired by commissioners which is 'bad' and the temporary work advocated for by artists and critics which is 'good'. In this vein collaborators Claire Doherty and Paul O'Neill offer a critique in their writings which champions a durational approach to art in public to counter the fixed and static monument, a stereotype which they argue still informs many contemporary regeneration and the built environment projects:

"We need to tackle the perception that a public art work should be permanent; why should the legacy of a temporary public artwork not be as keenly felt culturally as a permanently sited commemorative statue, why should public art not have time limits? Places are not static sites onto which public art is grafted; rather regeneration is a continuous process to which artists are contributing...At its most challenging, public art is the beginning of a conversation that changes the way in which we interact with the world around us; at its most conventional, it is a full stop." (Doherty, 2010)

Doherty objects here to the practice of inserting a permanent object as a short term fix (we've made this place pretty so it will be all right, now we can move on to the next place) which needs to be replaced with a long term commitment to supporting social and cultural

³³ Young particularly refers to Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Harbour Monument Against Facism* (1986), a lead column with the signatures of local people (tags, scrawls, graffiti etc.) inscribed on it. This column gradually sank into an excavated space beneath the column over a period of 7 years.

change. Doherty and O'Neill also value the ephemeral and temporary as a counterbalance to commodification, spectacle and "over-production":

"...the durational approach is not simply a call for longer term projects or for the commissioning of temporary versus permanent artworks, but rather for the potential of short-term and durational projects to be realised as part of longer-term, cumulative engagements which recognise the process through which small-scale, limited constituencies gather for a finite period of time around particular projects. This would require the rejection of the itinerancy and over-production that has characterised public art commissioning over the past ten years, in favour of embedded, committed practice for emerging curators, artists and commissioners, alongside funding and commissioning opportunities committed to longer lead-in times and fewer predetermined outcomes." (Doherty and O'Neill, 2011: p. 13-14)

That art in public has relevance over and above environmental improvement and that temporary projects have a cultural legacy is becoming less controversial. The *Stairway to Heaven* project demonstrates the validity of this point - as one person on the BBC "Ouch" messageboard for disabled audiences said: "Whether it [the art project] happens or not is irrelevant. It's the message behind it - that the environment isn't just the preserve of non-disabled people - that is the important thing. And the reaction of the guy at the preservation society makes the best argument - because he can't see that there is even a problem" (BBC, 2006b).

To dismiss permanent work altogether though is problematic. Firstly there is an issue with what is actually meant by permanent and temporary. What are these actual time frames and on whose scale are they measured - does an artwork have to last 1 year, 7 years, 25 years or 1000 years to be permanent - why is a work that is meant to endure for 25 years less of a "conversation" than one which lasts a minute? Also if one accepts that the meanings of art in public space are also constructed by sensual and contextual experiences (as well as the conceptual and textual outcomes captured by the documentation of a temporary art project) then surely it is better for the work to remain in situ for as long as possible in order to be accessible to as many people as possible? Even if an artwork doesn't change physically this does not necessarily mean that its signification won't change in ways which reintroduce different or subversive meaning. Take for example the

adoptive naming of sculptures like Dhruva Mistry's *River Goddess* (1993), a classical bronze sculpture and fountain depicting a female nude in the middle of Centenary Square, Birmingham, commissioned by the local authority with funding from sponsors like multinational banks. This is exactly the type of permanent artwork that is the subject of Doherty's critique, and yet is so popular locally it has been "...affectionately dubbed 'The Floozy in the Jacuzzi'" (BBC, 2010). This appropriation of its respectable subject matter of Indian mythology (which could be interpreted as a 'politically correct' nod to multi-ethnic population of Birmingham) through a soubriquet which reflects more the bawdy night life of the city which goes on around it every Saturday night demonstrates the redistribution of meaning which can take place over time through popular agency.

Another objection to the rejection of permanence within the field of art in public space is that, in environmentalist terms, some of the fundamental principles of sustainability as a function of the minimal consumption of resource over time are ignored. Some see a crucial role for art in public space to lead by example in terms of sustainability. Public art agency Chrysalis Arts have gone to the lengths of publishing a sustainability checklist for projects, as Kate Maddison, the Director of Chrysalis says of their project:

"Art has an ability to reflect and potentially influence our behaviour and public art is by its nature in the public eye. Chrysalis Arts believes it has a role to play in promoting responsible behaviour in this context. It soon became clear that we needed to disseminate this information widely, as the issues need to be dealt with by everyone involved in the process of planning, commissioning and implementing public art." (Public Art Online, 2010)

It is tempting to say that pragmatic expedience is a factor in adherence to temporary projects for public space as a primary methodology. It is much easier in terms of cost, planning and politics to get permission for a temporary work than it is to get planning permission for a long-lived work if there is any sort of risk involved in subject matter or form. In this sense temporary projects are actually less risky for the authorities than permanent projects as there is less pressure for them to be popular. For this reason

temporary projects are less likely to make any major impact on authorities (let artists vent their spleen/go nuts for a few days and then we can get on with business as usual).

At its core though, for artists at least, the question remains one of whether priority should be given to aesthetic risk or to the moral imperative to act for the wider benefit of the human species. Returning to the writings of Rancière, Bishop and Kester et al. - is priority given to works which will require consensus as a prerequisite of permanence or is the ideal the ability to introduce antagonistic forces into the public sphere as part of a temporary intervention? What though if, in the same way that modes of complementary practice act to mediate between subject and context, it were possible to intervene in a physical environment which existed similarly in a mediated, in-between space? Here there might be the potential for “permanent” interventions which act dissensually and are mutable physically or relational over time, keeping an eye on the changing future of that environment and rejecting by intent a fixation of signification. This could offer a way of radically reorienting the accepted parameters of the permanence of art in public to develop more explicitly a “longer term cumulative effect” as part of a “conversation” which is more sustainable, accessible and egalitarian than glossy pictures of a temporary project in a coffee-table monograph.

8.2 RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND RISK

A number of the projects discussed so far (*Stairway to Heaven*, *Sites of Reception* and *Lyme Light: Light Year*) have been located within the ubiquitous infrastructure which is needed in order to inhabit and productivise any landscape: *Stairway to Heaven* would be an extension of the system of the conduits of the countryside - paths created for walkers, *Sites of Reception* would be part of key transport nexuses like car parks and *Lyme Light: Light Year* actually within the public lighting system.

Infrastructure itself is generally understood, in terms of physical public space, as the underlying fixed structures or systems which need to be created and maintained in order to facilitate human activity, usually broken down as, but not limited to:

- Transport
- Water management
- Waste management
- Energy
- Communications
- Geographical/environmental services³⁴

These systems and networks are in effect public spaces to which the public have greater or lesser access to, depending on the combination of public, public/private and privatised structures for their management, their physical characteristics and function.

Infrastructure tends not to be widely considered as part of public space as, with the exception of transport and communications technologies, its visibility or profile is low, built over or under, hidden away within wall cavities or in secure bunkers. Nevertheless the ability to access these systems ultimately forms a pre-requisite to participation in society. Infrastructure therefore represents a generally insensible structure for accessing civic life. It is networked nationally and locally, is a physical and political distributor of power and defines both macro and micro societal relations, and yet is largely inaccessible and immutable as a public space. Even where infrastructure is accessible, part of the public realm like roads, parks or public leisure spaces, it tends to remain fixed over long periods. The terms and conditions of the provision of infrastructure are political. It has become part of the way social exclusion/inclusion is defined: "Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole" (Levitas et al., 2006: p. 9).

³⁴ Geographical/environmental services are systems such as geo-locational positioning or meteorological metrics.

A rurally specific example of exclusion in infrastructural terms would be the unavailability of broadband and mobile phone coverage in some rural areas which are needed, particularly by young people, for work, leisure, education, health needs etc: “Almost 60% of urban areas are able to receive a cable-based broadband service – in villages and hamlets this drops to 1.5%” (Commission for Rural Communities, 2010). The cause of exclusions like this in rural locations are many but it is obvious that, from an economic point of view at least, the low population density of rural areas equals low returns per capita on investment in infrastructure such high speed broadband. Hence the Commission for Rural Communities calling for government investment in the area: “The Government’s delivery of Next Generation Access by 2017 must put rural areas at most need at the forefront of targeted delivery” (ibid). Equally transport is a crucial rural infrastructure issue: “Lack of public transport and greater distances to be travelled to access services and amenities makes life difficult for rural young people and leads to isolation” (ibid).

Infrastructure then has interested me both as socio-political space and as an arena for art, but this site presents significant barriers in exploitation, mostly from fear of risk and liability. This is demonstrated in a project as part of the *Wide Open Space* programme of art commissions I produced from 2009 to 2011 for the Dorset Design and Heritage Forum. One of these commissions originated with Dorset County Council’s Natural Environment Team and the Local Transport Plan Team who were keen to explore at a strategic and project level what artists or makers could contribute to the implementation of the recently adopted *Dorset rural roads protocol* (Dorset County Council and Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 2008) which hoped to influence the future development of rural highways in the county of Dorset and nationally. The protocol advocates a new approach to highway design and management with the fundamental principle being the recognition and understanding of local distinctiveness and context, and that these must guide decisions made in the rural road environment. Focusing on a new road scheme (on the coast road from Bridport to Chickerell in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) the commissioned artist, Michael Pinsky, looked at ideas for road safety that also

declutter the roadside landscape in this aesthetically sensitive area (Figure 33). In achieving this there was also the opportunity to utilise the principals of psychological road calming in order to encourage traffic to drive more safely: reducing drivers speed through increasing perceptual risk for drivers by creating shared spaces between cars, pedestrians and cyclists (Figure 34). This also has the potential to create new social spaces carved from the areas dedicated to vehicles, joining communities which have literally been divided by busy roads.

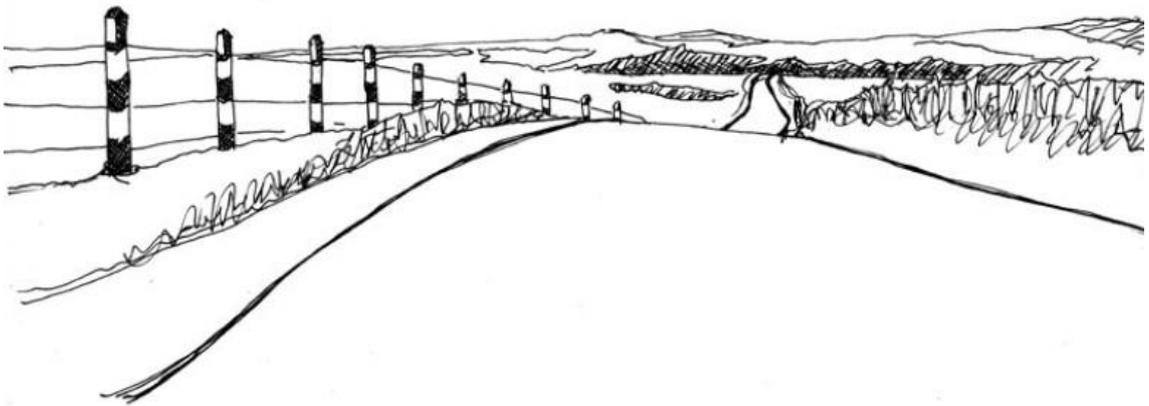


Figure 33. Reflective Fence (2010), Michael Pinsky. "There is often a doubling of fence posts and reflective bollards. The reflective fence integrates both functions. These reflective posts are not particularly evident during the day, but function well at night when they are most necessary."

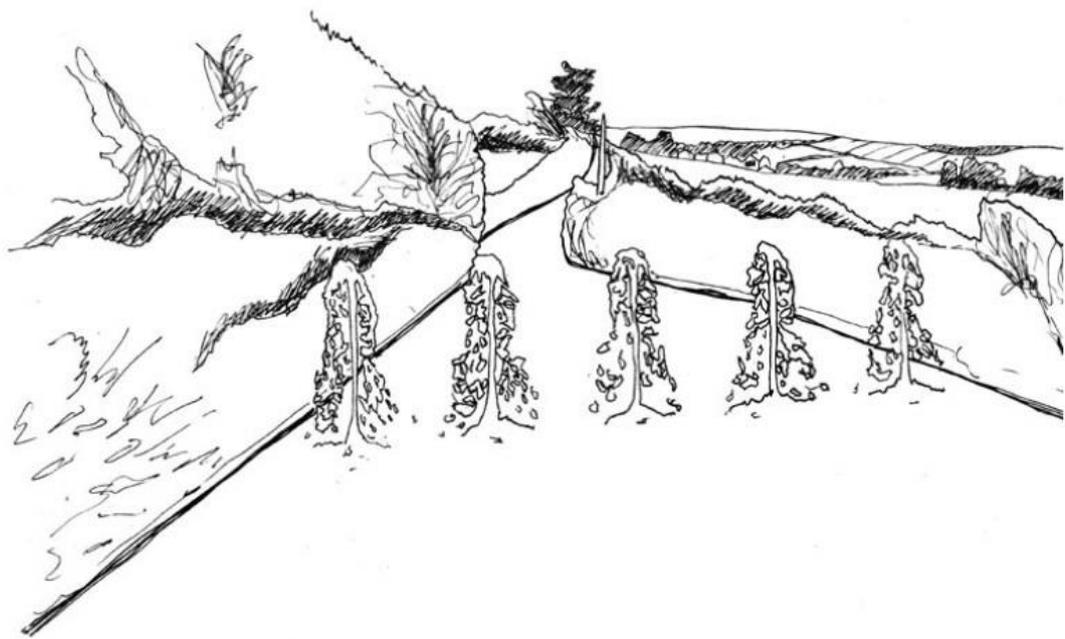


Figure 36. Road Fountain (2010), Michael Pinsky. "Using a sensor system that only activates as cars pass, this fountain system takes water from a stream passing underneath the road to provide a water feature that surprises the driver and cleans the cars."

These alternatives to typical rural road design make essential infrastructure a contributor rather than a detractor, to the particular place it is located in. Pinsky's proposed permanent features simplify and enhance, the temporary interventions build up a long term memory of potential risk for drivers. The overall effect is that new interest is created for road users and the need of residents for safer public spaces next to roads (or even as shared spaces) is addressed:

"Michael's ideas are not intended as a manual for road design, after all one the main purposes of this work is to enhance local distinctiveness not replace one standardised way of thinking with another. They are intended to demonstrate the potential of working with artists to anybody working on highway projects - local authorities, government agencies and the communities affected. They clearly show that bringing in new perspectives could contribute to making the dangerous, ubiquitous, non-places that are the current reality of our road networks into sympathetic, sustainable and safer spaces for the future." (Pinsky and Murdin, 2010: p. 5)

Perhaps unsurprisingly little has been done to follow up on this work as there are major obstacles to altering road environments. Restrictions on what can be done on and to roads

mostly derive from legislation and concerns over health and safety. The local authorities responsible are reluctant to make any changes from standard practice as it may make them liable to prosecution in the event of an incident. This is the basic contradiction inherent in any aesthetic intervention in infrastructure and the public realm, the introduction of new processes or methods is set against standardisation which seeks to avoid risk.

8.3 SUN STAGES

The project *Sun Stages* (2010) (Appendix 9) develops the themes of access (*Stairway to Heaven* and *One Mile Wild*) and the “impostures” of our connections to the environment (*Immersion*) and the issue of risk. The project started from consideration of a piece of safety equipment, the lifeguard’s chair. These are accessories for lifesaving operations, increasing viewing area, reducing glare from the water’s surface and decreasing distractions to the lifeguard on duty. It thus functions as another tool of panopticism in Foucauldian terms, part of a regulatory apparatus to control and observe the activity of swimmers within a particular area. In the U.K. their use is generally confined to swimming pools, either indoor or outdoor lidos. At the seaside lifeguards tend to use observational buildings or sit on top of vehicles (in other countries with more clement weather such as the U.S.A. there is a tradition of large, permanent lifeguards chairs on beaches).

Sun Stages was a shortlisted proposal for *Structures on the Edge*, a competition to create new architectural structures for beaches in Lincolnshire. The premise was developed from existing beach architecture - the beach huts found all along the British coast (such as the plotland chalets at Jaywick – see p. 41). In response to a brief which detailed specific locations and in collaboration with Childs Sulzmann architects, the proposal outlines a series of structures for a picnic site at Wollabank. On the landward side of the main sea bund, or bank, are placed a series of normal hexagonal picnic tables with integrated seating and other furniture, bins and notice board. At their centre is the “sun stage” an overgrown picnic table which becomes a performance area or outdoor classroom

underneath and from the top of which can be seen a view of the sea which is blocked at ground level by the bund (Figure 35). From the top can be seen a series of four large lifeguards chairs on the seaward side of the bank which are accessible to the public, elevated seats for watching the sun come up –a “sun rise cinema” (Figure 36).



Figure 35. Sunstages (2010), Alex Murdin and Mike Cox. Photomontage showing central structure as performance area.

Inspired by the discovery of “Seahenge” further down the coast in Norfolk (the wooden equivalent of the stone henges of the rest of Britain) all of these items are connected by their position in forming a contemporary equivalent to a Neolithic ceremonial landscape (Figure 37) which are commonly held to be constructed into order to allow observations of sun and moon at key times of year³⁵. In this case a sighting from the stage to the litter bin provides the position of the spring and vernal equinoxes.

³⁵ See for instance J. Wood’s account in *Sun, moon and standing stones* (Wood, 1978).



Figure 36. Sunstages (2010), Alex Murdin and Mike Cox. Sunrise cinema. Photomontage.

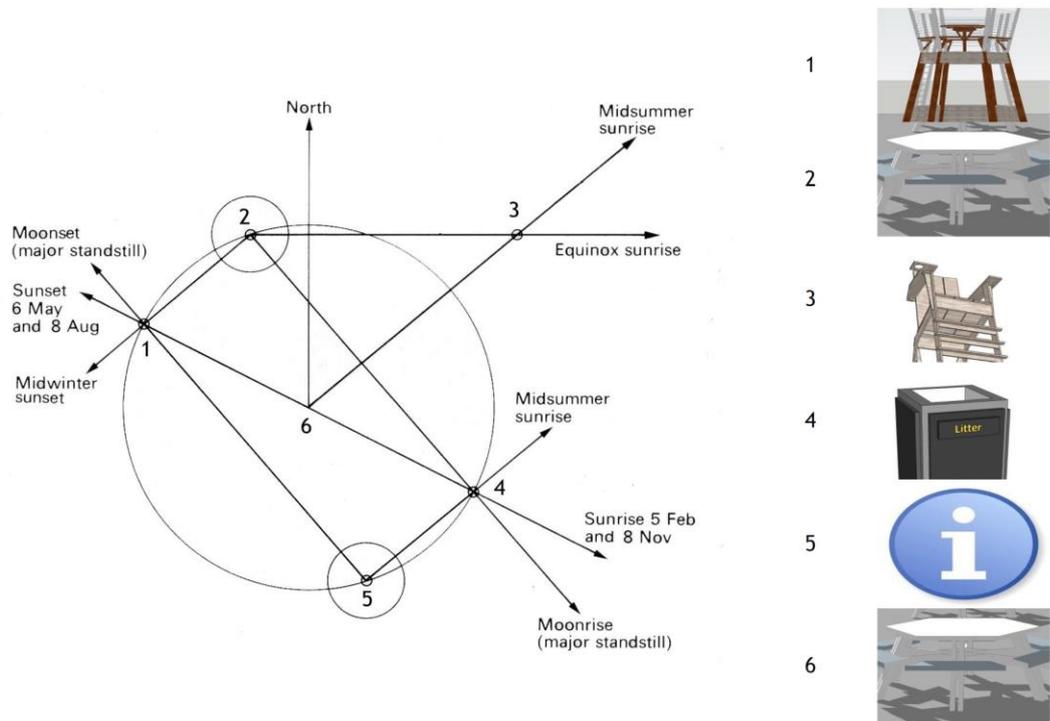


Figure 37. Sunstages (2010), Alex Murdin and Mike Cox. Schematic showing relationship of picnic furniture.

The form of the project corresponds closely to standard interpretational and leisure infrastructure, utilising as it does mostly off the shelf products such as picnic benches, litter bins and notice boards, primarily in hard wood. The predictability of this aesthetic and its origin in vernacular garden design is noted by Evans and Spaul:

"The form of interpretation centres says much as to their content, echoing summer houses and garden furnishings, models of tasteful, middle class restraint: few colours that are more obtrusive than soft greens and browns; a preference for natural wood structures and surfaces; textual elements in sober upright fonts - the garish tourist attraction is miles away... a plausible characterization of an 'aesthetic environmentalism" (Evans and Spaul, 2003: p. 210-12)

Where this project differs is in attempting to open up the aesthetic experience of this type of site to a more open ended and relational type of interpretation where activities facilitated by the stage allow groups to meet, socialise and potentially learn. It points to a relationship of enquiry into context and the local environment through its connection to the sky and seasons. Additionally the use of lifeguards chairs are a reminder of some of the risks inherent in the landscape where danger can come from floods, storms, wild seas and boggy marshes. As they are accessible to the public they embody a sense that the responsibility for protecting individuals from risk must ultimately come from society at large, negating the way that this is normatively a responsibility abdicated to government or other agency e.g. lifeguards.

8.4 PARALLAX

Sun Stages exists in-between function and dysfunction, located in a leisure infrastructure which exists between inhabited space and natural environment. It is this position between subject and context which opens up new perspectives with an effect of parallax, the displacement of subject and object/context according to the movement of the viewer. In *Sun Stages* the effect of parallax underlies the processes of astronomical observation as the subject must be in the correct position (and time) to observe, via the infrastructure, the different astronomical phenomena. Here though it is not just astronomy, in terms of empirical, scientific observation that is taking place, it is the furtherance of a connection of

the subject to their ecological history and immediate environment. Knowing when the spring or autumn equinoxes are enables cognition of the future, the past and the effect of the progression of seasons on surrounding ecologies and agriculture.

The concept of parallax is used extensively by Slavoj Žižek to offer an explanation of the distinction between the shift in understanding which occurs and its effect on the subject which could offer us a way out of the environmental dead-end caused by the impossible gaze:

“The standard definition of parallax is: the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background) caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight. The philosophical twist to be added, of course, is that the observed difference is not simply “subjective” due to the fact that the same object which exists “out there” is seen from two different stances, or points of view. It is rather that, as Hegel would have put it, subject and object are inherently “mediated,” so that an “epistemological” shift in the subject’s point of view always reflects an “ontological” shift in the object itself. Or—to put it in Lacanese—the subject’s gaze is always already inscribed into the perceived object itself, in the guise of its “blind spot,” that which is “in the object more than the object itself,” the point from which the object itself returns the gaze. “Sure, the picture is in my eye, but I, I am also in the picture”” (Žižek, 2006: p. 17)

Here Žižek describes a process which realigns the impossible gaze and allows the subject to initiate an evolution of self which accords full recognition of the object (the environment/the Other) and the self’s appearance in that object. He points out that this shift can have an effect which is not just the *objective* acquisition of knowledge but a *subjective* shift in the viewer’s whole state of being. In other words, using *Sun Stages* as an example, it is not simply that the visual principles of parallax are able to provide us with observational data on a particular phenomenon (so one knows where the sun will rise at a given time), it is that this information allows an understanding of an entire environment (a temporal, dynamic pattern of diurnal fluctuation, seasonality etc. which affects crop planting, harvesting and so on). The key tool in this process can therefore be said to be the sight (as in gun sight) which acts as a fulcrum around which the effect of parallax can occur. In this case the sight is the artwork which offers the subject a point of reorientation in a physical location which is pivotal between inhabited and uninhabited space.

Žižek expands on the effect of parallax in public space when he describes a specific architectural parallax which is made obvious in postmodern architecture, particularly large projects like new skyscrapers or cultural buildings. Here the gap between interior and exterior, the space of the skin or voids between, is opened up to gain views into or out of the building, exhibiting the function of the space created more clearly. Examples are Richard Rogers' seminal projects (like the Lloyds building in London or the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris) where services for the building are externalised to leave the maximum of inhabited space within the envelope, or the complete elimination of visible infrastructure which allows the complete aestheticisation of the skin of buildings by architects like Frank Gehry who designs glass envelopes in contorted shapes to contain the functional spaces needed. Žižek suggests that it is this, now apparent, gap between two spaces which opens up a view of a third mediating location where a physical and cognitive change occurs, "...the parallax gap is the inscription of our changing temporal experience when we approach and enter the building" (Žižek, 2011 p. 245). Leading on from this Žižek asserts that the transparent skin of the building made aesthetically manifest is symptomatic of postmodern "playful indifference" (ibid: p. 253) to ideology, i.e. the way in which in postmodernist architecture the parallax gap, or disjunctive space, is openly admitted and displayed and therefore has a neutralising effect. Contrasting these structures with previous orders of architecture which have been used in the past to make externalised ideological statements (like the imperialist classicism of a fascist state building which suggests continuity and civilisation – see p. 59) he suggests that these permeable skins flatten out any antagonistic tension between the spatially included and excluded into an indifferent plurality of standpoints.

The same principles can be applied to most physical infrastructure which equally manifests the political milieu in which it is created. Historically we can think of the cathedral-like architecture of Victorian infrastructure projects -the wrought iron gas storage towers and gothic water pumping stations which demonstrate pride in industrial progress. In the 20th century infrastructure moved on to become much purer Modernist

conduits or production centres where form follows function and decoration is eliminated. An example would be the most common electricity pylon design in the UK, created in 1927 by architect Sir Reginald Blomfield and now hated by many: “To some it is an icon of the British landscape; to many more it has, and always will be, little more than an eyesore – and that includes the professionals. “In practical terms the design has always been extolled by engineers. But they don't say 'It's ugly, but...'. They just cleverly say 'it uses the minimum amount of material',” the architect Sir Nicholas Grimshaw says” (Boucher, 2011). A more contemporary example of the aesthetic (and therefore political) antagonisms inherent in infrastructure design would be resistance to contemporary wind farms which are the subject of widespread NIMBY³⁶ protest across the UK. In Scotland for instance 44,000 people have made formal objections as part of the planning system as they are: “concerned about wind farms ruining their landscape and quality of life” (STV News, 2013). Some historical infrastructure has been reclaimed for other purposes: the art deco lines of Bankside Power station in London (dating back to 1947) now contain the Herzog and Meuron designed facilities of the Tate Modern gallery. Interestingly the Tate became the site of an event which demonstrates well some of the spatial and political antagonisms within infrastructure. In July 2012 the group Liberate Tate protested against the £1 million sponsorship of the Tate art gallery by the oil company BP on the basis of the company’s environmental record and contribution to a “climate crisis” (Batty, 2012). At the time BP was still being castigated for one of the world’s largest oil spills created by the collapse of their Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. The protestors occupied the Turbine Hall gallery and assembled a 16m long wind turbine propeller, making, “...an official request for it to be made part of the gallery's permanent collection” (ibid). Here the pure infrastructure of the sleek wing like windmill blade is used as a disjunctive tool for introducing political angst into the pure void of an art gallery, where the refurbishment of the space emptied out the original infrastructural content of the building, its old generators and so on. In selecting to protest against and inside of the Tate

³⁶ “Not In My Back Yard”

the protestors selected precisely the sort of privileged space which demonstrates Žižek's point that postmodern architecture creates an indifference to ideology. In this case the space expresses this indifference to ideology generally just as the organisation does to environmental ideology by accepting sponsorship from a multinational oil company.

8.5 DISSENSUAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In his discourse on architectural parallax Žižek focuses in on the skin or envelope of structures as the site of an epistemological/ontological shift. Two projects, *Lines of Flight* (2012) (Appendix 10) and *Tats for Bats* (2012) (Appendix 11) inhabit this in-between space of infrastructure/architectural skin. *Lines of Flight* originated out of the *Pride of Place* project in Lyme Regis project as another response to the idea of low energy seaside lighting, in this case a sequence of hollowed out mirror balls are bolted to a lamppost in a spiralling sequence reminiscent of models of DNA (di-nucleic acids – constituents of genes) (Figure 38). These balls serve two purposes, at night the mirrored surfaces reflect light from the lamp above to provide a decorative lighting effect that represents zero net input of energy into the municipal lighting system. At the same time the hollowed out interiors are also able to accommodate nesting birds, allowing the infrastructure to mitigate in an ecological sense against the environmental depletion of habitat caused by consumption of natural resources by the human species.

Ecological mitigation as an aesthetic concern is not new and making animal habitats has been done before. In the field of environmental art Lynne Hull started creating *Raptor Roosts* in the USA the late 1980's. In the UK curator Sarah Wang identifies animal architecture as: "a growing trend of artists creating architectural work for urban wildlife... ecological site-specific artworks with functional outcomes developed through an interdisciplinary art/science approach to assist wildlife in areas of urban expansion and encourage further animal habitation... practical prototypes for how space can be made for nature within expanding urban environments in a creative way" (Wang, 2009). An example of animal architecture cited by Wang is *Animal Wall* (2009) by Gitta

Gschwendtner, a 50-meter wall that includes 1000 houses for birds and bats and acts as a textural and geometric sculptural divider between a residential development and the river front in Cardiff Bay (Figure 39).



Figure 38. Lines of Flight (2012), Alex Murdin. Temporary installation.



Figure 39. Animal Wall (2009), Gitta Gschwendtner. Photo: Kiran Ridley

Lines of Flight is an application of these same principles but specifically to an infrastructure of energy and lighting in a way that has the potential for evolution across an entire network. The form of the work, its mirrored (but fractured) surface causes it to also to act as the sighting mechanism for a parallaxian shift where “...the subject’s gaze is always already inscribed into the perceived object itself... the point from which the object itself returns the gaze” (Žižek, 2006: p. 17). A response to the work could therefore be recognition of the presence of the subject within the object, a presence within a network and infrastructure that will not only evolve through the agency of the human species but will be actuated by other species. This potential for revelatory self-recognition is also apparent if we consider it echoing the role of the mirror in another key point of development and self-awareness, Lacan’s mirror stage where the subject recognises themselves in a mirror for the first time as an object to themselves and others - it is only after the mirror stage that the impossible gaze becomes possible (Lacan & Sheridan, 1977). In this way human infrastructure is materially and perceptually changed into an ecological/environmental infrastructure.

As another point of infrastructural parallax *Tat for Bats* is a simple wooden bat box. It has however been laser etched with a tattoo in the international Maori style copied from elements of a tattoo possessed by a member of the household where the box is sited (Figure 40). It originated from a project for Arts NK where I was asked to consider how young people could be more involved in nature conservation, an activity more associated with older, conservative generations. In *Tats for Bats* there is an apparently simple correlation between bats and the common “Goth” teen counter-culture which adopts the symbolism of vampires (and therefore vampire bats) as one of its major themes.



Figure 40. *Tats for Bats*: installation view (2012), Alex Murdin

The tattoo externalises the identity of the occupant onto the house and, in the same way that a tattoo on skin is intended to be permanent, the bat box also becomes permanently part of its skin. It does this because the presence of the bat house, once actually inhabited by bats (which are protected by European and British conservation and planning law),

means that the building cannot be altered and the bat habitation cannot be removed without planning permission and a licence granted by European authorities.

Interestingly for Žižek tattoo provides another way of discussing his conception of architectural parallax where the skin of the large, high-profile buildings he is mainly concerned with becomes transparent, eliminating any form of decoration in order to gain the appearance of accessibility. He starts from the observation that tattoo remains associated in Western culture with outsiders and criminality, referencing the architect Alfred Loos who, writing in 1908, considered that the decoration of the skin and body was sexually degenerate, particularly as it originated from the "primitive" peoples of the Pacific region: "The urge to ornament one's face and everything within reach is the start of plastic art. It is the baby talk of painting. All art is erotic" (Opel, 1998: p. 127). This connection by Loos between ornament and crime was a key part of his Modernist critique of what he saw as a bourgeois arts and crafts movement which was also degenerate in its appreciation of architectural decoration and beauty, something to be eliminated from his utopian architecture of clean lines and geometric form. To balance this (now considered racist) perspective Žižek also refers to the Claude Levi-Strauss, the structuralist anthropologist, who reads the origin of tattoo as a common form of identification in the absence of institutions or social structures that resolve inequality in a community. Tattoo therefore projects externally a group or community of similar people, race or tribe united under an aesthetic marking. In the same way the tattoos of contemporary Westerners join them together in cult groups and, on the surface at least, assert individuality in the absence of any sense of belonging to existing social orders. Tattoo can therefore be read as the desire for proper appearance and social order, even if this is only apparent, not real equality. It can therefore be likened to the transparent architectural skin of postmodern buildings which can be said to only have the semblance of equality (of access to what is inside). Žižek does not though assert that this aesthetic semblance is of itself a producer of inequality more that "...our point is not that architecture *should* somehow be "critical", but that it *cannot not* reflect and interact with social and ideological antagonisms: the more it

tries to be pure and purely aesthetic and/or functional, the more it reproduces these antagonisms" (Žižek, 2011: p. 274). Žižek concludes that the only way out of this "deadlock" is to make use of the interstitial spaces of infrastructure in the skin of buildings which can create a Badiouian subtractive space (see p. 143). These may be retrospectively adapted for the purposes of occupation (the homeless person under the bridge) and/or aesthetics where their status as non-places make them available as "a proper place for utopian dreaming" (ibid: p. 278).

Finally, one important point that Žižek makes is that these interstitial subtractive spaces, are "uncanny" (ibid: p. 276), that these hidden services and conduits inhabit unknown sites within the known boundaries of the familiar inhabited space of a home or place of work. In any number of the fairy tales or horror films the ghosts are in the attic, basement or walls and the sounds of uninvited animals like rats, spiders, cockroaches and bats can be sensed overhead. This reinforces the idea of infrastructural space as an aesthetic one into which may be projected the imaginary and mythic. In this light *Tats for Bats* can be seen as working towards more than a token updating of the middle class preoccupation with nature conservation with the counter-culture gloss of tattoo; it can be considered as the aesthetic development of a small but uncanny subtractive space, a space for a "utopian dream" of egalitarian environmentalist ideological purpose which encompasses ecological restitution of inter-species co-habitation.

8.6 INTERSTICES

The chapter started with the aim of countering the idea that temporary necessarily was "good" and that permanent was "bad" in terms of developing art in public. The hope is therefore to have indicated that there is the potential to develop works which have longevity as structures in the built or natural environment *and* longevity in supporting social, political and ecological relationships which develop over time. This could be achieved by focussing on infrastructure, which by its nature consists of permanent structures that facilitate the development of temporary processes and actions. This means

that there is also within the art works created an allowance for negotiated meanings, for change and therefore for risk. It is this reintroduction of risk and the potential for social change that allows it to be called dissensual infrastructure, an infrastructure which acts as the sighting point of a parallaxian view of the mediating third thing, which allows us access to the uncanny and the aesthetic.

Equally *Sun Stages* shares these tendencies as a structure for risk which allows self-determined risk levels, at the same time expressing a wider social responsibility and environmental awareness. *Tats for Bats* on the other hand aims for an eco-political permanency, taking advantage of a legal requirement to introduce the uncanny and counter-cultural via the planning process, making an ecological and aesthetic intervention that symbiotically adheres to the architectural skin. In doing so it creates new space for life to regenerate over time and for new relationships to develop between animal and occupier. This is a small intervention but is designed with the potential in mind to spread throughout the housing system, in the same way that *Lines of Flight* could be easily reproduced throughout the lighting system and *Sun Stages* largely be reproduced through the arrangement of off-the-shelf municipal street furniture.

9 AN INFINITE NUMBER OF FINITE DEMANDS

This thesis started with the question:

Is it possible to create a coherent artistic praxis, a synthesis of practice and theory, that functions as an aestheticised political process and that effects the rural public realm, in order to respond to contemporary threats to public commons?

In answering this the first part of this thesis was concerned with a contemporary discourse amongst artists, critics and producers about how art in public space becomes instrumentalised. Here it is possible to identify two poles of thought, one asserting that art should be used for its additive/positive benefits to a social, economic, cultural and environmental context, for example through an integrated process of dialogue (e.g. the dialogism of Grant Kester) and the other that it should resist the attribution of values beyond aesthetic ones by maintaining a subtractive, externalised criticality (e.g. the relational antagonism of Claire Bishop). Or to put it another way, either asserting that art in public is an act of consensual negotiation between artist and audience, or that it is an independent, revelatory intervention by the artist to an audience. In both cases however there is agreement that the objective is a form of resistance or change to established agencies and ideologies (e.g. statal governments, capitalism etc.). In the United Kingdom at least a key political driver affecting the creation of art in public space, particularly in rural public space, in the recent past has been that of sustainability where art is seen to benefit communities and improve the physical environment, market locations, contribute to regeneration, tourism, employment and local economies (Thompson et al., 2005, Massey and Rose, 2005 etc.), all part of sustainable “place-making”. More specifically sustainability is about the benefit to these places and people in developing a way of living that is more environmentally sensitive in the long term. Art in public has therefore been instrumentalised by a politics of sustainability which has come to rely on particular interpretations of place, heritage and ecology, disputed terms which are in common parlance with commissioners (non-governmental organisations, developers, government,

etc.), funders, artists and art producers to negotiate an increasingly globalised, privatised, productivised and leisured public realm.

Arguably leisure is the defining temporal characteristic of contemporary public space. However as the post-historical time of choice and absence of responsibility it is both contrary to responsible sustainability (generating cognitive dissonance - the guilt of indulgence in unessential acts of leisure versus the conservation of necessary resources etc.) and at the same time an opportunity for a debate on the politics of consumption through acts of play and aesthetic experiences which take place outside of normal (work-related) patterns of behaviour. The opportunity for artists is that this character of contentlessness creates a blank canvas; *Sites of Reception* highlights this as a project where the reception desk makes visible, and then variable, positions of power within the touristic experience. In the mainstream of public space management however this contentlessness has come to be seen as antithetic to place/place-making where art practices are used to reinforce local distinctiveness, the social cohesion of communities who take more pride in their surroundings and therefore the longevity of infrastructure and housing which is looked after better, etc. The issue here is that the default option for filling the void (with local distinctiveness) is to reinforce existing heritage attributes, a reactionary process susceptible to overbearing forms of nostalgia which fix in place a limited number of approved readings of a location. The point is that this is not a minor cultural issue about what a place looks like but a matter of supreme political importance - limiting new ways of relating to landscape/place at a time when threats to the environment, and therefore human existence, make this relationship a matter of urgency.

The same problematics of nostalgia also affect the core of sustainability, environmental politics, the understanding and application of ecological principles which indicate the need for a holistic consideration of the earth and humankind as part of that system. In cultural terms the romantic fantasy of wilderness still has a strong hold and with it the nostalgia for an original naturalness before the impacts of humankind on the earth took effect. This

is the impossible gaze (Žižek, 2011 : p. 84) which affects cultural perceptions of the rural by an urban majority who wish to be simultaneously present and absent in nature in order to resolve their sense of cognitive dissonance whereby what is desired is destroyed.

Nostalgia though is not just an empty desire and is put in to practice in forms such as restoration ecology which, like forms of place-making, fix on certain aesthetic identities and temporal states of ecological development. Underlying this is a pervasive cultural and scientific trope, the human objectification of the environment that is required in order to assert forms of power and discipline over landscapes, for example interpretations of its past which determine methods of future aesthetic and ecological management.

Alongside nostalgia the other major barrier to rethinking the environment operates at the level of populations, the sense of the contingency (Butler et al., 2000; Žižek, 2008; Kester, 2011 etc.) that the individual has in the face of the overwhelming presence of the other, measured in billions (“what can I as one person do that will make a difference?”). An answer is the recognition that, in order for the individual to address problems in common to populations, that individual must firstly be able to address that population on the basis of possessing an equal stake and voice. Therefore the issue of environmental justice becomes one of social justice, as “...domination over nature necessarily entails class domination of people over other people... the way to rid ourselves of our masters is not for humankind to become a collective master over nature, but to recognize the imposture in the very notion of the Master” (Žižek, 2011: p. 242-3). Žižek’s point here is that “the Master” is of course capital and the marketplace which continue to drive unsustainable levels of production and consumption. If these are the issues which face humanity in creating a more sustainable future, it is possible to formulate the potential responses as follows:

- **Addition** –radical change that addresses social and environment equality and creates new public space held in common (e.g. Žižek)
- **Stasis** – business as usual with its reliance on market lead technological solutions and current ways of forming consensual public space (e.g. Fukuyama)

- **Subtraction** – withdrawal/externalisation from the system in order to change/critique from the outside or to create alternative or transient public spaces in current interstices (e.g. Badiou)

Assuming that the status quo is not an option in the face of a significant environmental threat to humanity this seemingly leaves us with a choice between addition or subtraction. There is however one final possible synthesis of addition and subtraction which does not yield a nil return. It can be described as a position of fluidarity, Guattari's unified disunity (Guattari, 1989: p. 10), which questions *all* polarities and assumptions. The process of this is dissensus, not the one described by Rancière which seeks only to make visible inequality (Rancière, 2010: p. 38), but a complementary practice which recognises Žižek's and Laclau's proposition of complementarity (Žižek, 1996: p. 214 and Laclau, 1996: p. 53), that in the act or event (which can take place both inside and outside of the system) is the potential of a universal equality. Just as this has purely political potential so a complementary practice also has the potential to release the politics of aesthetics from its polarisation between the dialogic and antagonistic.

The idea of a complementary practice can only exist against the background of a resurgence of interest in the social (and therefore the public) as a medium for aesthetic intervention i.e. the rise of socially engaged practice. Its development has meant that there are artists who work in this way who *require* the presence of the other to react with in order to create an aesthetic act. Thus the social and the political dimensions of public space are necessary adjuncts. In other words artists manipulate the circumstances and context in which they work in order to make it part of their artwork, as part of both its form and content. If this is true then it becomes redundant to discuss aesthetic autonomy in the ways it has been before. The notion that "I want to realise a pure aesthetic form" is simply not possible in a public space which starts at the surface of the skin and changes any art work through the context in which it is received. To make the complaint that there is "no room to move" (Slater and Iles, 2010) is to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of art within public space, a delusion of an art that is not affected by extra-aesthetic agency. The

complaint is really that those artists who are fundamentally opposed to the political structures that they are being employed by are, unsurprisingly, opposed by those whose job it is to maintain that system. On the other hand it is perfectly fair to say that the system also favours those whose practice is non-controversial with no risk involved and to some extent reinforces the political, economic or social priorities of the commissioner.

By choosing to work in public space there is therefore the need for artists to comply, revolt or infiltrate, this last being the most akin to what is envisaged as a complementary practice which moves across and between political boundaries. The way it does this can be considered further through the couplet of “cynicism” and “irony” (irony (or satire) is a characteristic that has been attributed in conversation with other artists and academics to some of the projects set out in this thesis). Irony as a tactic should be considered against the alternatives which frame it, either acceptance of the way things are or a cynicism which distrusts everyone and everything. Acceptance of the way things are does not seem to be a viable option in the face of the challenges to existence generated by global environmental issues (as Malcolm Miles says it can be a form of despair - see p. 26). Cynicism then on the face of it seems like an answer, with its sense of radical critique from the outside - after all irony is compromised as a form of criticism from within, as it adopts existing symbols as its basis even if these are adapted to different purpose. However cynicism is to be as equally distrusted as acceptance, the latter is despair but the former is denial. This is the point made by Žižek in his analysis:

“On a first approach, cynicism may appear to involve a much more radical distance than irony: is not irony benevolent ridicule ‘from above, from within the confines of the symbolic order — that is to say, the distance of a subject who views the world from the elevated position of the big Other towards those who are enticed by vulgar earthly pleasures, an awareness of their ultimate vanity while cynicism relies on the ‘earthly’ point of view which undermines our belief in the binding power of the Word, of the symbolic pact, ‘from below’, and advances the substance of enjoyment as the only thing that really matters: Socrates versus Diogenes the Cynic? The true relationship, however, is the reverse: from the correct premise that ‘the big Other doesn't exist — that the symbolic order is a fiction — the cynic draws the mistaken conclusion that the big Other doesn't ‘function’, that its role can simply be discounted: owing to his failure to notice how the symbolic fiction none the less regulates his relationship to the real of enjoyment, he remains all the more enslaved to the symbolic context that defines his access to the Thing-Enjoyment, caught in the symbolic ritual he publicly mocks.” (Žižek, 1996: p. 207)

Here Žižek suggests that the cynics, in believing that it is possible to be critically distant and function outside of the socio-symbolic order, are deluding themselves. He supports this by referring to Lacan's discussion of the relationship of the individual to language and culture as one of being voluntarily fooled - in order to participate in society and culture one must accept the symbolic fiction presented, "les non-dupes errent"³⁷. The ironist therefore, by working with the existing order, at least makes the choice that he or she is the conscious dupe of that order but in doing so creates a picture of that structure for others to see. In the same way the impossible gaze demands of the true environmental subject an understanding that they are part of and contained within the environment.

This is not to say that irony in and of itself is an ideal and must be used with caution, simply that it is a perspective that reveals the contradictions and fictions that accrue within a cultural milieu. Žižek, again via Lacan, warns of the pitfalls, that the ironist must resist, "...the reduction of reality itself to a fiction" (ibid: p. 207). This is also the point made by Žižek's other lodestar Hegel in *Aesthetics: Lectures on fine art* (1988) in which he warns the artist, tempted by aspiration to the status of supranormal genius, about viewing ironically all adherence by others to laws and moral codes:

"I live as an artist when all my action and my expression in general, in connection with any content whatever, remains for me a mere show and assumes a shape which is wholly in my power. In that case I am not really in earnest either with this content or, generally, with its expression and actualization. For genuine earnestness enters only by means of a substantial interest, something of intrinsic worth like truth, ethical life, etc." (p. 65)

Irony can of course be construed in this way as an unethical process that implies mockery of the subject using exaggerated attributes of the subject for effect even if the result is quite subtle. For instance in the case of *Stairway to Heaven*, how is it justifiable to instrumentalise the politics of disability, using its name to justify a practically useless piece of access equipment? Surely the ironic instrumentalisation of political movements, of

³⁷ Translation: "those not fooled are mistaken".

deeply held beliefs, implied in the temporary occupation of those political spaces is open to question? The answer is about intent, whether the irony used in fact opens up the wider ethical dimensions of a situation through the aesthetic act via the sublime, radical uncanny etc. As Stephen Critchley, the British philosopher, says, "...if art is just about the production of a sort of knowing irony, a knowing distance whereby you rip people off by getting them to spend money on your work but you think that they are stupid, that's terrible. But I don't think that art can be unethical; I think that interesting art is always ethical. It is organized around ethical demand. What that ethical demand might be is up for grabs" (Hernández-Navarro, 2011: p. 24). The use of irony can therefore be justified, particularly in the case of a complementary approach where irony is used on both one political view and its antithesis at the same time, e.g. the disability right to access *and* the conservation of a landscape. In any case it can be said that in these instances the irony is always already there.

Also if the intent of the irony is to engage with "truth, ethical life, etc." then perhaps it possible to be earnestly ironical within a complementary practice? This is the alternative that is on offer - to make visible the instrumentalisation of art in public and perform the reverse operation, instrumentalise the instrumentalisers, art instrumentalising the politics of sustainability. It is at least a liberation which moves the artist from the character of victimhood to one of an agency occupying multiple positions both *within* and *outside* of a social and political system. For example whilst *The Jaywick Tourist Board* appears to fit the politics of sustainability (the promotion of tourism for the regeneration of a run-down area) at the same time it appropriates this driver in order to make room for the production of different meanings (the people and place affirms its difference to other peoples and places - "Jaywick, wicked!"). The typical criticism of projects like this by the adherents of critical, oppositional or aesthetic distancing (Rancière, Bishop, Slater and Iles, etc.) would be that a proper artwork, by engaging with a real context, sacrifices at some point its aesthetic "undecidability" (Rancière, 2010: p. 133) or the effect of the "radical uncanny" (Rancière, 2000: p. 63) to achieve social, ethical and/or political effect

which requires a clarity of message. *The Jaywick Tourist Board* though balances on the cusp of being an official instrument of the tourist economy and a medium for the communities of Jaywick. Its content was formed neither through the consensus required by the local authorities or the antagonism required by the protestors within the community. It can therefore be said that *The Jaywick Tourist Board* is a work which, in Rancièrian terms, moves not from the periphery to the centre, but from the centre to the periphery and then returns to the centre, back out again and so on in multiple movements. In doing so it performs an action which is less of a (political) revolution and more like a form of chaotic diffusion where small elements are collided, acquire different trajectories, collide into other elements and eventually engender a complete reconfiguration of the original state of matter. If we accept that the aesthetic here is to be judged in relational or socially engaged terms, as in Bourriaud's definition of relational aesthetics, i.e. "...judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt" (Bourriaud, 1998: p. 112), then is not this oscillating, somewhat chaotic movement actually the very quality of undecidability which makes a 'proper' artwork?

At the same time though *The Jaywick Tourist Board* seems to be an example of a failure that supports those who believe in aesthetic criticality and distance from politics and communities. Here a political consensus blocked the production of artistic difference, as the sensitive political situation meant an avoidance of controversy by the producers and local authority. There is however another side to this, that there was also a sense of oppositionality from the communities of Jaywick to arts and culture (e.g. a kneejerk reaction to art in public - spending money on culture as opposed to street lights) which contributed to a lack of engagement with the project at the grassroots. It actually is in this double failure where the project does not sit comfortably in either camp, that there is a reinforcement of the character of indeterminacy or undecidability between the two ethico-political poles. This returns to the notion of a complementary practice as a process of complementarity which understands that the impossibility of knowing both our position as a subject and the impossibility of knowing the other, and is the key to aesthetic

intervention in contested public spaces as the, "...overlapping of the two deficiencies (or, in Lacanese: the intersection of the two lacks) that opens up the dimension of universality." (Žižek, 1996: p. 214).

This complementary indeterminacy is also apparent in other research projects. *Stairway to Heaven* effectively instrumentalises the politics of access, utilising consensus around disability policy to question consensus around the "right to roam", the appearance of freedom within a nationalised landscape and vice versa. Or to put it another way, the activism/antagonism of disability access questioning the activism/antagonism of the right to roam and the inverse. Here the complementary practice puts the subject and the other in states of flux as consensus questions consensus and antagonism questions antagonism. In *Inclusive Path* and *One Mile Wild* the economic imperative of tourism is in negotiation with environmental conservationism, in *Immersion* access to waterscapes negotiates with ecological protectionism and so on, but always without fixed demarcations of position. In doing so these types of project also address the problem that has been noted throughout this research - that where projects can make small changes what good are these if no one notices and there is urgent need? Hal Foster notes this apropos of Rancière's proposition that art can reconfigure the sensible, i.e. that "...art is no match for the image and information industries that control and concentrate 'the sensible' with such ease and efficiency. (This is not to totalise the market, media or spectacle it is only to size them up roughly)" (Foster, 2013). By generating conflict between political positions these projects have, to greater or lesser extent, generated coverage in other media, which at least expands the sites of their reception.

The above examples of complementary practice though were all projects which took place in the public sphere (the space of public discourse) with only a temporary presence in physical public space. In these instances the fluidity and adoption of multiple positions I have characterised as a complementary practice is relatively straightforward as it has no readily identifiable sense of longevity (although the effect on individuals and groups is

potentially limitless). How then can forms of dissensus be generated within the public realm, a space equally as important as both a space for political debate and as the present and future environmental commons? Here there is the opportunity to consider art in public as a means to enable fluidarity and evolving discourses on the politics of sustainability through the creation of works which are open ended, mutable and devolved to the publics who surround the work. An ideal location for this is the infrastructure of the public realm which is ostensibly dedicated to public need. If these, often closed, systems are made open, accessible and visible it is possible to think a “dissensual infrastructure”. In purely practical terms art interventions within existing infrastructure have particular advantages in addressing sustainability agendas - as infrastructure by definition already exists, making costs and resource use low. The concept is also particularly pertinent to rural environments as there would be no additional impact on landscapes deemed sensitive, as installations would be within established frameworks. Engaging with the non-places of infrastructure might also free artists from their servitude to place-making and official historicity. A dissensual infrastructure would offer the opportunity of creating visual projects, platforms or networks which would be long lived (i.e. “permanent”) and yet mutable and participatory. Aesthetic action could open up the dimension of dissensus and risk within these interstitial spaces.

Some models for a dissensual infrastructure as part of this research are *Stairway to Heaven* which oscillates between the mitigation of risk through accessibility adaptation and the right to be in a site of perceptual risk (the sublime of the wilderness) and *Sun Stages* which proposed structures for the public to occupy and utilise for self-determined levels of risk in wild swimming. They offer a form of dissensus in the move between the consensus of health and safety legislation and the activism of environmentalist imperatives which advocate for immersion in nature. *Tats for Bats* offers a further iteration of a dissensual infrastructure which suggests an exchange between ecological conservationism, planning law and the counter-culture of tattoo. In these instances the aesthetic act operates to create an initial point of Žižekian parallax at which is it possible

to focus contradictory social, economic and political forces. Instead of resting here though, content to function as the “mediating third” (Bishop, 2012b: p. 40) between them, the act moves into the sphere of these opposing forces offering forms of progression for both at the same time, *Sun Stages* for example offers the lifeguards chair in support of *both* consensual supervision *and* independent risk taking. It does this in the hope of changing the politics of a given situation as “...an “epistemological” shift in the subject’s point of view always reflects an “ontological” shift in the object itself.” (Žižek, 2006: p. 17). It has been not possible to devote adequate time in the context of this thesis to an exploration of the particulars of this Žižekian parallax shift in the context of the aesthetics, as the mediating third, however this represents an important future avenue of research.

In summary then what has been developed is a methodology for a complementary practice in public contexts which is characterised by:

- **Complementarity - recognition that the other is always inscribed in the subject and the subject in the other, the universal in the particular, presence in absence.**
- **Fluidarity - as a unified disunity allowing simultaneous use of both consensual and antagonistic operations.**
- **Exaptation³⁸, instrumentalisation and collision of political drives (sustainability) for aesthetic purpose.**
- **A seductive, provocative or uncanny aesthetic invitation to debate.**
- **Instrumentalisation of the media to give that debate volume.**
- **Development of a dissensual infrastructure – inhabiting in-between spaces for evolutionary practices in public that repossess the commons.**

Referring back to the original question, does this complementary practice constitute “an aestheticised political process”? The answer is “no” if this is considered in the sense of a totalising of life and art into a heteronomic ethico-political form, whether that is the subsuming of art into the “real” of the community or into the super-structure of the State. But the answer is “yes” if it is in the sense that art can and should engage with the key

³⁸ Exaptation is a term from evolutionary biology which refers to the adaptation of a body part which was originally for one purpose for another purpose, e.g. the Panda’s thumb (Gould, 1983).

political and ethical questions of our time in pursuit of radical effect. To give Žižek a final word, he suggests that:

"...the truly subversive thing is not to insist on 'infinite' demands we know those in power cannot fulfil. Since they know that we know it, such an 'infinitely demanding' attitude presents no problem for those in power: 'So wonderful that, with your critical demands, you remind us what kind of world we would all like to live in. Unfortunately, we live in the real world, where we have to make do with what is possible.' The thing to do is, on the contrary, to bombard those in power with strategically well-selected, precise, finite demands, which can't be met with the same excuse." (Žižek, 2007: p. 7)

This may be correct in purely political terms but does not take into account the efficacy of aesthetic practices to encompass both impossible and possible demands. Art is capable of touching the absolute but must also manifest in the real world. In doing so it creates an infinite number of finite demands, simultaneously inhabiting, making visible, contradicting and subverting the structures of power and aesthetic ordering that regulate everything from where I go for a walk to the composition of the air I breathe.

APPENDIX 1 – THE JAYWICK TOURIST BOARD

2008/9

Jaywick, Essex

Commissioned by Landscape Arts & Network Services, Essex County Council, Tendring District Council.



Figure 41. The Jaywick Tourist Board: screengrab from www.jaywicked.org.uk with audio tour number 4 "Let the waters roll down" (2008), Alex Murdin.



Figure 42. The Jaywick Tourist Board: installation at Jaywick Martello Tower (2008), Alex Murdin.

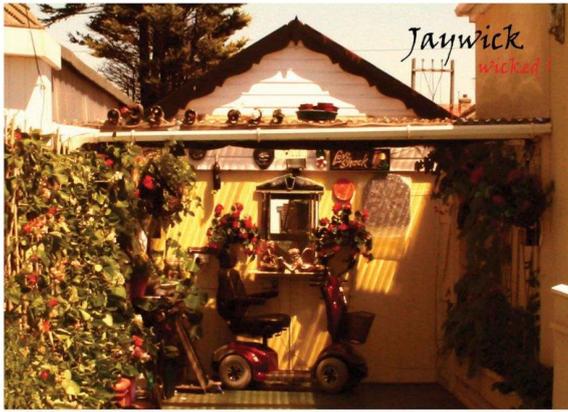




Figure 43. The Jaywick Tourist Board: (From previous page, top left to bottom right) Series of 5 postcards (Love Shack, Union Jack, Barb-wire Ice Cream, Fisherman, Men at Work), three exhibition posters (Jaywick Green, Little Venice and Take Off) and T-shirt (2008), Alex Murdin.

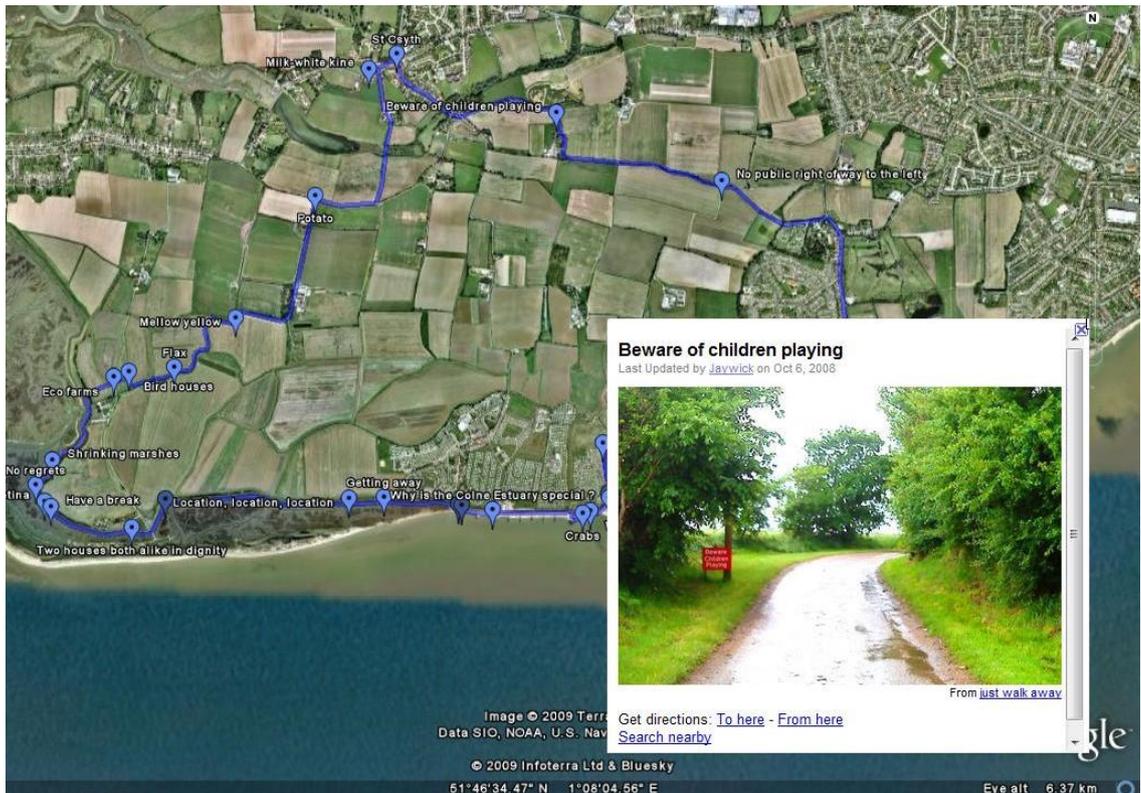


Figure 44. The Jaywick Tourist Board: Screen grab of www.jaywicked.org showing a Google Earth tour around Jaywick marshes - 24 photographs and texts related to local wildlife, buildings, agriculture, aquaculture, oyster recipes, local landmarks, stories of the 1953 flood etc. (2008), Alex Murdin.

APPENDIX 2 – STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

July to September 2006

Dartmoor

A collaboration with Childs Sulzmann Architects

Please join me... for your sake

I want better access for all to the countryside

Yes No Maybe

I think a stairlift and path on Haytor would be great

Yes No Maybe

I want to join thousands of other people

Yes No Maybe

I think about the countryside all the time

Yes No Maybe

Comments

Name

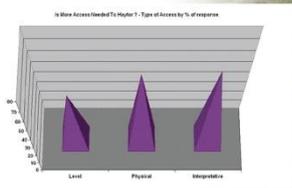
Address

Postcode

E-mail

Fill out online at www.stairwaytoheaven.me.uk

Results from access survey on Haytor, February 2006



Proposed new path made from Dartmoor granite from the Higher Car Park to Haytor Rocks

Dartmoor is mine



Campaigning for better access to the countryside



"Let Eagles bid the Tortoise sunward soar – As vainly Strength speaks to a broken mind" Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Walk Don't Walk is a campaign to improve access to Britain's countryside for the elderly, less mobile and disabled.

We believe that everybody should have a right to enjoy and participate in the spiritual, physical and mental benefits of nature and that to deny this to the people simply because they cannot walk, or have difficulty walking, is undemocratic.

For too long the elderly and disabled have been discriminated against and prevented from enjoying equal access to the landscape amenities of the UK. As current landscape use changes from agricultural models to the preservation of the countryside as cultural amenity it is necessary to consider the principles of equal access.

Although, thanks to the Disability Discrimination Act of 2005, access has been improved to many public buildings, many parts of the natural environment remain inaccessible. Another important Act, the Countryside Rights of Way Act (CROW) which came into force across England on October 31 2005 has opened up more land but it is not enough...

Members of the Disabled Ramblers Association



The "Stairway to Heaven" - a special solar powered stairlift to the top of Haytor Rocks. Plans by architect Nick Childs BSc BA Arch RIBA. Artists impression by Alex Murdin BA MA.

join me in buying a stairway to heaven...

Walk, Don't Walk aims to challenge the status quo by piloting projects that demonstrate the need for opening up the countryside of the UK in a proactive fashion. The first of these projects, *Stairway to Heaven* will be to create greater accessibility at Haytor Rocks in Dartmoor National Park, Devon (OS map reference SK7577).

It is proposed to introduce a path from the nearest car park to the Rocks and a stairlift to take the elderly and disabled to the top so that for the first time they can enjoy the same unparalleled experience of height, vision and uplift that every other visitor can.

This will not only provide improvements to access but will fight erosion on the moor, increase tourism and provide more local employment.

www.stairwaytoheaven.me.uk

Due to its convenient location next to the B3387, Haytor attracts many thousands of visitors a year and is managed as a high use area by the National Park. The spectacular views to the sea and across the moor make it a noted view point and belvedere, bringing peace, tranquillity and a sense of superiority to all who can ascend the rock. This spiritual ambience goes back thousands of years to when the rocks were called Solar Tor, a place where sacrifices and offerings were made to the Sun God 'Bal'.

Haytor is also popular with rock climbers with climbs ranging from 30 - 50ft such as the 'Zig-Zag', 'Athos', 'Bulging Wall', 'Low Man', 'Aviation' and 'Raven Gully'.

Sometime in the 1800s an iron handrail was erected on this outcrop and steps were cut into it. A Doctor Coker, a visitor in 1851, noted the "...stair step to enable the enervated and pinguinous scions of humanity of this wonderful nineteenth century to gain the summit." This indicates that even 150 years ago consideration was being given to the disabled in order that they had the opportunity to ascend the rock. The steps still remain; however the handrail was removed in the unrestricted planning period of the 1960s and never replaced.

"Recreation and tourism play an important part in the life of the National Park... Visitors help the rural economy through their spending and many jobs are provided in a range of services. Visitors also help to maintain some services in many National Park communities. Yet, recreation and tourism activities can bring problems such as erosion and traffic congestion. Therefore, recreation and tourism in the National Parks have to be managed to sustain the high quality of the natural and cultural environment whilst allowing visitors to enjoy and appreciate these qualities."

Dartmoor National Park - Dartmoor Tourism Factsheet 2004

Some of the thousands of walkers who share the paths and lanes around Dartmoor



"Yes, the life that we call blessed is to be sought for on a high eminence, and straight is the way that leads to it. Many also are the hills that lie between and we must ascend by a glorious stairway from strength to strength." Petrarch

Figure 45. Stairway to Heaven: trifold printed leaflet, distributed to Dartmoor information points. (2006), Alex Murdin.

We believe that everybody should have a right to enjoy and participate in the spiritual, physical and mental benefits of nature and that to deny this to the people simply because they cannot or have difficulty walking is undemocratic.

Walk Don't Walk is a campaign to improve access to Britain's countryside for the elderly, less mobile and disabled.

Government studies indicate that by 2010 farming will account for less than 65% of land use in the UK. Subsidy is therefore being switched from exploitative models of farming to stewardship schemes aimed at preserving habitats and maintaining our unique heritage for everyone to enjoy. However as more and more of the countryside becomes managed for leisure one key element seems to be missing, access.

Although the Disability Discrimination Act of 2005 means that access has been improved to many public buildings many parts of the natural environment remain inaccessible. Over 85% of Britain's landscape has no level access or interpretation for the 3 million registered disabled and the 20 million people over 65 in this country (a figure set to rise from 38% of the population in 2004 to 43% by 2031).



The view from Haytor towards the Teignmouth estuary

Better access to the countryside is crucial in order to address the increasing need for improving levels of fitness and reducing the costs of the national healthcare budget. According to the Ramblers Association 77% of UK adults, or about 38 million people, say they walk for pleasure at least once a month. Based on national averages this would translate into approximately 22 million elderly and disabled ramblers.

Walking is the best choice for regular, healthy exercise. Unlike most other forms of exercise walking is free and requires no special equipment or training, is safe and low-impact, with a low risk of injuries and accidents. Regular walking can reduce the risk of a number of health problems including coronary heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and bowel cancer.

Steps forward have been made. The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2005 gives people the opportunity to walk freely across mapped 'access land', without sticking to paths. In England, the public now have 'open access' to around 940,000 hectares (3,629 square miles). This represents 7% of the country.

The new right covers most recreational activities carried out on foot, including walking, sightseeing, bird-watching, climbing and running. The new right of open access does not include camping, cycling, horse riding or driving a vehicle but does include mobility scooters and buggies.

All that's needed now is somewhere to go...



Photo by kind permission of the Disabled Ramblers



Figure 46. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Introduction. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

"Hey Tor, which derives its name from heah, high, is perhaps, visited more often than any other tor upon Dartmoor. This is due not only to the fact that it is easily accessible - the 'cherrybanks' of Bovey Tracey taking it in their round - but to the gigantic masses of rock which crown its summit, the largest piles, taken as a whole, upon the moor and the most unmistakable." J Page 1895

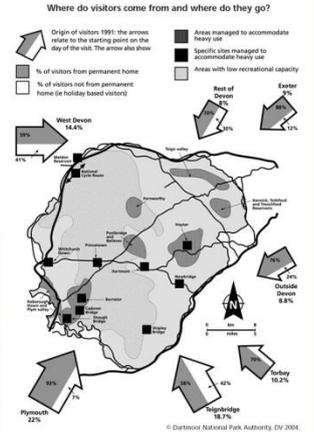
Walk, Don't Walk aims to challenge the status quo by piloting projects that demonstrate the need for opening up the countryside of the UK in a radical and proactive fashion. The first of these projects, **Stairway to Heaven**, will be to create greater accessibility at Haytor Rocks in the Dartmoor National Park, Devon (OS map reference SX7577).

Dartmoor National Park itself is an important natural landscape visited by over 11 million people each year. Due to its convenient location next to the B3387, Haytor Rocks is one of the most visited parts of the Park, attracting many thousands each year. It is managed as a high use area by the National Park in order to reduce the environmental impact of visitors on other more fragile parts of Dartmoor.

The outcrops of Haytor themselves stand at 1,499 ft (457m) and consists of two granite outcrops. It is classified as an 'avenue tor' which means that the central section of the tor has been eroded leaving an avenue running between two outcrops. The granite which makes up the tors is called 'tor granite' but at the base of the western outcrop is a layer of fine grained granite. Where the tor granite joins and overhangs the fine granite a 'rock shelter' has formed. On the top of the eastern outcrop the granite has been eroded to form a rock basin which measures roughly 34" long, 28" wide and 10" deep.



Walkers below Haytor Rocks



Where do visitors come from and where do they go?

- Origin of visitors 1991: the arrows relate to the starting point on the day of the visit. The arrow also shows % of visitors from permanent home (or holiday based visitors)
- Areas managed to accommodate heavy use
- Specific sites managed to accommodate heavy use
- Areas with low recreational capacity

Location	% of visitors
West Devon	14.4%
Rest of Devon	7%
East of Devon	1%
Outside Devon	8.8%
to Tor	10.2%
to Torridge	10.2%
Plymouth	22%

© Dartmoor National Park Authority DV 2004



The famous "Haytor steps"



The main reason for people to visit the Rocks is the unparalleled view from the summit where it is possible to see across Torbay to Portland Bill on a clear day. This fascination for the spot stretches back many years and the granite summit already has a set of steps cut into them which are over a century old.

In spite of these obvious reasons for improving access no action has been taken to make Haytor Rocks truly accessible to all sections of the community.

Stairway to Heaven aims to give back Haytor to the people who have made it what it is today...



Climbers on Haytor c 1930

Figure 47. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Background. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

"O my God ! What sublime scenery I have beheld... The mist broke in the middle, and at last stood as the waters of the Red Sea are said to have done when the Israelites passed - & between two walls of Mist the Sunlight burnt upon the Ice a strait Road of golden Fire, all across the lake - intolerably bright, & the walls of Mist partaking of the light in a multitude of colours." Samuel Taylor Coleridge

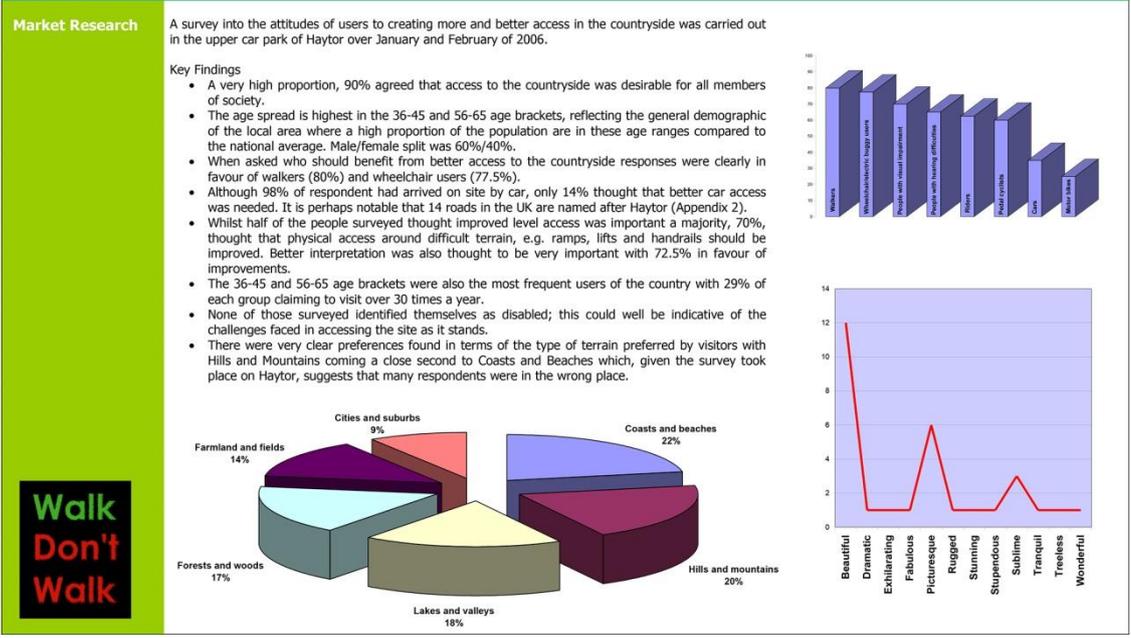


Figure 48. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Market Research. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

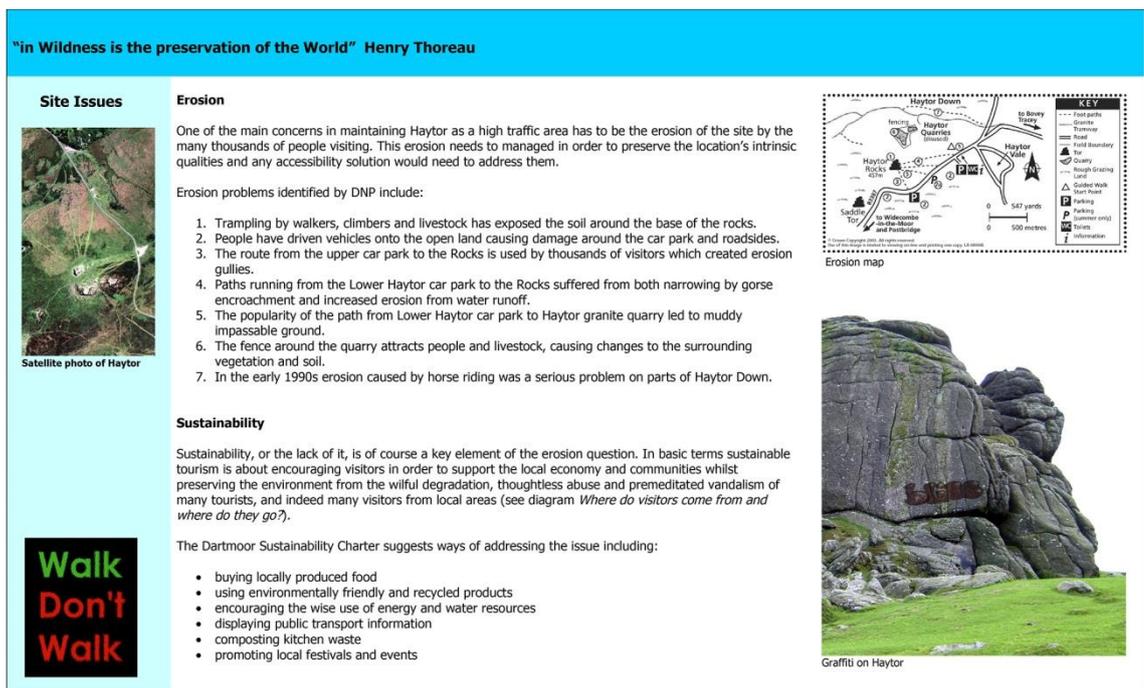


Figure 49. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Site Issues. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

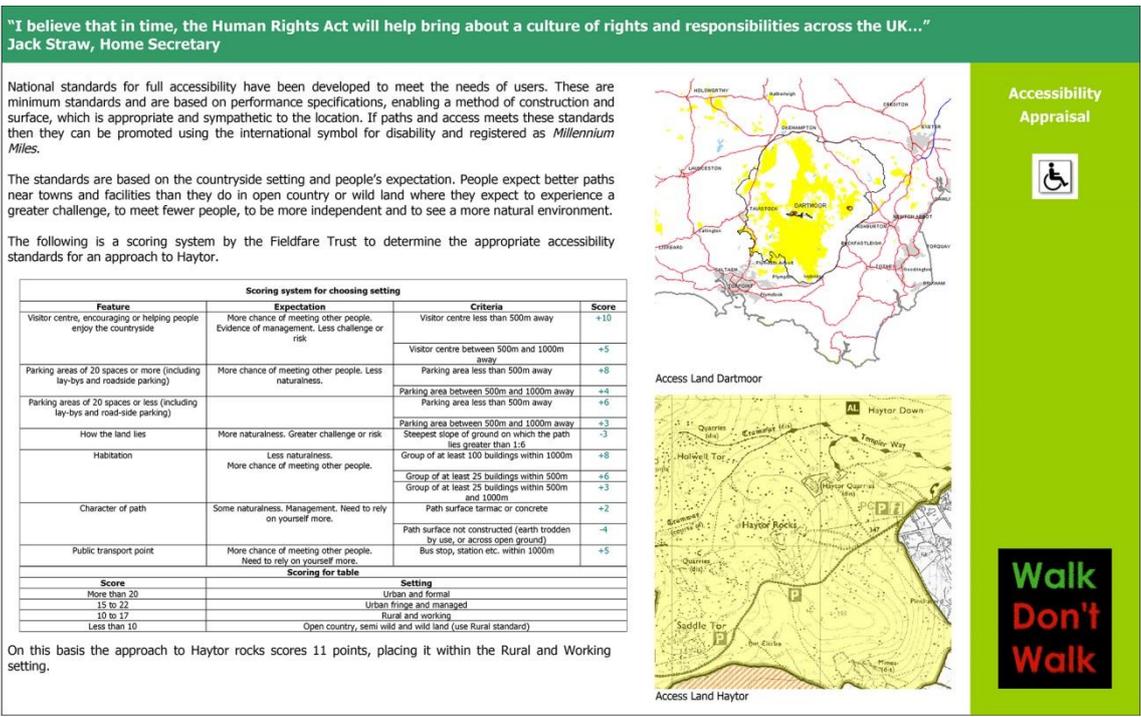


Figure 50. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Accessibility Appraisal. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

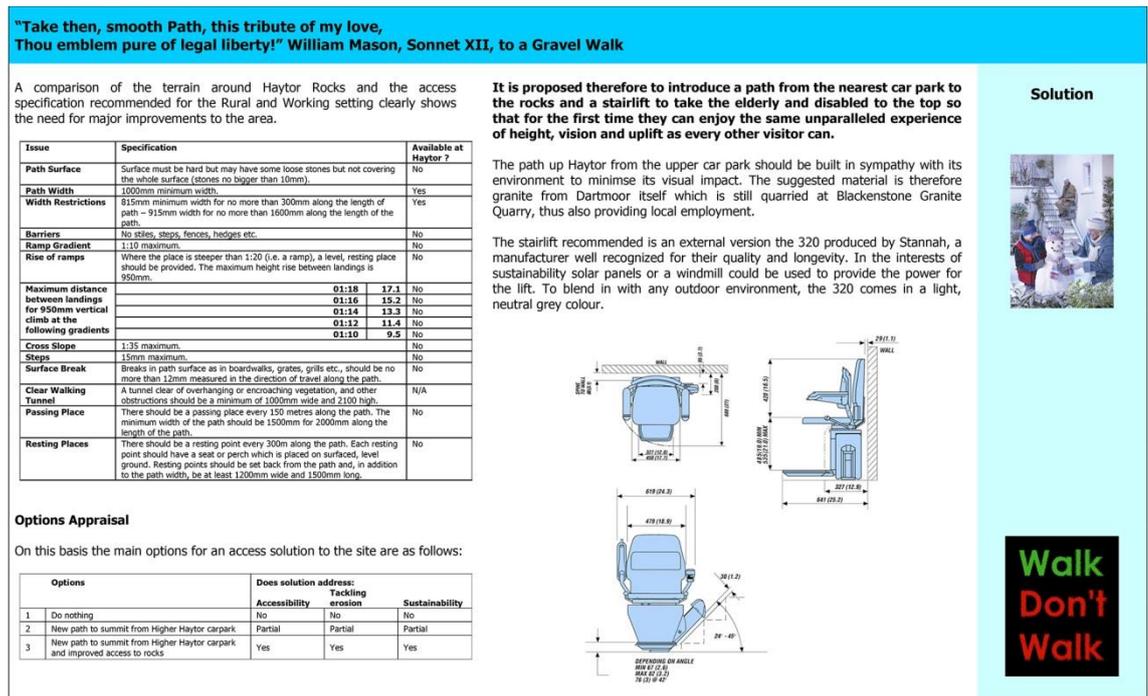


Figure 51. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Solution. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

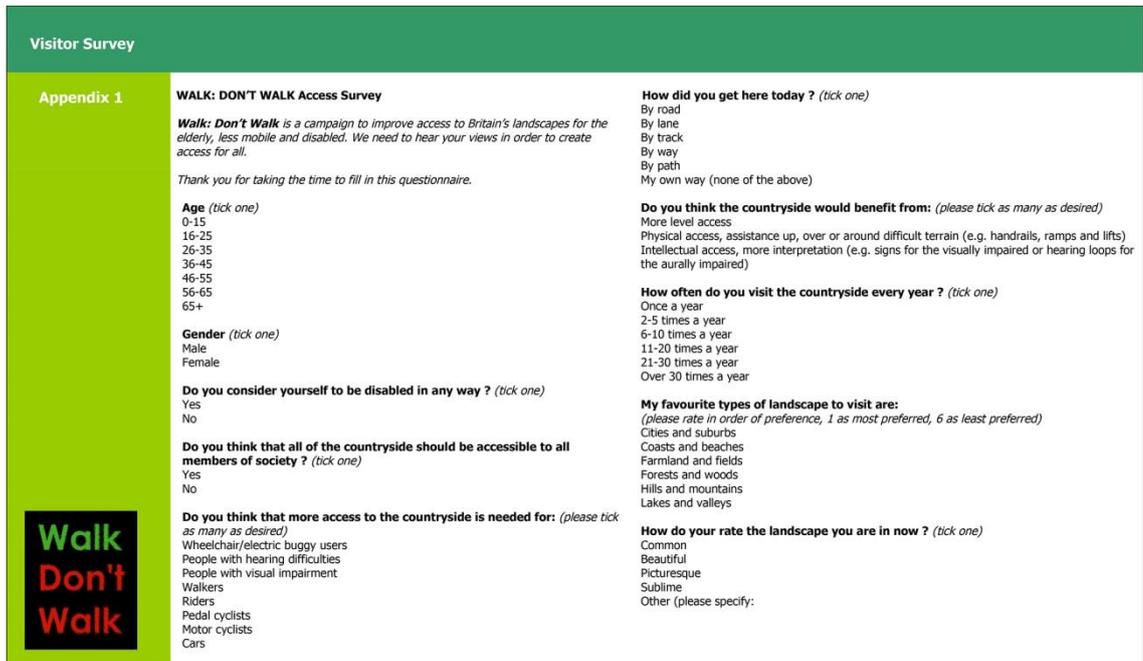


Figure 52. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Appendix 1 – Visitor Survey. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

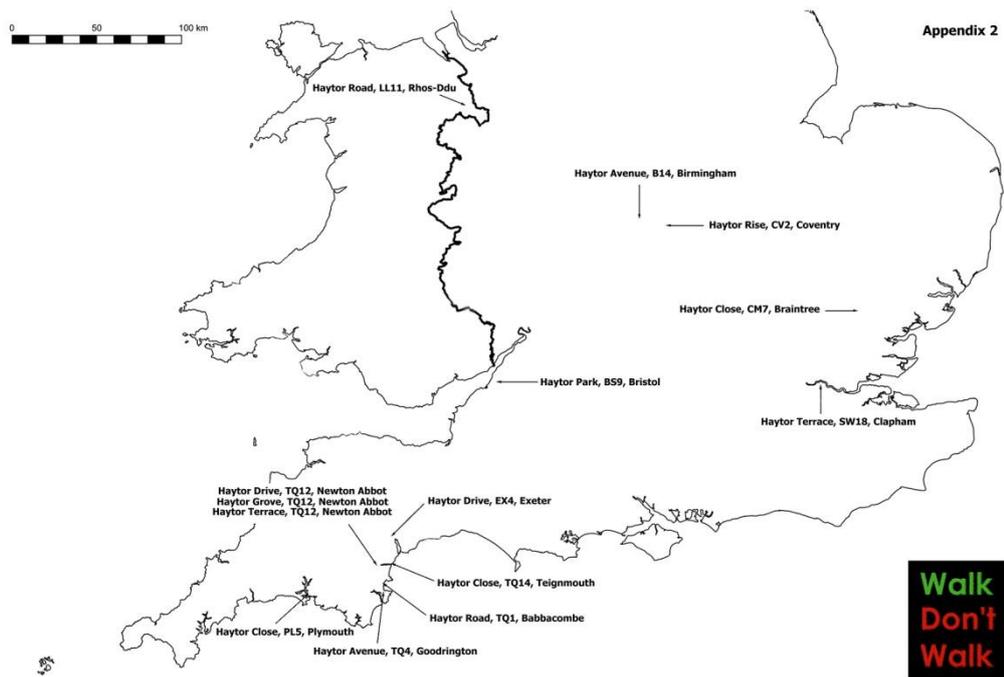


Figure 53. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Appendix 2 – Haytor Ways. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

Stairway to Heaven, Jimmy Page

There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold
 And she's buying a stairway to heaven
 And when she gets there she knows if the stores are closed
 With a word she can get what she came for

Woe oh oh oh oh oh
 And she's buying a stairway to heaven

There's a sign on the wall but she wants to be sure
 And you know sometimes words have two meanings
 In the tree by the brook there's a songbird who sings
 Sometimes all of our thoughts are misgiven

Woe oh oh oh oh oh
 And she's buying a stairway to heaven

There's a feeling I get when I look to the west
 And my spirit is crying for leaving
 In my thoughts I have seen rings of smoke through the trees
 And the voices of those who stand looking

Woe oh oh oh oh oh
 And she's buying a stairway to heaven

And it's whispered that soon, if we all call the tune
 Then the piper will lead us to reason
 And a new day will dawn for those who stand long
 And the forest will echo with laughter

And it makes me wonder

If there's a bustle in your hedgerow
 Don't be alarmed now
 It's just a spring clean for the May Queen

Yes there are two paths you can go by
 but in the long run
 There's still time to change the road you're on

Your head is humming and it won't go because you don't know
 The piper's calling you to join him
 Dear lady can't you hear the wind blow and did you know
 Your stairway lies on the whispering wind

And as we wind on down the road
 Our shadows taller than our souls
 There walks a lady we all know
 Who shines white light and wants to show
 How everything still turns to gold
 And if you listen very hard
 The tune will come to you at last
 When all are one and one is all
 To be a rock and not to roll
 Woe oh oh oh oh oh
 And she's buying a stairway to heaven

There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold
 And she's buying a stairway to heaven
 And when she gets there she knows if the stores are closed
 With a word she can get what she came for

And she's buying a stairway to heaven, uh uh uh.

Appendix 3



Figure 54. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Appendix 3 – Lyrics to Stairway to Heaven. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.



Figure 55. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study – Appendix 4 – Leisure uses of the moor. 10 exhibition panels presented at Dartington College of Art, (2006), Alex Murdin.

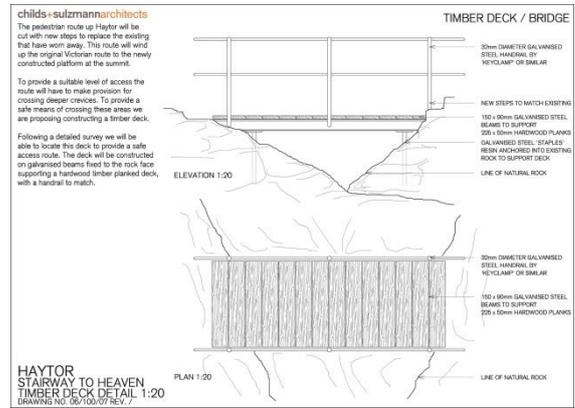
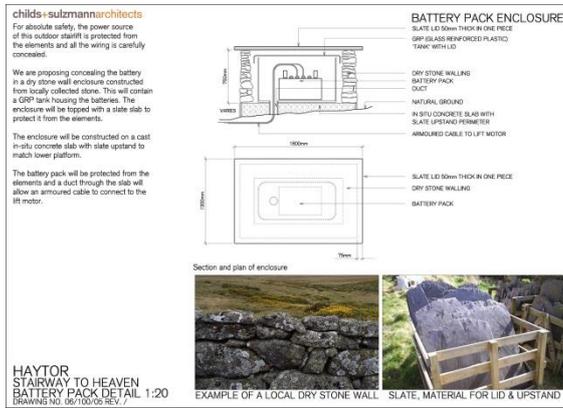
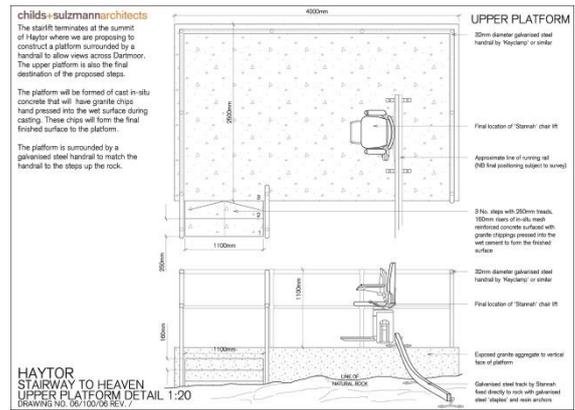
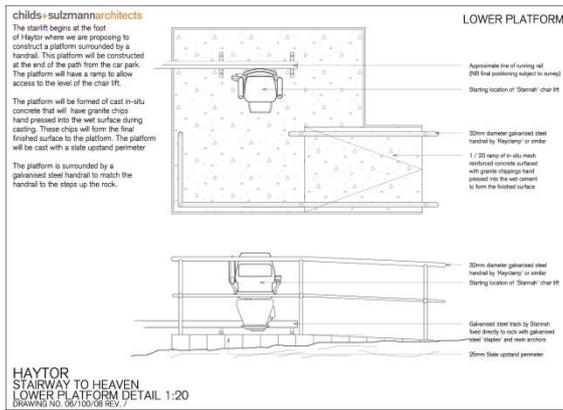
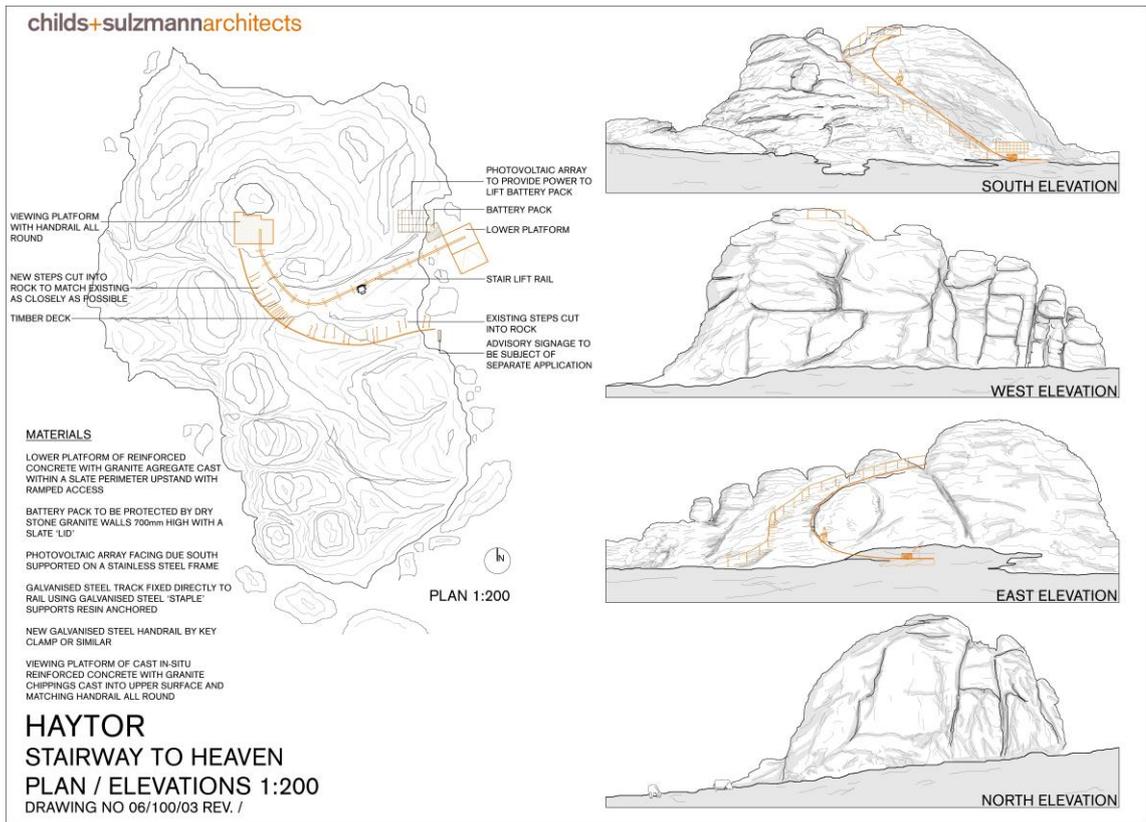


Figure 56. Stairway to Heaven: Feasibility study - Plans to support planning application, (2006), Alex Murdin and Childs Sulzmann architects.



Figure 57. Stairway to Heaven: planning notice at Haytor (2006).

From Ouch! ...it's a disability thing (BBC Message Board)

Stairlift plan for Dartmoor tor

Message 1 - posted by Jaygee21 (U1726507) , Jul 3, 2006

Planning permission is being sought for a stairlift on one of Dartmoor's most iconic natural rock formations. Artist Alex Murdin has applied to Dartmoor National Park Planning authority for permission for the stairlift at Haytor Rocks.

Message 2 - posted by Neal Cassady MGX (U4703019) , Jul 3, 2006

That's just silly. They won't be wild, natural places anymore if people keep cluttering them up with manmade objects. As well as my mobility difficulties I also have hay fever. Will they also get rid of the vegetation for me?

Message 3 - posted by Agent_Fang (U1726714) , Jul 3, 2006

Ha! Trust an artist to hit the spot where nothing else can... MidnightgenerationX, maybe you should give the artist a call... But seriously. Defacing places of natural beauty with access. Popular places of natural beauty I've been to that were full of people were always a bit diminished anyway. And look, for instance, at Snowdonia. Coach parties, the railway system and gravel paths. I've climbed it in my more active days, and to be honest, didn't like those things, but then there's plenty of other routes to take that aren't so busy, if you can do it. It's easy to go from house to car to building and forget nature when you've got an impairment that makes it difficult. And remember, it's a one-off by an artist - not a national organisation planning to roll this out over our countryside. I'd be interested to see it go ahead just to see how people responded to it. There are plenty of beautiful wild places that will never be considered for this treatment. I wouldn't advocate this kind of thing all over the place, but I do think it makes an important point about disabled people not being able to access nature easily. In peace and harmony, AF

Message 4 - posted by Lin (U2213803) , Jul 3, 2006

I wouldn't want to be the OT that has to sort out the stairlift on Ben Nevis if this is going to be the trend.....lolol I expect he's after publicity, but if he's not, perhaps an IQ transplant might be his first priority. doh Or, perhaps, we could flatten Britain to keep him happy.yikes Jeez. Still, I suppose it has got his name in the media - I hadn't even heard of him before. Lin smiley

Message 5 - posted by Neal Cassady MGX (U4703019) , Jul 3, 2006

Dear Agent Fang, I'm an artist and a cripp (yes it's quite possible to be both), and I still think this is darn silly.

Message 6 - posted by Jaygee21 (U1726507) , Jul 3, 2006

Ah, but IS it silly? You have trains up there, cafes at high points of the mountains (for those weary train travellers winkeye) and all number of things to attract visitors. Isn't that spoiling the natural beauty too? If that can be done, why not this? winkeye)

Message 7 - posted by Jaygee21 (U1726507) , Jul 3, 2006

Sorry, not at Haytor Rocks but they do in Snowdonia.

Message 8 - posted by Agent_Fang (U1726714) , Jul 3, 2006

Dear MidnightgenerationX, I am also an artist and a crip. Perhaps we shall cordially have to agree to disagree. Why is it so silly, in your opinion? Do expand. Hayfever (but not cripness) aside, haven't you ever wanted to be able to get up on somewhere like that and absorb the view? I could still agree a stairlift is ugly but would gladly take the opportunity to go up there anyway. I've scrambled (as in rock climbing) once or twice in more mobile days, and loved looking out onto a beautiful landscape all laid out below. Even if I won the lottery and got one of those ibot chairs than go up stair, I doubt it'd scramble for me...

Message 9 - posted by Agent_Fang (U1726714) , Jul 3, 2006

Or, indeed scramble... not scramble...! (Btw whats this stupid "You must wait 1 minutes 50 secs before you can post again" malarky?! Never seen that before - old timer, me.)

Message 10 - posted by markmop (U602706) , Jul 3, 2006

I have written to Hiugh Robinson of the Dartmoor Preservation Society to ask why is disabled access a joke and what he would feel if he became disabled today

Message 11 - posted by Loopy_S (U1819434) , Jul 3, 2006

On a more practical note, what happens to your wheelchair? 1) Stairlift is built 2) Granite parthway from carpark to bottom of stairlift is also built. 3) I trundle along to stairlift in my wheelchair and get into stairlift. 4) Stairlift takes me to the top. I presume wheelchair has to stay at the bottom, or am I mistaken in this assumption? and 5) ??? Do I just sit in the stairlift looking around?

Message 12 - posted by Agent_Fang (U1726714) , Jul 3, 2006

Hi Loopy Sarah, There's link on the news item with more about the project.
<http://www.stairwaytoheaven.me.uk/> Dunno if it'll answer all of those questions, but there is a diagram on the first page which says there's a viewing deck.

Message 13 - posted by vandenwyngaerde (U1829662) , Jul 3, 2006

Yes, this is it - I often think that these things aren't properly thought out, Loopy. Wonderful idea - access to the countryside. But no good if you can't tootle around at the top, however you get around. No good if you can't get to it easily either, or the pathway thereto isn't accessible. So much of this sort of thing seems to be half-hearted and half-baked. What's wrong with the principle of access to open land for everyone? It shouldn't just be for the Ramblers and for the Long Distance Walkers' Association...A well-designed stairlift would be an asset - after all if there is a path it still has an impact on the countryside. Ski-lifts are an asset, surely, in places where people ski, all in beautiful mountains? They're a way of getting people to appreciate the beauty they're in! Most people do not realise how much of our environment is man-made. Those exposed layers of rock are quarry or mining remains, the "patchwork" effect of the countryside is due to farming practices, even ancient barrows and Neolithic causewayed enclosures which may look like natural bumps or wiggles are man-made and have had an impact on the land from the day they were built. Dartmoor itself to a certain extent is a managed landscape. Even conservationists are managing the landscape. Visitors impact upon the landscape and wear away foot trails. I

understand that with increasing urbanization there is an understandable desire to preserve what is left of the countryside. But that has to be taken in context - man has already managed the landscape, and why shouldn't our generation add something of its own? I think some of the nay-saying is partly because the idea appears rather novel. It could be well designed, it could be a thing of beauty, it could be functional, it could add to other visitors' appreciation - if all relevant factors are looked at and included.

Message 14 - posted by Chris_Page (U557481) , Jul 3, 2006

The objectors obviously don't realise - especially the disabled ones - that they're shooting us all in the foot. This has both practical AND symbolic value. If they can have viewing platforms at the Grand Canyon, then I see NO credible reason to oppose this. The twit from the preservation society obviously doesn't want us plebs enjoying what he jealously guards. And the fact that he can't see the problem shows they need Disability Awareness training. To coin a phrase from the film Field Of Dreams: "Build it, and they will come."

Message 15 - posted by littleMancity (U4639486) , Jul 3, 2006

OMG please leave Dartmoor alone - one of the few true wilderness areas left in the UK. I have very fond memories of visiting various parts of Dartmoor - I feel no need for something to be defaced - just because I might want to climb it! I am all for accessibility obviously but not at any cost! The DPA are right to object to this - they are preserving something beautiful and amazing for all of us. I have restricted mobility and I recognise there are certain things I cannot do, I would fight tooth and nail for accessible buildings, businesses, shops and offices but please dont do this in my name!

Message 16 - posted by Neal Cassady MGX (U4703019) , Jul 3, 2006

There won't be a view left to absorb, it won't be a wild place anymore. It will have been destroyed.

Message 17 - posted by miikaawaadizi (U3343711) , Jul 3, 2006

Let's see ... concrete over the moors to create the parking lot and pavements needed to get to the tor. carve a chunk out of the tor so that the equipment will go up it at the correct legal angle and slope. carve chunks out of the top of the tor to mount a viewing platform on top that will end up being bigger than the tor is so that everyone can get up there. what exactly will be left for anyone to see except for concrete and steel? if you want to see that you just need to go out your front door. just because you can do a thing it doesn't mean you should do a thing. hacking the hell out of natural beauty so that people can go see it isn't logical. as for symbolic, Chris ...

Message 18 - posted by Chris_Page (U557481) , Jul 3, 2006

Whether it happens or not is irrelevant. It's the message behind it - that the environment isn't just the preserve of non-disabled people - that is the important thing. And the reaction of the guy at the preservation society makes the best argument - because he can't see that there is even a problem. And it's a historical problem. If Disabled people's rights to equality had been recognised back in ages past, we'd be much further along in terms of societal development.

Figure 58. Stairway to Heaven: transcript of first 18 messages from "Ouch! ...it's a disability thing" (disability message board) (BBC, 2006).

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Stairlift plan for Dartmoor tor

Planning permission is being sought for a stairlift on one of Dartmoor's most iconic natural rock formations.



How the Haytor stairlift would look

Artist Alex Murdin has applied to Dartmoor National Park Planning Authority for permission for the stairlift at Haytor Rocks.

Mr Murdin, 35, said the application is "deadly serious" and he has the backing of disabled groups.

But the Dartmoor Preservation Association said it would oppose the move which it called a "joke".

The project also seeks consent for a granite pathway from the car park up to the rocks, to enable people in wheelchairs to get to the stairlift.

Mr Murdin, 35, from Ashburton, said he expected opposition to the application, but he said it was designed to raise questions about who really has access to Britain's wild landscapes.

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'Bonkers' test of equal access



Alex Murdin, an artist from Ashburton, Devon, says that he wants to test Dartmoor National Park's commitment to equal access to the countryside by applying for planning permission to set up a 30ft (9m) solar-powered stairlift, to enable disabled people to reach the top of Hay Tor, and a 500m zigzag pathway, whereby they can access the lift from a car park in their wheelchairs. Kate Ashbrook, president of the Dartmoor Preservation Association, said that the plan was "just bonkers".

END COLUMN

Craig Brown
Way of the world

The curse of the stairlift

STAYING with my grandmother on Dartmoor, I used to play with my brothers on Hay Tor. It was second only to Hound Tor as the perfect place to play running-and-climbing games, full of stray rocks to hide behind, and with the main rock high enough to lend any game of cops and robbers the necessary whiff of terror.

At that time, I had no fear of heights. I seem to have spent the greater part of my childhood peering down at my father on the ground as he pleaded with me to come down. But with age comes vertigo. I have spent much of my adulthood in my father's shoes, craning my neck up at my son, pleading with him to come down.

All this may change. Planning permission is now being sought to install a 30ft solar-powered stairlift on Hay Tor, its developer explains, "to enable disabled people to reach the top". But why on earth should disabled people want to reach the top? The only reasons for anyone wanting to reach the top is that it is a little tricky and a little hair-raising. A stairlift would nullify both these. You might as well place escalators on Mount Everest.

Needless to say, the development will not stop there: development breeds developments. To prevent the wheelchairs from sliding over the edge, there will have to be some sort of platform on the top, with safety rails all round. It is further proposed that a 500-metre "zigzag granite pathway" will be built from the car park "to enable those in wheelchairs to reach the lift". On past experience, this will be supplemented by handrails, disabled toilets and an abundance of new signs pointing the way to the pathway, the toilets and the solar-powered stairlift, plus further signs, full of maximum penalties and so forth, forbidding those who are disabled from using the pathway, the toilets, the handrails and the solar-powered stairlift.

There will be signs in Braille, too, of course. The bourgeois-triumphalist, *Newspaper Digest*-style sculpture of a shell that was dumped on the Suffolk coast a year or two back by Maggi Hambling now comes complete with a special Braille information board, telling the blind how marvellous they would feel if only they were able to see it, which of course they can't.

This beautifully bleak stretch of landscape is no longer so beautiful, because it is no longer so bleak. The same may soon be true of Hay Tor. I am sure most disabled people would be perfectly happy to forgo access to the summit of the Tor in return for the promise of keeping its rugged beauty intact.

The Gulag Experience

MEANWHILE, in the Russian town of Ulyanovsk, Lenin's birthplace is being used for corporate parties hosted by local banks and businesses, and some of these gatherings have been getting a little out of hand, introducing strippers, lap-dancers and so forth.

The local communist party is not amused and has been to the governor of the province to complain. "Everything is for sale nowadays - body and soul," grumbles the party head, the inappropriately named Mr Kravtchikov. "I think making money out of Lenin's name is a shame."

But Governor Sergei Morozov is all for it. He has announced plans to turn the museum into a theme park called Leninland. If these plans go ahead, visitors will be able to dodge secret police and relive what Morozov calls "the Gulag Experience".

Of course, one's immediate reaction is to agree with any plan that might upset the ghost of Lenin, who was certainly not what one might call the lap-dancing type. It might even be fun to whisk his embalmed body out of its mausoleum in Red Square and plant it in the middle of a party of executive fun-lovers.

On the other hand, the sight of his scowling visage with its disapproving little goatee might take some of the bounce out of the lap-dancers, causing even the most vivacious partisans to make their excuses and leave.

On the Hay Tor principle, it is probably best to leave well alone and to abandon plans for the Gulag Experience. Lenin's home should remain as it was: its display of middle-class comforts should be enough to make him squirm in his grave.

Incidentally, following their success in the recent by-elections, I wonder if the Lib Dems have considered turning Sir Menzies Campbell's birthplace into the Ming Experience? Visitors would spend their time dodging canvassers and trying to avoid nodding off. A little on the dull side, maybe, but so much more reassuring than the historic Thorpe Experience.

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Tor stairlift plans are refused

A plan to put a stairlift on one of Dartmoor's best known tors has been rejected by planners.



Artist's Impression: How the Haytor stairlift could have looked

Artist Alex Murdin had applied to Dartmoor National Park Planning Authority for permission for the stairlift at Haytor Rocks.

Mr Murdin, 35, said his application was to improve access for disabled people.

The planning authority said such a lift would cause "significant landscape harm" and have a "detrimental impact" on the natural beauty of the area.

Planners had been recommended to refuse the scheme.

There had been 95 letters of objection, and planning officers described the application as "frivolous and time-wasting".

Mr Murdin, from Ashburton, said his application was both serious and genuine, and the refusal of the National Park to take his proposal seriously was "disappointing".

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Figure 59. Stairway to Heaven: press coverage (clockwise from top) BBC, Telegraph, BBC and Times, (2006).

APPENDIX 3 – SITES OF RECEPTION

2009

Proposal for Turn Lyme Green residency project

Commissioned by Dorset County Council.



Figure 60. Sites of Reception: proposal for car park reception desk 1 – photomontage (2009), Alex Murdin.



Figure 61. Sites of Reception: proposed location of reception desk 1 in Lyme Regis (2009), Alex Murdin.



Figure 62. Sites of reception: proposal for car park reception desk 2 – photomontage (2009), Alex Murdin.



Figure 63. Sites of reception: proposal for car park reception desk 3 – photomontage (2009), Alex Murdin.



Figure 64. Sites of reception: proposal for beach reception desk – photomontage (2009), Alex Murdin.



Figure 65: Sites of Reception: proposed signing in system for visitors to Lyme Regis (2009), Alex Murdin.

APPENDIX 4 – ORGANIC PONY SKIN RUCKSACK

2010

Exhibited at *Ecology and Economy* at the Centre for Contemporary Art for the Natural World.

Collaboration with Tony Piper, leatherworker.

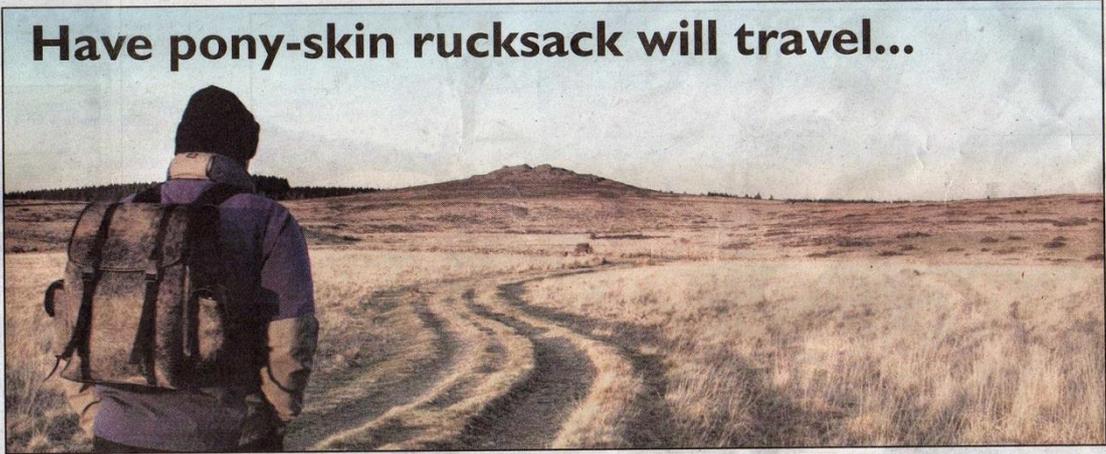


Figure 66. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack: Devon moorland pony skin, kid leather interior, cattle leather straps with tough polypropylene webbing and buckles (2010), Alex Murdin and Tony Piper.



Figure 67. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack: accessory for the environmentally conscious walker (2010), Alex Murdin and Tony Piper.

Have pony-skin rucksack will travel...





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THE skin of a Devon moorland pony has been used to make an organic hiking rucksack in a creation that an artist says explores the relationship between the animals and humans. Alex Murdin used the hide of a pony which had been culled as part of population management to create a bag with functional features such as webbing and pockets. He said he hoped to see it put into production, turning a waste product with little commercial value into a useful and stylish accessory. Mr Murdin, 39, last hit the headlines when he came up with a proposal to turn lidos into "underwater zoos". And he sparked controversy three years ago when he submitted a planning application to erect a stairlift at Dartmoor's iconic Hay Tor to highlight issues surrounding access to rural areas. Mr Murdin, from Ashburton, South Devon, said the pony rucksack aimed to make people think about the impact of tourism on wild landscapes such as Dartmoor and Exmoor, as well as how such land was managed by man. While Dartmoor and Exmoor ponies were "iconic symbols", they were



Artist Alex Murdin says there is a message in turning a 'waste product' into a useful and stylish accessory

virtually worthless financially. Mr Murdin said ponies were kept as pets or to control vegetation. But over the past 15 years, human use of the ponies had declined. The loss of market value meant farmers were forced to humanely cull animals. Mr Murdin sourced the pony skin from licensed Bristol-based dealers J J Wilson, and the rucksack was made by fine leather craftsman Tony

Piper. The artist said: "By demonstrating how local craftsmanship can create beauty and utility out of what is considered a waste product, this work highlights the challenging relationship between the management of an ecology for its aesthetic or leisure value, and a purely market-led economy." The rucksack is on show in the exhibition Art, Ecology and the Economy, taking place simultaneously at the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World in Haldon Forest Park near Exeter, and the Duchy Square Centre for Creativity, at Princetown, from today until March 28. Mr Murdin said the rucksack was the first in the world but he would love to see it produced. "As far as I know, there is no other rucksack like this," he said. "You'd pay thousands of pounds in Prada for an Italian bag of this type - why not both support the ponies and encourage people to buy Devon instead?"

● Alex Murdin's projects are featured on www.ruralrecreation.org.uk

Figure 68. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack: press coverage transcript - Western Morning News 23rd January (2010).

Practical, stylish, comfortable, free range pony skin rucksack raised organically on Devon's wild moorland.

An ideal accessory for the environmentally conscious walker the bag is handcrafted by fine leather maker Tony Piper out Devon moorland pony skin, a waste product created by contemporary land management practices. Moorland ponies are mostly kept as pets or used by the authorities for keeping vegetation under control for the benefit of walkers on moors. However over the past 15 years human use of the ponies, and hence their economic value, has declined. With little market demand farmers are forced to humanely cull older, infirm and unwanted animals each year in order to keep the whole population sustainable, a matter of much dispute as can be seen from the comments below.

Materials: Devon moorland pony skin, kid leather interior, cattle leather straps with tough polypropylene webbing and buckles. Wind and rain resistant. The skin is sourced from a licensed hide and leather dealer.

Comments:

09/10/12

Pony skin rucksacks

When I first moved to Dartmoor I used to love seeing the new foals appear each spring but now I find it heart-breaking knowing that most won't make it beyond the autumn. No ponies (or any other animal) should end up in landfill! I'm not a vegetarian and believe that the best should be made of every part of an animal that is killed for meat. But ponies aren't – at least not for human consumption – nor do we drink their milk. If it's not right to eat them then it is clearly going to be a sensitive issue if you make things out of their skins. I have goats and they are very intelligent (and mischievous) animals but I recognise that in a milking herd the males will need to be culled and so, provided it is done humanely, I am willing to eat goat meat.

It is very misleading to say that these products are made from the skins of old and infirm animals when in fact they are almost certainly from foals as young as two weeks old that are rounded up every autumn and sent to the pony sales. The few lucky ones are sold for around £10 each to private owners but the rest are shot and at best become zoo fodder (and now ponyskin rucksacks). In 2010 this was the fate of around 700 ponies and in 2011 that number increased by over 100% to 1500. The 2012 sales are going on now so numbers are not yet known for this year. Clearly, far too many foals are being born but the issues are complicated. Some very dedicated people have been working hard with the involved parties to find a way of solving the problem of so many unwanted foals and anything that could make their slaughter more profitable will only serve to make a solution harder to reach.

Gill Crane

In contrast the Dartmoor Hill Pony Association have recently said on the BBC 'Breed Dartmoor ponies for food' :

Charlotte Faulkner, founder of the DHPA, said in a letter to South West Equine Protection (Swep): "It has taken years of considering reports and listening to the outcome of meetings to recognise and reluctantly accept that Dartmoor pony herders will only carry on keeping their herds if they have a sustainable market for them.

"We are in real danger of ponies disappearing from Dartmoor altogether."

Ms Faulkner said selling ponies for riding and driving would continue.

"The Dartmoor Hill Pony Association believes the meat trade should be (used) too," she said. "Strangely, having a meat trade should improve a pony's chances of finding a new home at sale."

Becky Treeby, of Swep, said: "Dartmoor hill ponies were there for a reason, for ecology purposes to keep grass on the moors down, and they have been there for thousands of years. People have never eaten them before. It is promoting over-breeding for profit."

Figure 69. Organic Ponyskin Rucksack: (previous page) website description and (this page) comments gathered on www.ruralrecreation.org.uk website (2010-11).

APPENDIX 5 – INCLUSIVE PATH

4th -7th October 2007

Installations/performance as part of the FRED Festival in Keswick and Grasmere.

Commissioned by FOLD Gallery.

FREE VIRTUAL VISIT

THE PIKE WITHOUT THE PAIN

BECOME AN ECO-TOURIST

*The World is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!*

*This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours
And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;*

*It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,—
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;*

*Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.*

William Wordsworth, 1806

www.ruralrecreation.org.uk

Do you value the beauty and tranquillity of the Fells and Lakes?

Want to stop damage being done to badly eroded paths and the environment?

"Once these footpaths have been destroyed there is no going back. We have to fix them now."

Kim Wilde on www.fixthefells.co.uk (supported by the National Trust, Lake District National Park Authority, English Nature and the Tourism and Conservation Partnership)

We climbed the Pike so you don't have to.

Take photos of yourself and friends with our handy cut out boards then send them to:

info@ruralrecreation.org.uk

and we'll publish them for you on:

www.ruralrecreation.org.uk

Figure 70. Inclusive Path: flyer/poster (2007), Alex Murdin.



Figure 71. Inclusive Path: installation in Keswick town centre (2007), Alex Murdin.

ARTIST'S BID TO ENCOURAGE 'UN-TOURISM' FALLS FOUL OF THE NATIONAL TRUST

An artist's attempt to explore the impact of tourism on the Cumbrian landscape has run into opposition from the National Trust.

Alex Murdin wished to place a set of life-size cardboard cut-out figures of walkers in mountain beauty spots for just one weekend, but Trust managers vetoed the idea - on their land at least.

The idea of Mr Murdin's project, called 'Inclusive Path', is that the public get photographed inside the cardboard cut-outs, so they don't actually have to walk up the Lake's mountains themselves. The aim is to provoke awareness of how activities like walking, hiking and tourism affect the Lakeland landscape.

Mr Murdin says his work is making a serious point.

"Conservation organisations are concerned about the impact of growing numbers of walkers. There are twelve million visitors to the Lake District every year - do we allow the numbers to just keep on growing? Fix the Fells, for example, says on its website that ugly, scarred paths spoil the view for everyone. Logically then we should all stay off these paths, and make virtual visits - what I call 'un-tourism'."

Mr Murdin's plan has not found approval with the National Trust though. It has refused permission for him to erect the cut-out figures on land it owns in the centre of Grasmere, saying that as an organisation which promotes public access, it does not wish to be associated with phrases like 'un-tourism'.

Neither the local council nor the Grasmere village society objected to the project, and Mr Murdin says the National Trust is missing the point. "It holds land in trust for the public, and campaigns on climate change. It even gives discounts for people visiting heritage sites using public transport. And yet it spent £15 million on publicity last year, presumably promoting public access to the landscapes it's trying to conserve. Am I the only one that sees some contradictions here?"

Despite the National Trust's stance, Inclusive Path will be on show in Keswick Town Centre on 4th and 5th of October 2007, and in Grasmere on 6th and 7th October 2007. People can go along and get photographed inside the cut-outs - there will be three on display, a standing male walker, a male tourist in a wheelchair, and two boys. Pictures can be downloaded at a website which has been created as part of the work: www.ruralrecreation.org.uk

Figure 72. Inclusive Path: press release (2007), Alex Murdin

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Last Updated: Thursday, 4 October 2007, 07:42 GMT 08:42 UK

Artist's 'cardboard tourists' ban

An artist has been banned from displaying his card-board cut-outs of people on National Trust land over claims they are "anti-tourist".

Alex Murdin claims the pieces highlight "contradiction in tourism" as tourists are encouraged to visit beauty spots but actually damage the environment.

He had hoped to display the life-size "people" in Grasmere.

But the National Trust said the work was "against the tourist." The pieces are currently on display in Keswick.

The work is part of the Cumbria-wide arts project and has been displayed in other parts of England.

Mr Murdin said: "For a lot of people they can't make it to the Lakes because they cannot afford it or they are too disabled to climb up hills.

"This is a way for them to enjoy the Lakes without visiting it. It encourages people to travel with their mind and not their feet."

Worthy of debate

He added: "The National Trust is great and I love visiting its property but the point of this is to provide the tourist experience without the carbon footprint."

A statement from the National Trust said: "We have always supported the art projects over the years.

"We were asked about putting his installation in Grasmere.

"As you know, tourism and access are indeed worthy of debate, but we felt that the National Trust hosting a piece of art that was basically against the tourist, was not something we wanted to host.

"We simply asked that the artist select a different venue for the installation."

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Figure 73. Inclusive Path: extract from BBC new website coverage 4th October (2007).



Figure 74. Inclusive Path: Grasmere - composite photo of some of the participants (2007), Alex Murdin.

APPENDIX 6 – ONE MILE WILD

2009

Proposal for Re:place, a programme of site specific work being commissioned by the Derbyshire Arts Development Group.

Not commissioned.

Figure 75. One Mile Wild: 4 page project proposal for Re:Place (2009), Alex Murdin.

ruralrecreation.org.uk
 countryside and leisure: access: environment: inclusion

re:place
 one mile wild



Alex Murdin
 Terrace House, North St, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7QN - 07885409750 - www.ruralrecreation.org.uk - alex@murdin.com

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 countryside and leisure: access: environment: inclusion

re:place
 one mile wild

Manchester Guardian Monday 25 April 1932
 our Special Correspondent

Mass trespass on Kinder Scout

Battle with keepers - Police detain six men - Four or five hundred ramblers, mostly from Manchester, trespassed in mass on Kinder Scout to-day.

They fought a brief but vigorous hand-to-hand struggle with a number of keepers specially enrolled for the occasion. This they won with ease, and then marched to Ashop Head, where they held a meeting before returning in triumph to Hayfield.

Their triumph was short-lived, for there the police met them, halted them, combed their ranks for suspects, and detained five men. Another man had been detained earlier in the day.

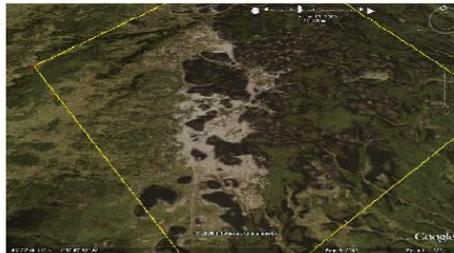
For a week past Hayfield has been looking forward with anxiety to to-day's events. Last Sunday members of the British Workers Sports Federation, which has no connection at all with the Ramblers' Federation, distributed handbills among Hayfield's usual Sunday population of ramblers urging them to "take action to open up the fine country at present denied us."

County Police Called In
 This morning chalked notices on the roads, and leaflets distributed at the station, urged ramblers to meet on the Recreation Ground at two o'clock for a meeting before the much advertised mass trespass.

A "green and pleasant land" is still very much part of the British psyche, as is its counterpart the dystopian polluted city. Derbyshire, surrounded by some of the largest conurbations in the UK has played a key role in perpetuating this myth. From the mass trespass at Kinder Scout in 1932, to the formation of one the first National Parks in the Peaks in 1951, it has been at the forefront of the appropriation of the countryside in the name of an urban majority and the management of the landscape for its aesthetic value, as much as for its economic utility.

Now however there is a third voice espousing the cause of ecology and its political arm environmentalism. In the Peaks, as elsewhere, spaces are being changed by the sheer scale of human passage, destroying both tangible and intangible features and attributes of the landscape.

Where is wild ?



The Observer, Sunday 20 April 2008, Caroline Davies

Ramblers ruin right-to-roam's landmark site

The mass trespass on Kinder Scout in 1932 began a revolution that opened the countryside to millions. Now the Peak District's bleak beauty is under threat of erosion - partly caused by its popularity.

To ramblers and countryside lovers across the nation Kinder Scout is a landmark. It was here on this windswept Derbyshire moorland plateau in the Peak District that hundreds of working-class walkers gathered one Sunday morning in April 1932 to commit the celebrated Mass Trespas - a wilfully illegal act that would, ultimately, open up the countryside to the public. So it is, perhaps, inevitable that hundreds of thousands of modern-day ramblers still descend annually on the bleak but beautiful scene of this significant event in the battle for the 'right to roam'. It is perhaps ironic then that the birthplace of the rambling revolution is falling victim to the ramblers themselves.

Millions of footfalls have contributed to such horrific erosion that conservationists are now fighting a desperate battle to save this iconic spot.

And unless they do, it could be lost for ever. Now the National Trust, which owns the land, is launching a nationwide appeal to raise £1m to stop Kinder Scout simply crumbling away.

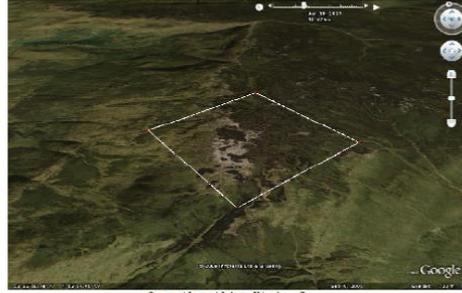
Natural England, the government's environment advisory body, has pledged £500,000. The trust must find the rest. It really is very urgent.

Keeper Injured

Other ramblers took belts off and used them, while one spectator at least was hit by a stone. There will be plenty of bruises carefully nursed in Gorton and other parts of Manchester to-night, but no-one was at all seriously hurt except one keeper, Mr. E Beaver, who was knocked unconscious and damaged his ankle. He was helped back to the road and taken by car to Hayfield and to Stockport Infirmary. He was able to return home to-night after receiving treatment. After the fight the police chiefs, who had accompanied the mass trespassers, left them alone to their great though premature relief. The fight over, we continued up-hill, passing on the way a police inspector bringing down one rambler, who was subsequently detained at Hayfield Police Station.

Soon we turned to the left and continued along the hillside towards Ashop Head, the summit of the public footpath from Hayfield to the Snakes Inn on the Glossop-Sheffield road. Before we regained the footpath a halt was made for tea, and the Manchester contingent was joined by a party of about 30 from Sheffield, who had marched from Hope over Jacob's Ladder, from the top of which they had watched the battle with the keepers. The trespassers were urged not to leave any litter about, and to their credit it must be said they were particularly neat in this matter.

On Ashop Head itself a victory meeting was held, and the leader who at an earlier stage had asked us to trespass in spite of all danger now congratulated us on having trespassed so successfully.



One mile wild - Kinder Scout

This project would explore the feasibility of a wild space (or possibly multiple smaller spaces) totalling one mile square. Kinder Scout would be symbolically interesting as a site.

In discussion with the curator/partners of re:place and stakeholders/communities on the ground the project would involve some or all of the following actions:

- Develop the proposal and distribute to potential partners, e.g. National Trust, farming communities, local authorities...
- Establish legal/planning framework required for disowning land e.g. in trust, or as "commons"...
- Develop and cost two models, a. to purchase land and implement on a permanent basis and b. to develop a temporary awareness raising project
- Investigate who will manage the unmanagement of the land.

But as ordinary people they were only allowed access to just one per cent of the land that now makes up the Peak District. Kinder Scout was owned by the Duke of Devonshire. He used it to hold grouse. But it was only worked for 12 days a year, remaining deserted for the rest. When the Lancashire branch of the socialist British Workers Sports Federation entertained their colleagues from the London branch at an Easter camp, they tried to get access, but failed. Infuriated, they decided to challenge the law. The Mass Trespass was widely advertised. Under the leadership of Beamy Rothman, a politically active socialist, up to 500 ramblers turned out on the day to ascend Kinder Scout from the Manchester side.

With one third of the Derbyshire police force on duty, there were several arrests. But what outraged walkers across Britain was the prison sentences meted out. Five unfortunates were jailed for between two and six months. Anger galvanised ramblers into further protests that would eventually change the law and lead to the creation of the Peak District National Park in 1951, the first in England.

'Kinder Scout is a huge totem in the minds of walkers because young men were jailed for simply taking a walk on a Sunday,' said Sir Martin Doughty, chairman of Natural England, whose own father was at the Mass Trespass aged just 14. 'It really is in a bad way. The situation is critical. I really do hope people will respond to the appeal.'

We were warned that some ramblers might be unfortunate enough to be fined, and for their future benefit the hat was passed around.

The March Back

This done we made our way back to Hayfield, keeping religiously to the footpath this time. Near the Stockport Corporation Water Works we met the police once more. One policeman made a move as if to detain one of the leaders, but he immediately took to his heels and was closely followed by a large number of ramblers, who so crowded the way that the policeman could not have got near him if that had indeed been his intention.

At the first beginnings of the village the ramblers were met by a police inspector in a "baby" car. At his suggestion the ramblers formed up into column and marched into Hayfield, still over 200 strong, singing triumphantly, the police car leading the procession.

It was their last happy moment.

When they got properly into the village they were halted by the police. Still they suspected no ill, and it was not until police officers, accompanied by a keeper, began to walk through their ranks that they realised they had been caught. Five men were taken to the police station and detained. The rest of the now doleful procession was carefully shepherded through Hayfield while, as the church bells rang for Evensong, the jubilant villagers crowded every door and window to watch the police triumph.

Allowing for the research and development process which may changes outcomes, the results would include a study, a work in its own right and a tool which could be used to fundraise for and to implement a "full" scheme. The report would also be made available on a website for the project and distributed to the media so it had a life of its own. A temporary installation would also take place as culmination to this work as an awareness raising exercise, creating a temporary definition of the site(s) identified (for instance customised barrier tape.)



Budget

Research and development costs (10 days @ £250 per day)	£2,500
Travel and accommodation	£1,000
Installation costs	£1,000
Design of study	£500

"...Why are we so reluctant to let go of the reins? Do we still have the medieval's dread of nature? Do we feel guilty about what we have done to it? Or do we still truly believe that we know best? It is a bit glib to say that wildness is a condition of mind as much as of the land. Yet it is true that wildness could be an aesthetic characteristic of many places and experiences - a "free fringed tangle at the edge of things" Richard Mabey

To halt the erosion, the area will need to be resprayed with lime and fertiliser to reduce the acidity and give heather a chance to grow.

The artificial water channels built by sheep farmers will be blocked up to prevent water washing away further peat. Cotton grass will be plug planted to root the peat and keep it in place. And heather and grass seed will be sprayed over the area from a helicopter.

It is estimated that more than 10 billion tonnes of carbon is stored in UK soils, around half of it in peat, which is the equivalent to a year and a half of global greenhouse gas emissions. When the peat dries out, that CO2 is either released into the air or washed into streams, leading to the brown coloration of upland water which costs millions each year to rectify in water treatment plants.

Conservationists believe improving the management of our upland peat bogs alone could reduce our carbon emissions by up to 400,000 tonnes a year.

Meanwhile, the walkers will still be welcome - provided they stick to the special stone pathways that are to be built. And the legend of the Mass Trespass will live on. On its 70th anniversary the 11th Duke of Devonshire issued a formal apology for the actions of his grandfather, calling it 'a great wrong' and a 'shaming event in my family'. The 76th anniversary will be marked by a 'mass' planting event on the early May bank holiday weekend organised by the National Trust. Walkers and volunteers can go to help plant cotton grass while they are on a walk.

APPENDIX 7 - IMMERSION: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ECO-RECREATION IN BRITISH WATERS

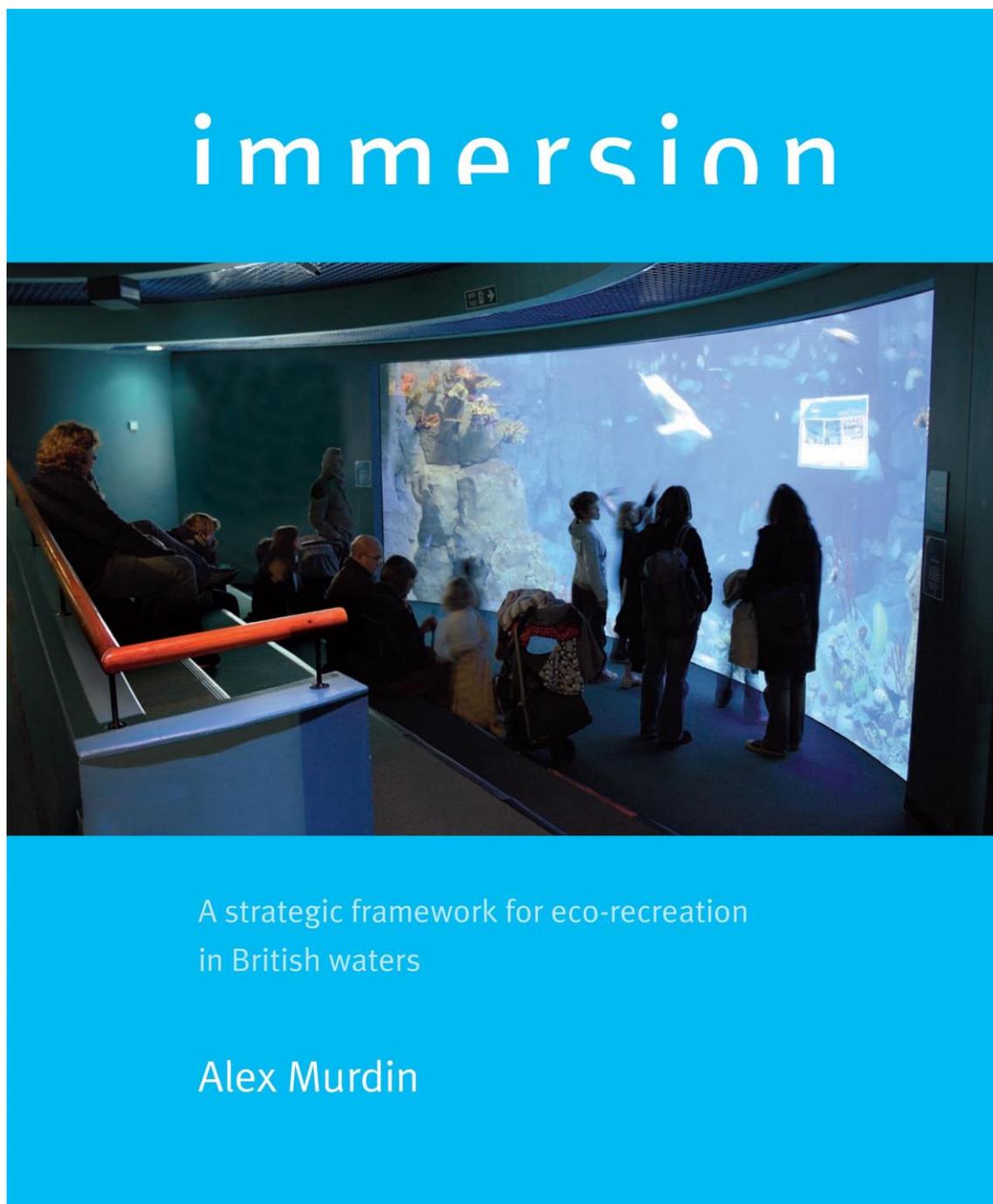
December 2007 - January 2009

Full colour printed report, 78pp, self-published 2008, design by Simon Ryder, Artnucleus

Research in collaboration with the Marine Institute, Plymouth University

Commissioned by Landscape Arts and Network Services for Bright Sparks 3

Figure 76. Immersion: A strategic framework for eco-recreation in British waters - full colour printed report, 78pp, self-published (2008), Alex Murdin and Simon Ryder.





immersinn – a strategic framework for eco-recreation in British waters

Alex Murdin
www.ruralrecreation.org.uk

Contents

(04)	Introduction	1
(08)	British waters – a cultural resource	2
(10)	Water and wellbeing	2.1
(12)	Wild swimming	2.2
(15)	Geographical context	3
(16)	Regeneration of coastal towns	3.1
(17)	Coastal access	3.2
(18)	Beach culture	3.3
(19)	The rise and fall of the lido	3.4
(22)	Environmental pressures on water habitats	4
(23)	Fishery collapse	4.1
(24)	Common Fisheries Policy and Marine Bill	4.2
(26)	The wrath of the sea-fish	4.3
(27)	Aquaculture	5
(28)	Mariculture	5.1
(30)	Land aquaculture	5.2
(31)	Climate change and water	6
(34)	Invasive non-native species	7
(36)	Economic cost of non-natives	7.1
(37)	Alien species	7.2
(38)	Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain	7.3

Contents

8	Towards a total immersion	(41)
8.1	Aims and objectives	(42)
8.2	Regenerating British lidos	(43)
8.2.1	Sustainable freshwater aquaculture sites	(44)
8.2.2	Freshwater invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories	(46)
8.2.3	Sustainable marine aquaculture	(47)
8.2.4	Preliminary identification of marine sites	(50)
8.2.5	Marine invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories	(53)
8.2.6	Purpose built facilities - rapid response units to areas of need	(54)
9	References	(57)
10	Appendices	(60)
10.1	Some common fisheries that are potentially unsustainable	(60)
10.2	Unsustainable fisheries	(62)
10.3	Sustainable fisheries	(62)
10.4	Migrating marine species	(64)
10.5	Non native freshwater plants and animals in the UK	(64)
10.6	Non native marine species in British waters	(65)
	Acknowledgments	(75)



1/ Introduction



1 Introduction



Is this how people see British waters ?

"dangerous, dirty, cold"

Over the past ten years there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of the value of the British landscape to the wellbeing of the country's population, over and above its traditional economic value as farmland. The government's commitment to making the countryside open to all has been manifest in "Right to Roam" legislation, and work such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England's study on tranquillity has heightened awareness of the need to recognise both physical landscape features and their metaphysical impact. Marching alongside this rural renaissance have been,

now mainstream, environmental initiatives that enhance and preserve ecologically sensitive habitats that everybody can enjoy.

However these successes now need to be extended to a forgotten part of the land, its waters and seas, which remain feared, neglected and sometimes actively despoiled by a significant majority.

In spite of the fact that 72% of the UK's population visit the coast each year a recent survey by Natural England suggests that people in our country think our waters are terrifying, polluted and unwelcoming and this attitude is mirrored in the environmental impacts. Whilst we have cleaned up our beaches, and otters are returning to some

of our rivers there are still major issues to overcome:

- ≈ climate change, warming waters and threatening mass extinctions
- ≈ overfishing, threatening fishery collapse
- ≈ eutrophication (oxygen enrichment of sea water due to nitrate run off from land based farming), causing species depletion
- ≈ invasive species imported into coastal waters, estuaries and rivers
- ≈ pollution from both land sources and shipping ending up as flotsam/jetsam
- ≈ threats to genetic diversity of wild fish stocks from mariculture.

Out of sight, out of mind. We must learn to appreciate our watercourses, streams, culverts, ponds, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, bays, estuaries, marshes and sea again if we, and the flora and fauna we share Britain with, are to survive the inevitable changes to our climate that are taking place. Just because we can't see under the rolling steel grey surface of the sea, or the rippling river's current, does not mean we don't have a major impact on what occurs there.

Immersion is a project which sets out bring art, architecture and ecology together to address some of these problems by engendering new attitudes to British waters, particularly by attempting to use the forces of leisure and recreation for the benefit of the environment.

1



pg.7

Research with penguin, 2007

2/ British waters – a cultural resource



2 British waters – a cultural resource

The tranquil cot, the restless mill,
The lonely hamlet, calm and still,
The village spire, the busy town,
The shelving bank, the rising down,
The fisher's boat, the peasant's home,
The woodland seat, the regal dome
In quick succession rise to charm
The wind with virtuous feelings warm
Till, where the widening current glides
To mingle with the turbid tides,
Thy spacious breast displays unfurled
The ensigns of the assembled world
Throned in Augusta's port
Imperial commerce holds her court.

Thomas Love Peacock, *The genius of the Thames:*
A lyrical poem in two parts, 1810

It is well known that geographically it's not possible to be more than 70 miles from the sea. Ever since the North Sea swept south over the fragile land bridge, all that remained of Doggerland between what is now the British Isles and mainland Europe, the sea has played a huge part in the country's history as transport for trade, source of food and defence against invasion.

Once the channel had been crossed traders and invaders alike used Britain's river network to penetrate inland. These same rivers, lakes and water courses also provided the fresh water and food needed for settlements to flourish. It is obviously no co-incidence that all of our oldest major cities have rivers flowing through them, or are on the coast, London and the Thames, Bristol and the Avon, Glasgow and the Clyde.

Over time, as the populations of Britain's cities grew, their populations started to create their own water courses for transport and reservoirs for drinking water. The adaptation of water channels which started in the 18th century has left us with the Manchester Ship Canal, Kielder Reservoir and other great man-made features in our landscape.

"The best of men, and the noblest of minds, rejoice to see the people following the foretrod routes of pleasure." Thomas Cook, C.19th

The use of water for recreational purposes arguably developed at the same time as this great water building period and the medicinal value of bathing was "rediscovered" by the Georgians, who reinvigorated the Roman tradition of the bath house, and re-built whole towns around them, Bath, Tunbridge Wells and Buxton to name a few. These places became major social centres at the same time, providing places for geographically isolated and disparate members of society to congregate. Taking the waters therefore established places where a certain amount of social fluidity was allowed, different families and groups could mix and

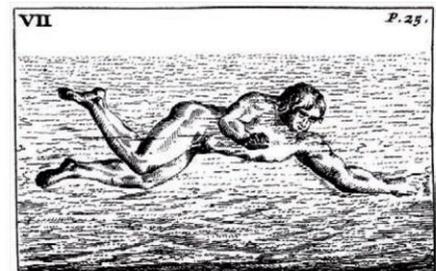


Illustration from Theodor Bailey Myers Mason's 1879 pamphlet, *The Preservation of Life at Sea*

marriages (and affairs) could be arranged. Places set aside for healing were in fact the precursors of contemporary resorts which are now places for breaking free from “normal” social boundaries, from the genteel pleasures

of early seaside resorts such as Brighton, to the establishment of more convivial working class holiday centres such as Blackpool in the 19th century.

Water and wellbeing

2.1

Glide gently, thus forever glide,
 O Thames! that other bards may see,
 As lovely visions by thy side
 As now, fair river! come to me.
 Oh glide, fair stream! for ever so;
 Thy quiet soul on all bestowing,
 ‘Till all our minds forever flow,
 As thy deep waters now are flowing.

*William Wordsworth, Lines written near Richmond,
 upon the Thames at evening, 1790*



*Inflatable suits from the 1950's
 – a cup of tea, the papers and a
 cigarette*

At the same time as the development of spa towns in the 17th century using springs as their water source, the seaside also started to develop as a place for health, with bathing (as opposed to swimming) involving immersion to effect the cure. The seaside was also a place which more people could access, avoiding the socially superior spas. Along with increased mobility and wealth this meant that by 1911, 55% of the population of England and Wales made trips to the seaside.

In the 21st century water and watersides are within easy reach of many

2

British waters – a cultural resource

2.1

Water and wellbeing

of us, and as their value for communication and transport has dwindled their primary importance is for their aesthetic and recreational value. They can provide opportunities that cut across social divides, including deprivation and race. Recent research (February 2005) by the Environment Agency indicates that nearly half the population of England and Wales enjoyed time on or near water in the previous 12 months.

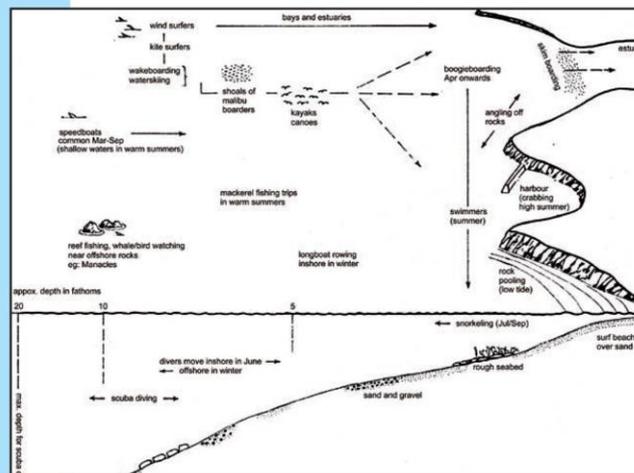
"The benefits – social, cultural, educational, economic and health – of recreation are considerable. It also has a key role to play in regeneration, as the catalyst for improvements to local environments. Community recreational opportunities and

have a role in improving both mental and physical health. Many water sports require sustained physical activity, e.g. swimming, rowing, dinghy sailing, surfing and canoeing. This has been recognised by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport⁽³⁾ which has identified swimming, canoeing, sailing and rowing as key activities for the UK. Our success in this field is manifest, with 12 of Great Britain's 30 medals in the 2004 Olympics coming from water sports such as sailing. The 2012 Olympics will further raise the profile of water sports with the sailing events being sited in Weymouth. These activities also have wider social benefits and many sports have developed social

inclusion programmes, such as Canoe Paddleability, the Royal Yachting Association's On Board Scheme and 'Get Hooked on Fishing'.

Fishing is increasingly becoming a priority for those agencies concerned with the environment as a way of linking physical recreation and access to open spaces and the public health agenda, such as the Environment Agencies Angling 2015 policy which takes as its basis the UK Sustainable Development Strategy 'Securing the Future' and the work of Policy Action Team 10⁽⁴⁾. Fishing is also a good example of where habitats can benefit environmentally from management for recreation, with significant investment by landowners and agencies in stocking and maintaining waterways such as reservoirs and lakes.

Economically there is also evidence of the value of water recreation. For instance a report by Invest in Fish South West⁽⁵⁾ claims that sea angling is worth £165m per annum



Map of sea and coast water recreation

facilities generate value and a sense of local ownership. There are spin-off benefits for employment and the economy in both the town and country.⁽²⁾

Public health is an important reason for promoting water sport and activities which

British waters – a cultural resource

Water and wellbeing

2

2.1

and creates 3,000 jobs. In Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly alone, research in 2004 identified the value of water sport related businesses, with surfing worth £64m, sailing £52m, scuba diving £17.5m and gig racing £2.5m⁽⁶⁾.

Recent research undertaken by the Henley Centre (2005)⁽⁷⁾ for Natural England, allied to the findings of workshops undertaken in the development of this strategic plan, suggest that there are some general trends in outdoor recreation that are relevant. These are likely to shape the future of demand for water related recreation in the region:

≈ "We live in an increasingly affluent society, with a greater focus on the 'experience economy' where people will pay for services and experiences rather than material goods

≈ There are an increasing number of older people who are developing a greater range

of interests associated with health and wellbeing, including in 'non-traditional' adventure based or challenge activities. At the same time young adults have increasingly sedentary and 'indoors' lifestyles

≈ There is an increased need for information, both in terms of extending its availability, and in providing it in a wider range of formats

≈ Warmer air and sea temperatures (brought about by climate change) allied to better service and value for money, could increase tourism demand as traditional locations – the Mediterranean for example – become too hot. Warmer seas could also encourage more interesting marine life, giving a boost to activities such as sea angling, scuba diving and boat tours."⁽⁸⁾

Wild swimming

2.2

And call they this Improvement? – to have changed,
My native Clyde, thy once romantic shore,
Where Nature's face is banish'd and estranged,
And Heaven reflected in thy wave no more;
Whose banks, that sweeten'd May-day's breath before,
Lie sere and leafless now in summer's beam,
With sooty exhalations cover'd o'er;
And for the daisied green-sward, down thy stream
Unsightly brick-lanes smoke, and clanking engines gleam.

Thomas Campbell, Lines on revisiting a Scottish river, 1826



2

2.2

British waters – a cultural resource

Wild swimming

One example of the trends identified by the Henley Centre is the development of a new wild swimming movement, led by the River and Lake Swimming Association and the Outdoor Swimming Society.

“A century ago, Britain had hundreds of outdoor swimming clubs: The New Town Water Rats, The Tadpoles, The Serpentine, The Sheep’s Green Swimmers, The High Gate Diving Club...names that now seem to shimmer in a sepia haze. Back then, it didn’t seem remotely eccentric to wallow in a tidal pool, or crawl down a flashy river. But after

the Second World War came the decline of lido culture, the rise of the municipal pool, the pollution of the river systems, and the understandable prizing of what we oddly call creature-comforts: air-conditioning, thermostats, the sofa...”⁽⁹⁾

Both organisations aim to increase public awareness of the ecological, social and health benefits of swimming outdoors. The RLSA also lobbies the government and Health and Safety executive to facilitate the activity. Their position is backed up by research which suggests that 12.35% of



Wild swimming on Dartmoor

British water – a cultural resource

Wild swimming

2

2.1

UK's population (5.95million) participated in outdoor swimming and 12.49% (6.01million) participated in spending general leisure time at the beach. With significant rises in the numbers of people angling from the shore (+0.34%), canal boating (0.25%), outdoor swimming (1.75%) and spending general leisure time at the beach (0.99%).⁽¹⁰⁾

"Clearly, whichever way one looks at the figures, swimming outdoors is the most popular UK watersport. It is therefore extraordinary that the activity is, at best, totally ignored by Government bodies, local authorities and other public bodies."⁽¹¹⁾

There does however appear to be evidence of changing attitudes to water recreation and now even the Environment Agency acknowledges that health and safety concerns and development pressures have resulted in fewer local fisheries, and the loss of boatyards and the infrastructure to support boating.

"This highlights a need to create new waters with access as valued public recreational amenities, comparable to playing fields and sports centres."⁽¹²⁾



3/ Geographical context

Geographical context

Regeneration of coastal towns

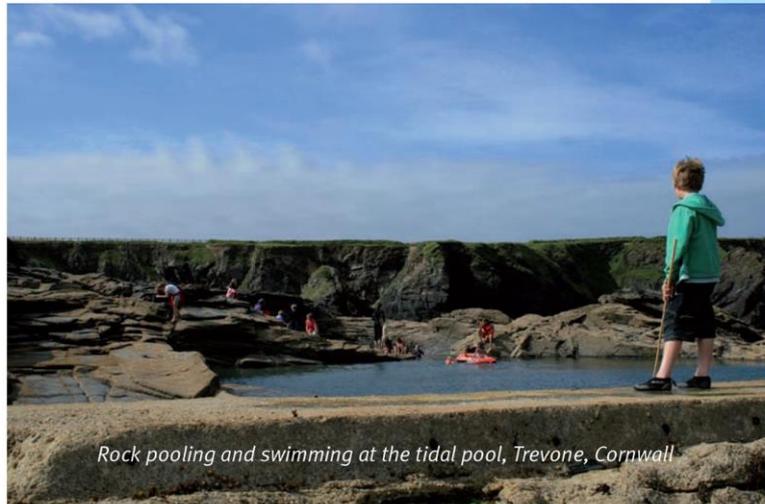
3
3.1

Since the 1960's Britain's coastal towns and resorts have harboured economic and social degradation the equal of some inner city areas. Physical isolation, the seasonality of labour, cheap accommodation out of peak periods which housed the unemployed and retired/aging populations, the outward migration of young people and poor quality of housing and second home ownership were just some of the factors which meant that contemporary resorts are some of the most deprived towns in the UK. Stimulated by the English Tourism Council's 2001 report "Sea Changes", a report by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee on Coastal Towns in 2007 concluded that action should be taken at a national level to promote visiting the English seaside through a national coastal tourism strategy and that coastal towns should diversify their economies in order to address some of these issues.

This proposal has been addressed through one programme Sea Change, administered by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment which aims to use culture to make a difference to seaside resorts; contributing to sustainable, social and economic regeneration, backing investment plans in culture, heritage and public space, which should act as a catalyst to support regeneration of the resort, boosting confidence and pride in the local community.

It is obvious though that regeneration initiatives like this will need to be backed up by visionary and innovative schemes that make the most of existing resources, such as disused buildings. CABE and English Heritage indentify this in their report *Shifting Sands*⁽⁷³⁾:

"There is room for more, for bigger, for better and for the inventive use of the large historic buildings that are to be found in many seaside resorts... towns appear to lack the confidence to use their heritage as part of their regeneration strategy. While they appreciate the contribution made by the historic environment, they can frequently falter when it comes to looking after it if there is the slightest hint of conflict with a more pressing social and economic agenda, even if the care and conservation of the historic environment might contribute to this



Rock pooling and swimming at the tidal pool, Trevone, Cornwall

outcome. It is evident, too, that there is room for the better promotion and celebration of the special nature of seaside towns. This

pg.16

3

3.1

Geographical context

Regeneration of coastal towns

includes their geography and heritage as well as the efforts that have been made to maintain their attraction for visitors."

3.2

Coastal access

Access to the coast has been recognised as a key priority by the Department of Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in its latest strategy and the Labour Party's Rural Manifesto of 2005, following on from the Countryside Rights of Way Act of 2000. Natural England's response to consultation recommends that initiatives be introduced that create:

- ≈ Secure access along the length of the English coastline, accepting that this may be subject to some exceptions, whilst considering erosion, accretion and realignment.
- ≈ A more accessible coastline, by creating physical routes to access the coast and by encouraging more people to enjoy the coast.
- ≈ Improvements for coastal wildlife and the landscape, as well as encouraging people to enjoy and understand this environment.

"The South West Coast Path is one of the region's greatest assets as far as attracting visitors is concerned. It is up there with the Eden Project, the Roman Baths and Stonehenge and when the Foot & Mouth crisis closed it, the whole of the tourism industry felt the effects." Malcolm Bell, Chief Executive South West Tourism⁽¹⁴⁾

Taking the South West as an example it has been clearly demonstrated how good quality continuous coastal access can have



Satellite view of Cornish coast showing littoral activity in high summer (image © Google)

a positive impact on the local economy. The South West Coast Path has now been recognised as a regional icon in the South West Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2015 as a result of the Economic Value of the South West Coast Path Report 2003. South West Tourism and Tourism Associates (University of Exeter) estimated that 28 per cent of all staying visits situated within one mile of the coast were due to the existence of the South West Coast Path which accounted for £143 million total spend i.e. all spend associated with that visit.

"The significance of beach recreation/ tourism and its impact on coastal economy and employment is recognized and the report sheds light on the value of sport and active recreation at a local level. Support should be extended for sustainable and responsible development that supports the local economy and enhances access to the coast."⁽¹⁵⁾



Porthcothán, Cornwall

The coast then is clearly a big cultural factor for inhabitants of the UK. In 2005, the National Trust commissioned a survey exploring coastal values. The results point to the coast's continuing appeal as a place adding to the quality of people's lives.

"65% of those questioned regard visiting the seaside or coast as important to their quality of life (30% regard it as important; a further 35% consider it fairly

important). Over a 12 month period, 62% of those questioned had been on a day trip and 50% on holiday to the coast or seaside. 65% felt the coast mattered to them for fresh air and exercise, 43% for peace and freedom. 59% have kept something at home that they found on a beach; 49% considered their happiest childhood memory as being by the sea; 16% want to have their ashes scattered at sea or on a beach and 7% have proposed

3

3.3

Geographical context

Beach culture



on the beach or coastline. 34% often day-dream about being by the sea when going about their everyday life."⁽¹⁶⁾

This is backed up by studies that have concluded that being by the seaside has tangible positive health outcomes.

"What effect does visiting the beach have on health and happiness? Very positive! 95% of respondents stated that their health and happiness was affected positively by a visit to the beach. Benefits are immediate. For example, 16% of off peak visitors felt the benefits of being with friends and family at the beach lasted up to a week after their visit compared, to 8% of peak visitors. Benefits include feeling relaxed / calmer, happier, less stressed / healthier having exercised, healthier after being outside, better after being with family and friends."⁽¹⁷⁾

Overall attitudes and perceptions are summarised in a report commissioned by Natural England, Improving coastal access: Our advice to Government (2007) which concluded that the coast was valued for:

≈ What it symbolises: many people talked spontaneously about the impact of Britain's island geography on national identity. This is most keenly felt by local coastal residents and regular visitors.

≈ Relaxation: the coast is seen as a place of rest and relaxation, particularly among those who lead busy lives, or are seeking peace and quiet.

≈ Sense of freedom: coastal visits to beaches or open areas by the coast are often associated with the word "freedom". In many cases, this feeling is one of the major reasons for visiting the coast in the first place.

≈ Scenery: coastal scenery is also important, and a recurring theme was the need to have visual access to the sea.

≈ Wildlife: people, particularly with children in mind, are drawn to the coast to experience its wildlife.

≈ Tourism: for many living close to the coast, the coast is fundamental for their livelihoods and the local economy, as well as their own pleasure.⁽¹⁸⁾

3.4

The rise and fall of the lido

From the 19th century onwards the medicinal value of ingesting and bathing in waters fell out of favour and in its place came a more general set of benefits to health from bathing as exercise, swimming and exposure to the sun and air for

an increasingly urban population. One of the first open air pools (or in this case lakes) was the Serpentine lake in Hyde Park, London, built at the instructions of George II, to provide a safer alternative to swimming in the Thames.

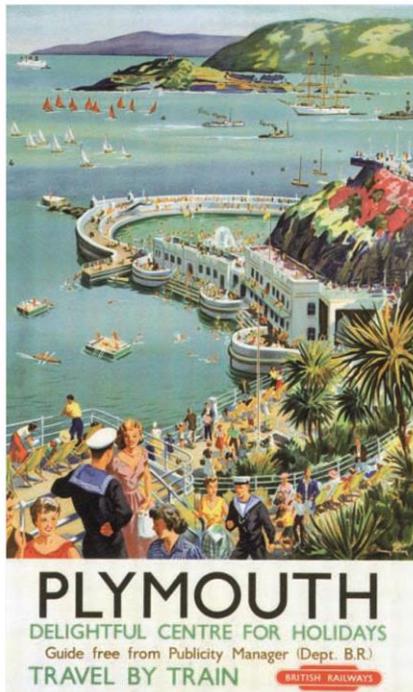
pg.19

Geographical context

The rise and fall of the lido

3

3.4



Harry Riley's 1950's poster (illustrated in *Liquid Assets* by Janet Smith)

Open air swimming pools, or lidos as they became known from the 1930's (named after fashionable European beach resorts), became the mark of a modern town, "emblems of municipal modernity and of faith in a brighter, more enlightened future, in much the same way that libraries had become a generation or two earlier"⁽¹⁹⁾. In particular during the interwar years lidos came into their own with most of the ones we are familiar with today being built from the 1930's onwards. Hedonism met health as mass exercise programmes, illuminations and

"To remain stationary in these times of change, when all the world is on the move, would be a crime. Hurrah for the Trip – the cheap, cheap Trip"

Thomas Cook in 1854 ⁽⁷⁾

cutting edge architecture combined to create half gym, half playground for a population starved of entertainment and pleasure during the periods of austerity and tragedy during both world wars.

Yet almost as soon as the great age of lido building was over they became a threatened asset as, from the 1960's onwards, technology gave us indoor pools, the era of mass tourism loomed and cheap travel abroad contrasted favourably with the unpredictable British climate. A tan was a status symbol that could rarely be achieved in the lidos of Margate, Skegness or even Plymouth. Certainly the Health and Safety at Work Act and the development of a litigious society has not helped.

So whilst some lidos are still open and there have been notable restorations like Tinside Lido in Plymouth and Saltdean in Brighton, many more have closed although are potentially reopenable. Oliver Merrington's site, www.lidos.org.uk lists the following (with some original opening dates):

1. Abergavenny Lido, Wales 1938
2. Banbury Open Air Pool 1939
3. Bath: Cleveland Pleasure Baths 1817
4. Bristol, Clifton Victoria Baths 1850
5. Carterton Swimming Pool, Oxfordshire, 1970s
6. Clacton: Pier Lido 1932

pg.20

3

3.4

Geographical context

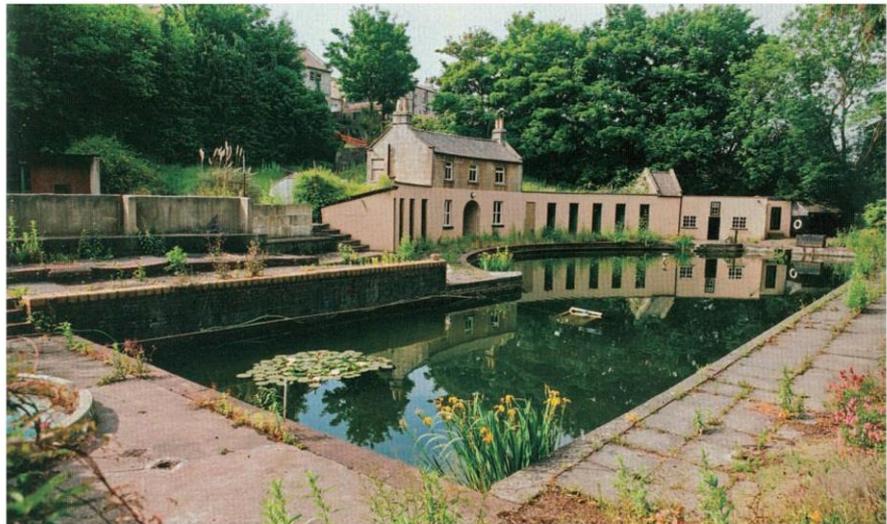
The rise and fall of the lido



7. Grange-over-Sands Lido, Cumbria
8. Henty Outdoor Swimming Pool, near Swansea, Wales
9. Hunstanton Lido
10. Ipswich: Broomhill Swimming Pool 1938
11. London: Eltham Park Lido 1924
12. London: Uxbridge Lido 1935
13. London: Wealdstone Open Air Swimming Bath Harrow, 1934
14. Malmesbury Outdoor Pool, Wiltshire
15. Marsden Park Open Air Pool, Lancashire, 1930s

16. Pontypridd: Ynysangharad Swimming Pool, Wales, 1920s
17. Reading: King's Meadow Swimming Baths 1903
18. Risca, Gwent, Wales
19. Ringshall: Deer Leap
20. Royston Outdoor Pool, Herts, 1930
21. Worthing: The Lido, 1897

Clearly something needs
to be done...



(top) Cleveland Pool, Bath Spa, now a fish farm (illustrated in *Liquid Assets* by Janet Smith)
(above) Eltham Park Lido (photo from www.derelictlondon.com)

4/ Environmental pressures on water habitats



4

Environmental pressures on water habitats

Set against the need for providing access to water for a bored urban majority there remain significant concerns over the increasing pressure this brings on sea and river ecologies. According to the United Nations, around 3.6 billion people, or 60% of the world's population, live within 60km of the coast and 80% of all tourism takes place in coastal areas⁽²⁰⁾. This becomes a major issue as, whilst in ecological terms the coast makes up only 10% of the ocean environment, it is home to over 90% of all marine species. For example, of the 13,200 known species of marine fish, almost 80% are coastal⁽²¹⁾. Pollution,

eutrophication⁽²²⁾ and overfishing of wild stocks are just some of the consequences of this extensive human habitation.

"A fantastic variety of marine habitats and species exist along the UK's 20,000km coastline and within the 710,100 square kilometres of its sea and seabed, which descends to depths in excess of 2,000m over the UK continental shelf. Human activities have already had a great effect on those habitats and species and, as our seas get more and more 'busy', we are urgently seeking ways to protect biodiversity."⁽²³⁾

4.1

Fishery collapse

Further out to sea the problems are just as great as global fishing yields decline (since 1994 this has been by 13%) and overfishing is considered to be the greatest single threat to marine wildlife and habitats, with many fish stocks in a state of serious decline.

This is not a new problem and controls on fishing have been a source of debate in the UK since at least the 14th century. The following is one of the first official complaints about the use of (beam) trawling, the use of small mesh size, and of industrial fishing for animal feed:

"That such a contrivance was destructive to fish life was realised in the reign of Edward III, when in 1376-77 a petition was presented to Parliament calling for the prohibition of a 'subtlety contrived instrument called the wondyrchoum'. This consisted of a net 18 ft. long and 10 ft. wide

'of so small a mesh, no manner of fish, however small, entering within it can pass out and is compelled to remain therein and be taken ... by means of which instrument the fishermen aforesaid take so great abundance of small fish aforesaid, that they know not what to do with them, but feed and fatten the pigs with them, to the great damage of the whole commons of the kingdom, and the destruction of the fisheries in like places, for which they pray remedy'. Responsia. 'Let Commission be made by qualified persons to inquire and certify on the truth of this allegation, and thereon let right be done in the Court of Chancery'".⁽²⁴⁾

This is a problem that has not gone away and from the industrial revolution onwards improved technology has meant that new fisheries have been opened up, fishing is undertaken in all weathers and bycatch

Environmental pressures on water habitats

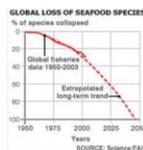
Fisheries collapse

4

4.1

(the catching of species not considered edible as a by product) has increased. Many were shocked when the Newfoundland fishery for cod, which has seemed inexhaustible, collapsed in the early 1990's and still shows no sign of recovery.

"Between 1950 and 2003, 29% of fish and invertebrate fisheries within all 64 large marine ecosystems worldwide had collapsed. These regions account for 83% of the world's seafood harvest. Projecting these trends into the future, all stocks decline by at least 90% (the definition of a fishery collapse) by 2048."
(25)



Stocks of cod and other Atlantic fish at the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth

Common Fisheries Policy and Marine Bill

4.2

Politics too has had its effect and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in Europe has also been blamed for underestimating fish stocks and thus leading to the sanctioned depletion of certain species. Perhaps more importantly the Policy has not been seen as legitimate by fisherman...

"...who have little sense of ownership of the process. When fishermen are

compelled to follow management steps which they regard as unfounded, and which turn out to be wrong; or when they are required to act on science whose basis is incomprehensible (and also turns out to be incorrect), it is hardly surprising that the process loses authority. There is a crucial difference between being consulted, and being inside the decision making process. This is not to say that

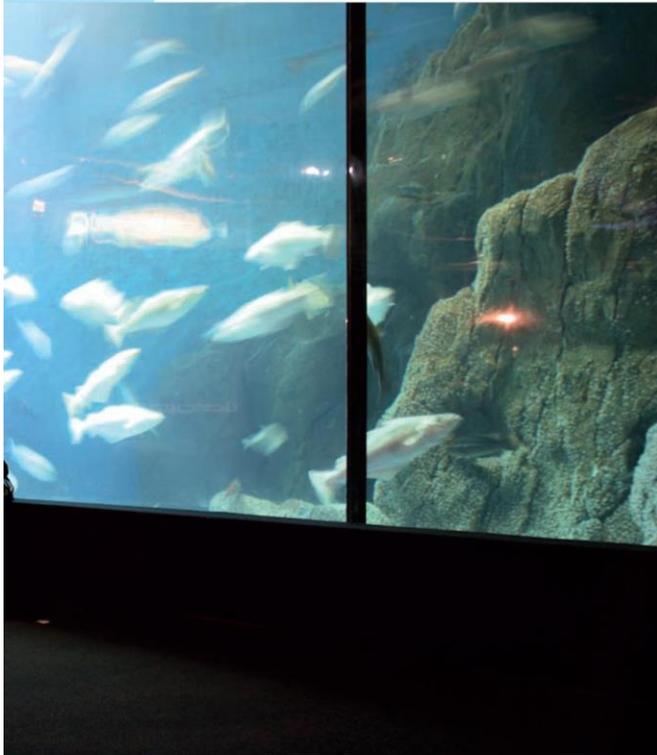
pg.24

4

4.2

Environmental pressures on water habitats

Common Fisheries Policy and Marine Bill



fishers have a monopoly of wisdom, but the loss of authority is a likely consequence of mechanisms that exclude legitimate interests from direct engagement.⁽²⁶⁾

Fishing is also the subject of intense political rivalry, particularly when it is the economic mainstay of a country such as Iceland, which was involved in the Cod Wars, a confrontation with the UK in the 1950s and 1970s regarding fishing rights in the North Atlantic. Although not on the same scale similar tensions exist now amongst the

nations of Europe as Spanish and Dutch fleets legitimately trawl in British waters, having purchased licences through the CFP. The political solutions to this problem are still not clear. However in its report *Choose or lose: A recovery plan for fish stocks and the UK fishing industry (2000)*, the World Wildlife Fund has recommended that there is:

- ≈ a commitment to investment money from the UK Treasury so that decisions are not based on short-term survival but on medium-term recovery and long-term sustainability;
- ≈ UK governments should commit to the delivery of regionally-based recovery programmes that involve a package of regeneration measures such as closed areas, bigger mesh sizes, scrapping vessels and lay-up schemes, along with appropriate delivery mechanisms.

WWF's Oceans Recovery Campaign (ORCA) is also calling for: a stronger network of Marine Protected Areas around the UK and integrated marine legislation in the form of an Oceans Act; a network of regeneration areas to enhance and restore fish stocks, including pilot Fishing-Free Zones.

In the UK the idea of fishing-free zones has been translated into Marine Nature Reserves, as piloted at Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel. In 1971 a proposal was made by the Lundy Field Society to establish a marine reserve around the Island, with statutory provision being included in the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. The project has been very successful in re-establishing depleted marine landscape and similar provision is likely to be made under the Marine Bill currently under consideration by Parliament. Other provisions of the Bill include

pg.25

Environmental pressures on water habitats

Common Fisheries Policy and Marine Bill

≈ a strategic marine planning system directed towards more efficient, sustainable use and protection of our marine resources and creation of a series of marine plans,
≈ strengthening fisheries and environmental management arrangements so that more effective action can be taken to conserve marine ecosystems and help achieve a sustainable and profitable fisheries sector.
≈ reforming the licensing system of fishing activities, and reducing overall exploitation of freshwater fish stocks to control potentially damaging movements of live fish

There is also more consumer awareness of the issue of sustainability of wild fish stocks with campaigns aimed at encouraging the public to know which fish to avoid, and substituting these with fish from sustainably

managed stocks that are caught or farmed in ways that cause minimum damage to the marine environment, for instance the Marine Conservation Societies' website www.fishonline.org [sic] – see Appendices 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3.

"there is literally not a fish that swims in our water that I cannot sell... Fish is what you might call protein without tears."⁽²⁷⁾

Rick Stein

The wrath of the sea-fish

Together we twain on the tides abode
five nights full till the flood divided us,
churning waves and chilliest weather,
darkling night, and the northern wind
ruthless rushed on us: rough was the surge.
Now the wrath of the sea-fish rose apace;
yet me 'gainst the monsters my mailed coat,
hard and hand-linked, help afforded,—
battle-sark braided my breast to ward,
garnished with gold.

Anonymous, *Beowulf*,
Late Anglo-Saxon epic poem

4

4.2

4.3

pg.26



5/ Aquaculture

"They are much to be pitied
who have not been given a taste
for nature early in life."

Mansfield Park, Jane Austen

Mariculture

5.1

In 2005 marine aquaculture accounted for 47.8 (33.8%) of the 141.6 million tonnes of global fisheries production, with the remaining 93.8 million tonnes from wild capture fisheries. In 2015 the global demand for fish is predicted to rise to 172 million tonnes and aquaculture is predicted to grow to meet this demand, supplying 39%, or 67 million tonnes, of global fish requirements. Scotland dominates the production of farmed marine finfish in the UK, producing nearly 130,000 tonnes of Atlantic salmon; 6,989 tonnes of Rainbow Trout and 272 tonnes of other species such as cod, charr and brown trout in 2005. The industry is subject to a number of regulations such as in relation to the siting and environmental impact of each farm.

If the marine aquaculture industry continues to grow as predicted, requirements for marine feed raw materials will not be able to be met by increasing fisheries on these industrial or feed grade fish, as many species used for fishmeal and oil are already either fully/over exploited (31% of the top 10 species used for fish feed) and/or not adequately assessed (63% of the top 10 species). Many marine species such as juvenile

carnivorous fish (e.g. cod) and sea birds also depend on these fish stocks for food in their natural environment, but the implications of continuous large-scale exploitation of this food source are poorly understood. The uncertain effect of climate change on all fish stocks adds further pressure.

In addition there are concerns over escaped farmed fish which have a number of deleterious effects as they can:

- ≈ Breed with wild fish leading to genetic dilution;
- ≈ Displace eggs and destroy redds of wild salmon (in the case of escaped farmed salmon);
- ≈ Put pressure on natural resources such as food and territory through competition with wild species;
- ≈ Spread disease.⁽²⁸⁾

5



pg.29

The Lobster Hatchery in Padstow – part conservation programme, part visitor centre

One solution to the problems with marine aquaculture has been to look again at land based aquaculture which has a history in the UK going back to the 1st and 2nd centuries BC when fishponds were indications of status as landowners. In England, the first large-scale building of artificial fishponds was undertaken by the members of the Norman secular aristocracy to enhance their status and a large proportion of monasteries also established ponds. The best evidence for the development of commercial production dates from the later fourteenth century. Along the southern bank of the River Thames at Southwark was a series of waterfront plots known as 'The Stews'. This was formerly held to represent an area inhabited by prostitutes, but it would seem that the real origin of the name derives from the fishponds there in the 1360's, and possibly much earlier. ⁽²⁹⁾

"But you may contrive to keep your Stock (of fish) within Compass; for you may enlarge the Expence of your House, and gratify your family and friends that visit you, with a Dish as acceptable as any you can purchase for Money; or you may oblige your friends and Neighbours, by making Presents of them, which, from Country-man to the King, is well taken;... it is a positive Disgrace to appear covetous of them, rather more than of Venison, or any other thing; so that Presents are not only expedient, but necessary to be made by him that professeth a Mastery of fish." ⁽³⁰⁾

These practices are being revived by a new generation with companies such as Aquavision calling for aquaculture based on sound ecological principles, and starting an organic carp at Upper Hayne Farm, Blackborough, Devon, "Upper Hayne Farm is the first fish farm in the UK to grow

organic carp for the table. The farm entered organic conversion in 2006. The fish farm is also involved in developing, sustainable recirculation aquaculture, course fish production and a water plant nursery." ⁽³¹⁾

Carp in particular (common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), Chinese carps (silver carp, bighead and grass carp, mud carp, etc.), Indian carps (rohu, catla and mrigal, etc.), barbels (such as Thai silver barb)) are well known for their contribution to low input, low cost aquaculture. World carp production from aquaculture in 1999 was 14.9 million tonnes, which was 44.7% of the world total aquaculture production in the same year. Eight of the top 10 aquaculture finfish in single species production are carps (the other two are tilapia and Atlantic salmon). In many industrialised countries, like Australia, carps are regarded as pests; in many populous counties in Asia they are the strategic species for securing rural livelihood and national food security through freshwater aquaculture. The carp species for aquaculture are generally low in the food chain in an aquatic ecosystem. Being low in the food chain is desirable in the sense that they can be grown with less costly feeds. Silver carp and bighead can be grown by fertilising the water so that the plankton for their food proliferate. ⁽³²⁾



Avon reservoir, a multipurpose aquaculture facility



6/ Climate change and water

"History judges political leaders by whether or not they respond to the great issues of their time. For today's leaders, that issue is how to move the global economy onto an environmentally sound path. We need a national political leader to step forward, an environmental Churchill, to rally the world around this mobilization."

Plan B 2.0, Lester Brown

Climate change, the increasing of global temperatures and its effects on weather systems, ecosystems and the environment generally, will inevitably affect water environments. Some scientists predict changes to the North Atlantic conveyor, a network of currents including the Gulf Stream that gives Britain its comparatively milder climate which could precipitate another ice age in the region.

Certainly it appears that the temperature of the waters off the UK coast is rising, with the Environment Agency predicting an increase in sea temperature of 2°C in the next 100 years. Inevitably this will influence the composition of life in our seas and rivers though changes in the composition and quantity of plankton, increases in the populations and ranges of southern species, decreases in populations and ranges of northern species and improved conditions for the establishment and spread of alien species from warmer areas. Other changes may include variations in sea water pH levels,

a decreasing amount of freshwater in rivers (and therefore more pollution gathering in the rivers), rising waters (of Biblical proportions) and more violent weather systems. As delicately balance ecosystems even small changes to life at the base of food chains such as plankton and algae, could have enormous implications.

Following changes in food sources and habitat it is observable that new species are occurring with increasing frequency in British waters and it may be that in the future we see more Pufferfish (*Pachygaster sphaeroides*), Flying Gurnard (*Dactylopterus volitan*) and Ocean Sunfish (*Mola mola*) being caught off our shores. This may apply to larger species as well, as Douglas Herdson from National Marine Aquarium says:

"With shark numbers declining the way they are I do not foresee any new species of sharks turning up in British waters, apart from the odd straggler; but with changing fish populations we could [be] getting changes in relative abundance of different sharks, but

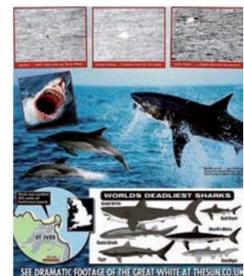
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Climate change and water

unfortunately I doubt that there will be much if any increase in their numbers; and little likelihood of our first genuine shark attack."⁽³³⁾

A study of northern seas has also shown that native species are being displaced as they seek colder waters. Climate change and distribution shifts in marine fishes by Perry, Low et al⁽³⁴⁾ shows that North Sea waters have warmed by an average of 0.6°C between 1962 and 2001 and that the distributions of both exploited and nonexploited North Sea fishes have responded, with nearly two-thirds of species shifting in mean latitude or depth or both over 25 years. For species with northerly or southerly range margins in the North Sea, half have shown boundary shifts with warming, and all but one shifted northward. Species with shifting distributions have faster life cycles and smaller body sizes than nonshifting species. Further temperature rises are likely to have profound impacts on commercial fisheries through continued shifts in distribution and alterations in community interactions.

Warmer temperatures have also meant that some species have been brought to the UK for aquacultural purposes which had been thought to be unable to breed, have now started to move into our waters, Pacific Oysters imported from America are now breeding in the Helston Estuary. Whilst some may see this as positive in overall terms warmer seas are less productive than cold ones which would have a negative effect on fisheries.



Alleged sightings of Great White Sharks are a regular occurrence in Britain.



6/ Climate change and water

"History judges political leaders by whether or not they respond to the great issues of their time. For today's leaders, that issue is how to move the global economy onto an environmentally sound path. We need a national political leader to step forward, an environmental Churchill, to rally the world around this mobilization."

Plan B 2.0, Lester Brown

Climate change, the increasing of global temperatures and its effects on weather systems, ecosystems and the environment generally, will inevitably affect water environments. Some scientists predict changes to the North Atlantic conveyor, a network of currents including the Gulf Stream that gives Britain its comparatively milder climate which could precipitate another ice age in the region.

Certainly it appears that the temperature of the waters off the UK coast is rising, with the Environment Agency predicting an increase in sea temperature of 2°C in the next 100 years. Inevitably this will influence the composition of life in our seas and rivers though changes in the composition and quantity of plankton, increases in the populations and ranges of southern species, decreases in populations and ranges of northern species and improved conditions for the establishment and spread of alien species from warmer areas. Other changes may include variations in sea water pH levels,

a decreasing amount of freshwater in rivers (and therefore more pollution gathering in the rivers), rising waters (of Biblical proportions) and more violent weather systems. As delicately balance ecosystems even small changes to life at the base of food chains such as plankton and algae, could have enormous implications.

Following changes in food sources and habitat it is observable that new species are occurring with increasing frequency in British waters and it may be that in the future we see more Pufferfish (*Pachygaster sphaeroides*), Flying Gurnard (*Dactylopterus volitan*) and Ocean Sunfish (*Mola mola*) being caught off our shores. This may apply to larger species as well, as Douglas Herdson from National Marine Aquarium says:

"With shark numbers declining the way they are I do not foresee any new species of sharks turning up in British waters, apart from the odd straggler; but with changing fish populations we could [be] getting changes in relative abundance of different sharks, but

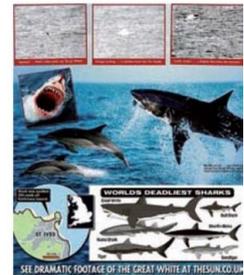
6

Climate change and water

unfortunately I doubt that there will be much if any increase in their numbers; and little likelihood of our first genuine shark attack."⁽³³⁾

A study of northern seas has also shown that native species are being displaced as they seek colder waters. Climate change and distribution shifts in marine fishes by Perry, Low et al⁽³⁴⁾ shows that North Sea waters have warmed by an average of 0.6°C between 1962 and 2001 and that the distributions of both exploited and nonexploited North Sea fishes have responded, with nearly two-thirds of species shifting in mean latitude or depth or both over 25 years. For species with northerly or southerly range margins in the North Sea, half have shown boundary shifts with warming, and all but one shifted northward. Species with shifting distributions have faster life cycles and smaller body sizes than nonshifting species. Further temperature rises are likely to have profound impacts on commercial fisheries through continued shifts in distribution and alterations in community interactions.

Warmer temperatures have also meant that some species have been brought to the UK for aquacultural purposes which had been thought to be unable to breed, have now started to move into our waters, Pacific Oysters imported from America are now breeding in the Helston Estuary. Whilst some may see this as positive in overall terms warmer seas are less productive than cold ones which would have a negative effect on fisheries.



Alleged sightings of Great White Sharks are a regular occurrence in Britain.

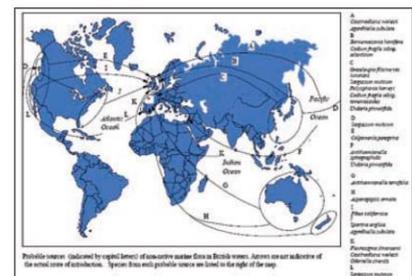
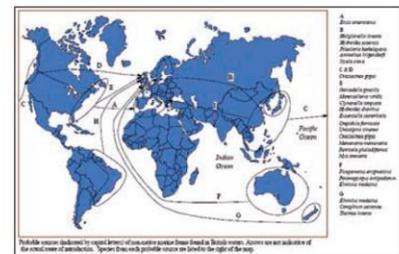
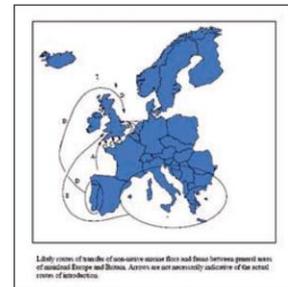
7/ Invasive non-native species



Invasive (non-native, alien or exotic) species have existed in the UK for many thousands of years, brought to this country accidentally, or for agricultural/aquacultural purposes, for example wheat or oysters. In the past their spread has been limited by natural barriers such as mountains, oceans and rivers. Also some are limited by their biology and habitat, many non-native marine invertebrates are restricted to ports and inshore waters, and their distributions on the coast of England are centered around major ports (e.g. Southampton, Thames Estuary, Plymouth). However in the era of globalisation, with the growth in trade and tourism, this situation has changed and invasive species represent a real economic and ecological threat to native species and biological diversity.

“Large expanses of water such as, in the context of Britain, the English Channel, North Sea, Irish Sea and Atlantic Ocean present barriers to many, particularly littoral, species and prevent their natural movement. Temperature and, for benthic species, the type of substratum are also considered to be barriers to the spread of species between geographic regions. These barriers can be bridged through the variety of methods which involve the intervention of man.”⁽³⁵⁾

The problem is not limited to UK waters and “biosecurity” is becoming a major issue around the world and the subject of international and European agreements. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) states that contracting parties shall “prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species” and the EC Water Framework Directive (2000) requires that all water bodies should achieve “good ecological status” by 2015. Water bodies that contain



Illustrations from Non-native marine species in British waters: a review and directory Ed N. Clare Eno, Robin A. Clark & William G. Sanderson, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 1997

invasive non-native species that impact their ecology may not meet this requirement. In England, some non-native freshwater fish species, from a biogeographical point of view, have exceptional status under current legislation (e.g. common carp *Cyprinus carpio*, ide (or orfe) *Leuciscus idus*, goldfish *Carassius auratus*, rainbow trout *Oncorhynchus mykiss*). These species are considered by the authorities to be 'ordinarily resident' in England, which de facto categorizes them as being 'naturalized'.

"Non-native species find their way into our coastal waters by a variety of means, e.g. floating debris, aquaculture activities, aquatic

imports and careless disposal of aquarium species (Globalballast, 2002). However, the most significant mode is through shipping by attachment to hulls and in ballast water. Ballast water imports have been identified as one of the four greatest threats to the world's oceans (Globalballast, 2002). Shipping moves over 80% of the World's commodities and transfers approximately three to five billion tonnes of ballast water internationally each year" (Globalballast, 2002). Coupled with the planktonic life stages of many organisms, transfer via ballast water of ships poses a real and immediate threat. "⁽³⁶⁾

Economic cost of non-natives

7.1

In 2007 the Minister for Biodiversity stated that invasive non-native species cost the British economy approximately £2 billion per year. Economic impacts of invasive non-native species include:

- ≈ altering ecosystem services – such as causing riverbank erosion and flooding and reducing levels of biodiversity;
- ≈ inhibiting water body access – through plants forming dense stands blocking access for river users;
- ≈ affecting land developments;
- ≈ causing human health problems.

And there is no doubt that the number of invasive species is rising. A 2005 audit recorded 2,271 non-native species in England, of which 188 had a negative economic impact and 122 had a negative environmental

impact⁽³⁷⁾. Fifty-one non-native species were recorded in marine waters around Britain in 1997⁽³⁸⁾. In 2007 the Environment Agency indicated that invasive non-native species were among the most significant



Topmouth gudgeon

water management problems in nine out of eleven river basins in England and Wales.⁽³⁹⁾

"Invasive non-native aquatic species are often of greater concern than terrestrial ones. There is little surveillance in the marine system and limited control methods available for use in both freshwater and marine systems... Chinese mitten crabs arrived in the UK in ballast water. These increase flood risk by

7

7.1

Invasive non-native species

Economic cost of non-natives

burrowing into and eroding estuarine banks... non-native crayfish carrying the crayfish plague which is lethal to the endangered native crayfish species...topmouth gudgeon and other non-native fish carrying parasites that threaten native fish species..."⁽⁴⁰⁾

Generally speaking the reasons for non-native species establishing themselves are:

≈ Loss of natural predators and competitors from their previous habitat

≈ Better adaption to habitat that native species

≈ Disturbance of habitat (usually by human activity) to the disadvantage of native species.



Catfish

7.2

Alien species

Alien species can create major problems. For instance Floating Pennywort was introduced into the UK in the 1980's by the aquatic plant industry. This plant chokes waterway and ponds and causes problems for navigation and other wildlife, British Waterways removed over 6000 tonnes of this plant in 2007 from the River Soar. Control or eradication of invasive species once they are established is often very difficult due to the nature of the ecological context. For example the Environment Agency have used chemicals to remove Topmouth Gudgeon from some ponds, however these chemicals are also lethal to all other fish and invertebrates. With some species such as the American Signal Crayfish there are no chemical controls.

"The GB Programme Board has established a working group to look at the development of rapid response capability for other types of invasive species. Eradicating invasive species before they become well-

established saves time and money in the long term. However, the possibility of re-invasion from external populations must also be addressed. Due to the extensive distribution of non-native invasive species and the costs involved in control programmes, it may be necessary to prioritise areas such as designated nature reserves. Current climate change predictions make it more likely that species will spread into the UK from neighbouring countries. However, many may bring with them their own pests, diseases and predators maintaining the natural balance and preventing them from becoming invasive but others may not. There is concern that climate change may allow some non-native species which are established but not invasive in the UK to become invasive. For example, red eared terrapins are found in several water bodies in Britain but it is currently too cold for them to reproduce. Warmer summers may allow this so that the terrapins become

pg.37

Invasive non-native species

Alien species

7

7.2

invasive. Warmer winters will also allow cold-intolerant species to persist. Climate change may also stress native species, reducing their resilience to the impacts of invasive non-native species."⁽⁴¹⁾

Preventing the introduction of invasive species is the obvious answer however this approach has associated issues, e.g. the Ornamental and Aquatics Trade Association (OATA) estimate it would cause a £2-5million loss in their industry. Many organisations involved in addressing this problem perceive a lack of awareness of the dangers of non-native invasive species among the general public. In the absence of a national awareness programme some groups have developed

awareness campaigns of their own. The OATA uses messages on its carrier bags to warn of the dangers of releasing fish or plants into the wild.



Red-eared Terrapin

Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain

7.3

These concerns have been recognised in the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2008)⁽⁴²⁾ which aims to raise awareness of invasive non-native species issues among the general public and other key target audiences so that there is a wider appreciation of the risks that non-native species can pose to our native wildlife and environment. This will secure better understanding of action being taken concerning invasive non-native species enabling the public at large to assist in the detection and monitoring of invasive non-native species.

The action plan put forward suggests better public awareness through:

- ≈ the production and dissemination of posters, identification guides and other general literature on key invasive non-native species and related issues;
- ≈ the production of regular bulletins to update key stakeholders on progress in addressing invasive non-native species;
- ≈ partnerships, to disseminate information and raise awareness amongst important audiences;
- ≈ linkages and synergies with communications channels relating to pathways

pg.38

7

7.3

Invasive non-native species

Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain

concerning human health and travel, wildlife health, trade, transport and so on;

- ≈ timing and targeting of

communications, thematic campaigns and other suitable measures;

- ≈ education programmes in schools and colleges

Prevention and education are only part of the solution however and the framework strategy proposes a containment and eradication strategy based on Rapid Response Early Detection, Surveillance, Monitoring,

Mitigation, Control and Eradication. Amongst the actions proposed are:

- ≈ Key Action 7.8 - establish (and publicise) a means for capturing information on non-native species from any source, for example, by ensuring that information from museums, government laboratories, local authority pest controllers, universities and members of the public can be passed on to the data repository;

- ≈ Key Action 7.9 - consider the need for investment in training and making taxonomic expertise more widely available;



An example of learning about marine issues in a safe and secure environment, the Rock Pool Zone, National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth

pg.39

Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain

- ≈ Key Action 7.10 - identify appropriate means of securing adequate resources and capacity to carry out rapid responses to contingencies;
- ≈ Key Action 7.11 - establish a means for clearly designating lead agencies for rapid responses to different taxa and in different circumstances; and,
- ≈ Key Action 7.12 - develop a general contingency plan to include a risk assessment, mechanisms for flow of information and a protocol for rapid approval of emergency action.

In summary, invasive non-native species can have severe negative impacts on native wildlife, habitats and economic interests and the UK is obliged by several international agreements to prevent, control or eradicate invasive non-native species which are harmful. It is also apparent that climate change may exacerbate the situation, allowing species which are currently climatically limited to survive and become invasive and that this issue is a priority for the UK hence the *Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain* that will improve Britain's status in the control of such species.

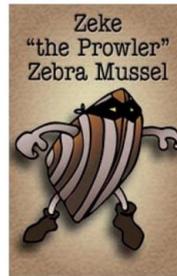


Illustration from American educational website for children on invasive non-native species (www.sgnis.org)



8/ Towards a total immersion

“Conservation is a great moral issue, for it involves the patriotic duty of insuring the safety and continuance of the nation.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Aims and objectives

8.1

From the evidence set out there is a clear need for projects that combine an increasing awareness of the challenges facing water based biodiversity in the United Kingdom and make use of enormous public interest in water based leisure activities. With an estimated 42 million residents of the UK looking at the water and just under 6 million getting in it there is great potential for joining ecological education to a trip to the seaside or lake or river. The educational priorities are to engender the paradigm shift needed for people to learn about their responsibilities towards the wildlife of the water and their duty to protect UK biodiversity.

Although there are many agencies working in these areas there appears to be a lack of joined up thinking. Immersion therefore will set out harness the power of recreation to ecological awareness through:

- ≈ Encouraging more people in the UK to understand the complex ecology of our water based environments
- ≈ Developing economic sustainability and promoting local water-based food and tourism industries
- ≈ Supporting the health of the nation by promoting free water outdoor activity to all



A time for change...

≈ Healing and protecting threatened habitats through a total immersion of public opinion

Immersion therefore proposes that a long term project is undertaken to address these aims as a matter of urgency and in order to do so sets out concrete proposals for urgent investment in our immersive infrastructure across the whole of UK. In order to start this process we have developed a national proposal that encompasses the key areas identified. In addition it is proposed that a pilot

pg.42

8

8.2

Towards a total immersion *Regenerating British lidos*

project is undertaken to raise awareness and test the waters. Further work will be needed to realise the project but we feel that it is important to plant a flag, as the destruction of our great water heritage, ecologically, socially and economically makes this one of the most pressing matters of our time.

We have seen how the country is not using the valuable real estate left to it as a legacy of age of lidos. Many of these lidos and tidal pools are masterpieces of period architecture, ripe for regeneration and could be restored to their former glory, recycled as multi-purpose venues as combinations of aquarium, swimming pool and fish farm.

For the purposes of this project these facilities can be divided up into 5 categories:

- ≈ Inland facilities in use that could be diversified in purpose to include **SUSTAINABLE FRESHWATER AQUACULTURE**, generating local fish protein

- ≈ Inland facilities not in use, near to strategic river systems, that that could be redeveloped into **FRESHWATER INVASIVE/UNWANTED MIGRANT SPECIES REPOSITORIES**

- ≈ Coastal facilities in use that could be diversified in purpose to include **SUSTAINABLE MARINE AQUACULTURE**, generating local fish protein

- ≈ Coastal facilities not in use near to strategic ports that that could be redeveloped into **MARINE INVASIVE/UNWANTED MIGRANT SPECIES REPOSITORIES**

- ≈ In addition there is scope for purpose built facilities that could be relocated as **RAPID RESPONSE UNITS** to areas of need.

Existing lidos in the UK tend to be limited in terms of opening times due to

the variability of the English weather. Those that aren't heated tend to adopt a May to September season, remaining closed outside that period. Many of these are subsidised by local authorities and need further income to survive. It therefore seems reasonable to develop their use to combat the overfishing of UK seas and to provide sustainable freshwater aquaculture to support large industrial centres nearby.

Carp and other naturalised fish species would make ideal winter occupants for these sites when the pool is not being use for swimming. If necessary to support a longer growing season pools could be partitioned to continue to support the aquacultural function and provide new recreational opportunities for practising anglers, wild water swimmers, divers and snorkelers. This new function would add significant value to these recreational activities, allowing people to learn about the ecology of water systems whilst relaxing. Many other educational aspects to this combination could be developed, school swimming trips, hands on workshops for amateur aquaculturalists or more advanced scientific fieldwork by local universities.

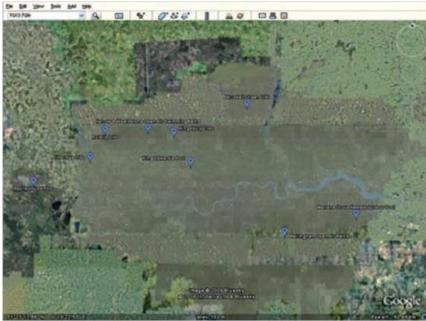


Lidos with aquaculture potential, UK (for London see separate map, overleaf)

Towards a total immersion *Sustainable freshwater aquaculture sites*

8

8.2.1



Lidos with aquaculture potential, London

LIST OF SITES

(opposite page: starting top left
& reading down in columns)

Barrowell Green Lido

Baylis House Pool

Bellingham Open Air Baths

Broomhill Swimming Pool

Clifton Pool

Eltham Park Lido

Harrow & Wealdstone Open Air
Swimming Baths

Hendy Outdoor Swimming Pool

King Edward's Pool

Kingsbury Lido

Malmesbury Outdoor Pool

Marsden Park Open Air Pool

Martens Grove Heated Outdoor
Pool

Royston Outdoor Pool

Ruislip Lido

Uxbridge Lido

pg.44

8

Towards a total immersion

8.2.1

Sustainable freshwater aquaculture sites



pg.45

Towards a total immersion

Freshwater invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories

In order to contain freshwater non-native species it is proposed that inland facilities are set up in order to contain species being cleared by agencies working in this field and by members of the public who have caught specimens at large. The activation and education of those members of the UK population living away from coastal areas will be a key outcome of these facilities.

Non native species, both vegetation and animal, pose a significant threat to British waterways. Plants can clog up canals and other channels used for communication, invasive crayfish have threatened British populations through direct competition and the spreading of parasites. To counter this secure facilities should be constructed at strategic sites inland, close to river and other water systems. Again disused lidos in the central belt of the UK could be reused in order to offer facilities for scientific study, general education, food and swimming/diving.

As we have seen a significant number of invasive non-native species living in UK water courses are edible, eg Catfish, Nobel Crayfish, North American Signal Crayfish, Pikeperch, Pumpkinseed, Red Swamp Crayfish, Ruddy Duck, Spiny-Cheeked Crayfish, Topmouth Gudgeon and Turkish

Crayfish. In order to motivate visitors to the facility it is suggested that surplus populations of non-native species not needed for educational purposes or scientific study are put at the service of local people so that anglers can catch what they need to eat on a daily basis in ideal conditions. Several of the facilities identified have small paddling pools which could easily be adapted for children to catch specimens with hand nets. Optionally avian species such as Ruddy Duck could be used as a food crop and mammalian non-native species such as American Mink and Coypu could be used as a fur crop.



Lidos with potential as inland invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories



LIST OF SITES (r to l): Cleveland Pleasure Baths, King's Meadow Swimming Baths, Twickenham Lido, Ynysangharad Swimming Pool

8

8.2.2

Towards a total immersion

Freshwater invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories

Where possible the public should be involved in the maintenance of waterways through outreach programmes, catching unauthorised species in rivers and lakes. Training should be provided in the safe handling of species, particularly avoiding cross contamination with native species (as is the case with catching crayfish). Managed as sensitive tourist attractions the offer could generate the funds to maintain and staff the facilities. There would also be the option of developing local partnerships to enhance health and sport agendas. For instance local canoe clubs could offer invasive species safaris and for less adventurous boaters other, safer, options could be thought of. One concept that is in the process of development is a system of glass bottomed pedaloes which could be used for this purpose.



*Prototype glass bottomed pedaloes:
British Wildfowl series I*

8.2.3

Sustainable marine aquaculture

Aquaculture is well established as an activity with 43% of global fish supply coming from farmed sources in 2004. It is therefore crucial to ensure that the effect of marine aquaculture on the environment is minimized amidst growing concern that escaped farmed stocks threaten genetic diversity and have a negative impact on the surrounding sea and sea bed. The Marine Conservation Society states that any new farms should:

≈ Minimise adverse effects on local wildlife, habitats and landscapes from pollution or poor siting;

- ≈ Utilise the best sustainable feed options available;
- ≈ Provide optimum protection of wild stocks from escapes associated with fish-farms;
- ≈ Continue to work towards achieving optimal health and welfare of farmed species; and
- ≈ Utilise the least damaging shellfish harvesting methods.

Seaside lidos and tidal pools offer the chance to create new fish farms that would be significantly better in terms of manageability,

pg.47

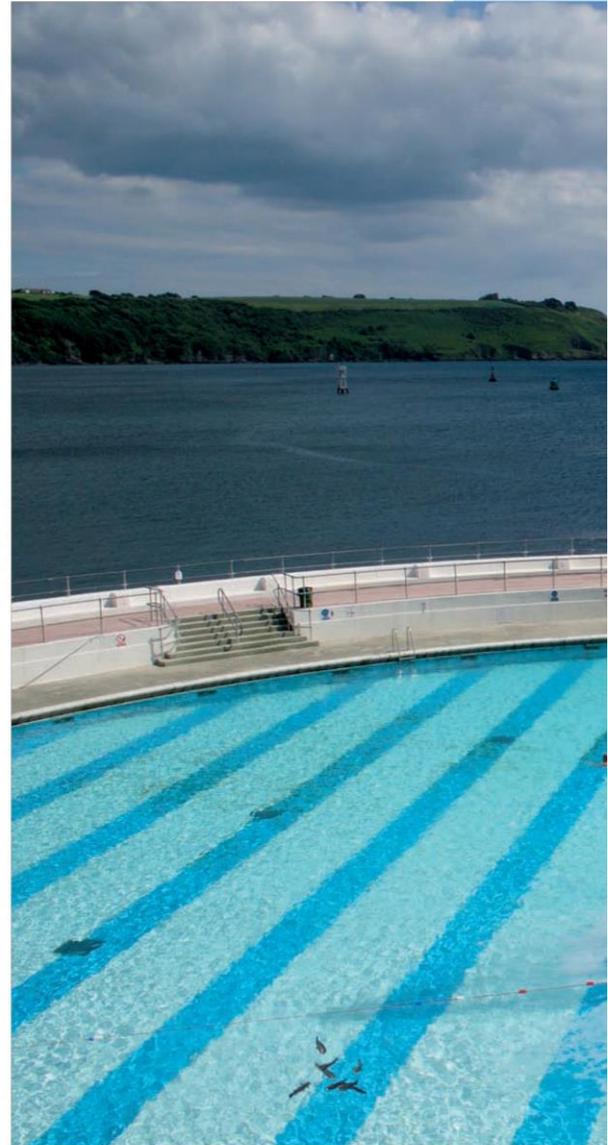
Towards a total immersion

Sustainable marine aquaculture

8

8.2.3

bio-security and protection of wild fish sites. Located in seaside towns and village along the UK coast these would be accessible and educational sites, promoting sustainable tourism and encouraging the use of the coast path to the more far flung tidal pools.



pg.48

8

8.2.3

Towards a total immersion

Sustainable marine aquaculture



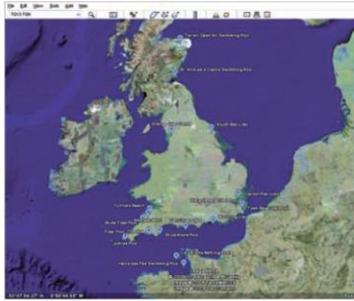
*Tinside Lido, Plymouth with the introduction of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)*

pg.49

Towards a total immersion Preliminary identification of marine sites

8

8.2.4



Lidos and tidal pools to consider as either sustainable marine aquaculture sites or marine invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories



Lido and tidal pool options for both sustainable marine aquaculture sites and marine invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories

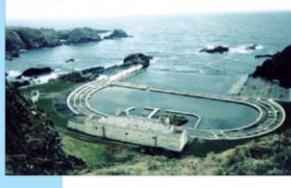
pg.50

8

Towards a total immersion

8.2.4

Preliminary identification of marine sites



LIST OF SITES (in columns)

Bude Tidal Pool
Clacton Pier Lido
Dancing Ledge
Grange over Sands
Havre des Pas Bathing Pool

Jubilee Pool
La Vallette Bathing Pools
Millendreath Tidal Pool
Mothecombe Beach Tidal Pool
Priests Cove Tidal Pool

Shoalstone Beach Pool, Brixham
South Bay Lido
St. Andrew's Castle Swimming Pool
Tarlair Open Air Swimming Pool
The Lido, Worthing

Town Bay, Margate
Tunnels Beach
Walpole Bay, Margate
Westward Ho!

Towards a total immersion

Preliminary identification of marine sites

8

8.2.4

This type of tourism and conservation offer is being tested at Padstow in Cornwall where the Lobster Hatchery offers visitors the chance to look over the breeding facilities for local lobster. Applied to other species this idea could promote a better ecological awareness of mariculture, and the wild oceans where farmed stocks originated.



Facilities where visitors can see seafood production, then eat it, will be important as in these lobster growing tanks at the Lobster Hatchery, Padstow.



pg.52

8

8.2.5

Towards a total immersion

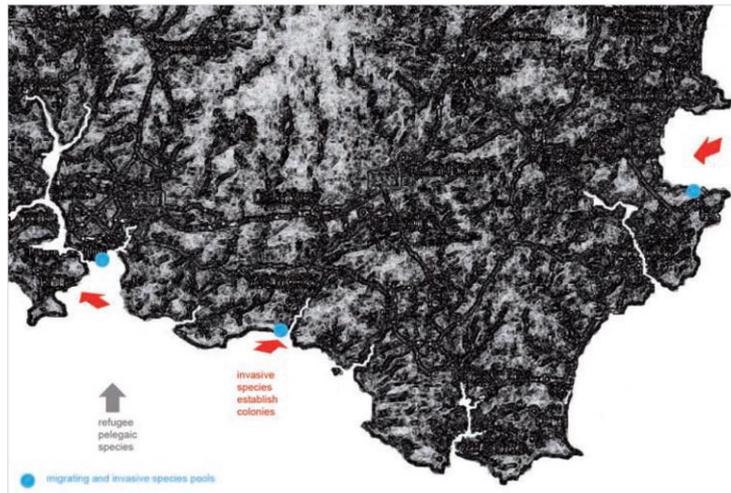
Marine invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories



Van converted to mobile aquarium

Of the potential sites as identified above, a small number could be set aside for marine invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories operating on the same principles as the inland version. These could be supplied by local fishermen from neighbouring ports and take as their location areas in need of recreational facilities as part of regeneration initiatives, for example Plymouth and Torbay. In addition to non-native species, where appropriate, they could also display northwardly migrating pelagic species.

Secure, reinforced chassis vehicles would also be needed to transfer species from dock to facilities. These could also be used to take examples of non-native species on outreach tours to beaches and towns as a fully mobile unit.



Example of strategic location next to ports and estuaries for Marine Non-native Species Repositories on the South Devon coast

Towards a total immersion

Marine invasive/unwanted migrant species repositories

8

8.2.5



Concept design for permanent Marine Invasive/Unwanted Migrant Species Repository, restoring the tidal pool at Mothecombe, Devon

Purpose built facilities – rapid response units to areas of need

8.2.6

The concept design overleaf is for a rapid response unit by architects Childs Sulzmann responding to the need for a re-locatable Marine invasive/unwanted migrant species repository. A large hollowed out structure, the unit would be anchored off sites where infestations were found as its incorporated flotation tanks would enable it to be towed

behind a vessel. The star shape facilitates drop off by fishing or scientific vessels who could dock alongside in order to deposit catches through the circular porthole access hatches on the top of the arms. A side entrance to the unit would allow access into the interior chambers for staff/members of the public at low tide, with access via a central top hatch at high tide.

pg.54

8

8.2.6

Towards a total immersion

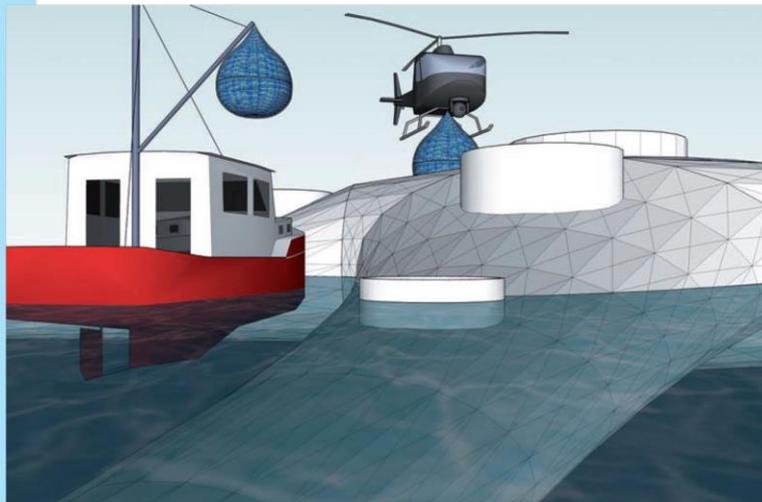
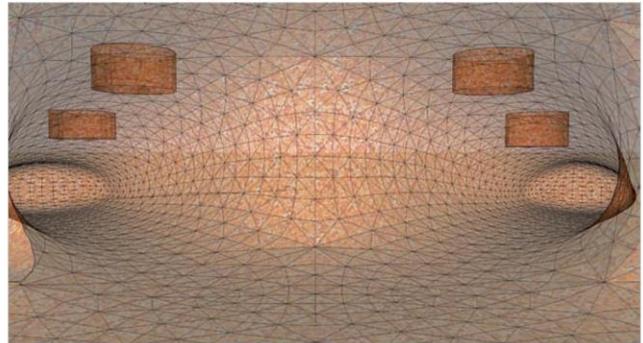
Purpose built facilities – rapid response units to areas of need

Internally the various arms would be partitioned off by glass walls in order separate resident species and to create a central access chamber which allows 360 degree supervision day and night by scientific staff. The same circular portholes used to deposit species in the various arms could also be used by members of public who wished access these different chambers to use the facility for diving or fishing.



*(above) external view
(below) internal view*

Designs by
Childs Sulzmann
Architects



*Loading a rapid
response unit from
sea and air*





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9

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*Some common fisheries that are potentially unsustainable***Atlantic and North Sea cod**

All north-east Atlantic cod stocks are assessed as being overfished, however stocks in the North Sea, Irish Sea, West of Scotland, eastern Channel, eastern Baltic, Greenland, Skagerrak, Kattegat and Norwegian coast are the most heavily depleted.

Atlantic halibut

Atlantic halibut is a thick-set, flat fish with both eyes on the right-hand side of the body. It lives in deep, cold waters and is slow-growing. Atlantic halibut is overfished, which means it is caught in such high numbers that a sustainable fishery cannot be maintained by the current population size. It is also assessed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as endangered.

Dogfish

Spiny dogfish, spurdog, rock salmon or flake are all species of dogfish, which belong to the same family as sharks and rays. Spurdogs are long-lived, slow growing and have a high age of maturity. The north-east Atlantic stock is now considered to be depleted and may be in danger of collapse. Species also assessed as critically endangered by the IUCN.

European eel

Eels spawn in the sea and return to freshwater streams to grow. The European eel breeds in the mid-Atlantic Sargasso Sea. There is one single European eel stock. This is severely depleted and at a historical minimum which continues to decline. Eels spawn only once in

their lifetime and it is almost certain they die after spawning. Eels are also farmed but rely on juveniles from wild stocks.

European hake

There are two main stocks for European hake - a northern and southern stock. The northern stock is below the minimum biomass level recommended by marine scientists but harvested sustainably, and the southern stock is depleted. Avoid eating hake from depleted stocks and immature fish below about 50cms and during their breeding season, which is February to July.

Porbeagle

Porbeagle is part of a group of sharks known collectively as mackerel sharks. Sharks are vulnerable to exploitation because they are slow-growing, long-lived, and have low reproductive capacity. Porbeagle is assessed as critically endangered by the IUCN. Its north Atlantic population was seriously over-exploited by directed long-line fisheries up until the 1970s, when they became unprofitable. Since then there have been sporadic targeted fisheries for porbeagle and they are also caught as bycatch. You should avoid eating any species of shark, which are caught not only for their meat but also for their fins. Shark-finning, for the Asian shark-fin soup market, is a wasteful and barbaric technique where fins are hacked off and sharks thrown back into the sea to die.

10

10.1

Appendices

Some common fisheries that are potentially unsustainable

Plaice

Plaice is a long-lived species and subject to high fishing pressure. Stocks in the Celtic Sea, western Channel, south-west Ireland and the west of Ireland are in decline and substantial reductions in fishing efforts are required to achieve sustainable stock levels. Large numbers of undersized plaice are discarded in particular in areas of the southern North Sea that are trawled for sole and plaice. The Irish Sea stock is currently the only stock classified as healthy and harvested sustainably. Avoid eating immature plaice below 30cm and during their breeding season, from January to March.

Seabass

You should avoid eating seabass captured by nets that trawl the bottom of the sea. These fisheries target spawning and pre-spawning fish, are responsible for high levels of dolphin by-catch, and deplete stocks available for inshore and recreational fisheries. Choose fish which has been sustainably caught by handlining methods in the south-west of England.

Skate

The common skate is the largest European flat fish, with females reaching lengths of 285cm and males 205cm. They are found in the north-east Atlantic from Madeira and northern Morocco to Iceland and northern Norway. Common, long-nose, black and white skate are all endangered species.

Sole

North Sea Dover or common sole stock is classified as healthy and harvested sustainably. Stocks in Skaggerak and Kattegat, the Eastern Channel and Celtic Sea are also healthy but the level of fishing pressure is considered too high or unknown. Stocks in the Western Channel and Biscay are below the minimum level recommended by scientists and harvested unsustainably. Avoid eating fish caught in these areas, as well as south-west Ireland, where the state of the stock is unknown and catches the lowest on record. Dover sole from the Hastings Fleet trammel net fishery in the Eastern Channel is certified as an environmentally responsible fishery. Avoid eating immature sole (less than 28cm) and fish caught during the breeding season (April-June).

Whitebait

Whitebait are the fry (young) of herring and sprat. As with any fishery's future, sustainability relies on young fish being allowed to mature and reproduce to maintain the population. Taking juveniles before they have a chance to spawn undermines future sustainability.

pg.61

1. Alfonsinos or golden eye perch
2. American plaice
3. Argentine or greater silver smelt
4. Atlantic cod (from overfished stocks)
5. Atlantic halibut
6. Atlantic salmon (wild caught)
7. Black Scabbardfish (trawled from Northern Stocks)
8. Blue ling
9. Brill (beam-trawl caught from the North Sea)
10. Patagonian toothfish (non MSC certified fisheries)
11. Nursehound (bull huss, dogfish, flake, greater spotted dogfish) and Spurdog (piked dogfish, rock salmon, spiny dogfish)
12. European Hake
13. Greater forkbeard
14. Grouper
15. Ling
16. Marlin (blue, Indo-Pacific & white)
17. Monkfish (from North and North West Spain, Portuguese Coast)
18. Orange roughy
19. Plaice (from overfished stocks)
20. Rat or rabbit fish
21. Red or blackspot seabream
22. Redfish or ocean perch
23. Roundnose grenadier
24. Seabass (trawl caught only)
25. Shark
26. Skates and Rays (except mature cuckoo, spotted and starry rays)
27. Snapper
28. Sturgeon
29. Swordfish
30. Tiger prawn (except organically farmed)
31. Tuna (except dolphin friendly, pole and line caught yellowfin and skipjack)
32. Turbot (from North Sea)
33. Tusk or torsk
34. Wolfish

Taken from www.fishonline.org, a Marine Conservation Society website

Sustainable fisheries

1. Abalone (farmed)
2. Alaska or walleye pollock (MSC certified from Alaska)
3. Bib or pouting
4. Black bream or porgy or seabream (from Cornwall and NW and N Wales)
5. Brown crab (pot caught off S Devon coast)
6. Cape hake (MSC certified from S Africa)
7. Clam (sustainably harvested)
8. Cockle (MSC certified from Bury Inlet, SW Wales)
9. Cod, Atlantic (organically farmed)

10

10.3

Appendices

Sustainable fisheries

10. Cod, Pacific (MSC certified)
11. Coley or saithe (from NE Arctic and combined N Sea stock)
12. Dab
13. Dover sole (MSC certified from Eastern Channel)
14. Flounder (from Cornwall and NW and N Wales)
15. Gurnard (grey and red)
16. Halibut, Pacific (MSC certified)
17. Herring or sild (MSC certified from Thames Blackwater, North Sea and Eastern English Channel)
18. Lemon sole (otter trawled from Cornwall)
19. Lobster, Mexican Baja California red rock (MSC certified)
20. Lobster, Western Australian rock (MSC certified)
21. Lythe or pollack (line caught and tagged from Cornwall))
22. Mackerel (MSC certified from Cornwall))
23. Mahi Mahi (handline caught from targeted fisheries only)
24. Mussel (sustainably harvested or farmed e.g. rope grown))
25. Oyster (native & Pacific, sustainably farmed)
26. Pilchard or sardine, European (traditionally harvested from Cornwall)
27. Red mullet (not from Mediterranean)
28. Salmon, Atlantic (Organically farmed)
29. Salmon, Pacific (MSC certified from Alaska)
30. Scallop (sustainably harvested e.g. dive-caught)
31. Scampi or Dublin Bay prawn (MSC certified from Loch Torridon, NW Scotland (not available in UK))
32. Scampi or Dublin Bay prawn (pot-caught from West of Scotland)
33. Seabass (line-caught and tagged from Cornwall)
34. Snapper, Red or Crimson
35. Spider crab (pot caught only)
36. Tilapia (sustainably farmed)
37. Trout (brown or sea and rainbow, organically farmed)
38. Tuna, albacore (pole and line, handline or troll-caught from S Pacific or S Atlantic)
39. Tuna, skipjack (pole and line or handline-caught from Pacific (western & central) or Maldives)
40. Tuna, yellowfin (pole and line, handline or troll-caught from Pacific (western & central) or Atlantic)
41. Whiting (from English Channel)
42. Winkle (sustainably harvested e.g. hand picked)

pg.63

Some southern migrants moving north:

Red Mullet *Mullus barbatus*
Smooth pufferfish *Pachygaster sphaeroides*
Flying Gurnard *Dactylopterus volitans*
Grey triggerfish *Balistes capriscus*
Ocean Sunfish *Mola mola*
Vadigo *Campogramma glaycos*
Greater Amberjack *Seriola dumerili*
Derbio *Trachinotus ovatus*
Almaco Jack *Seriola rivoliana*
Blue Runner *Car ysos*
Amberjack *Seriola sp.*
Guinea Amberjack *Seriola carpenteri*
Derbio *Trachinotus ovatus*
Gilthead Sea Bream *Sparus aurata*

Couch's Sea Bream *Pagrus pagrus*
Bogue *Boops boops*
Saddled Sea Bream *Oblada melanura*
Spanish Sea Bream *Pagellus acarne*
Zebra Sea bream *Diplodus cervinus*
White Sea Bream *Diplodus sargus*
Red Scorpionfish *Scorpaena scrofa*
Small-scaled Scorpionfish *Scorpaena porcus*
Triton *Charonia lampas*
Slipper Lobster *Scyllarus arctus*
Tiger Prawn *Penaeus japonicus*

Source: National Marine Aquarium

Non-native freshwater plants and animals in the UK

American Bullfrog *Rana catesbeiana*
American Mink *Mustela*
Australian Swamp Stonecrop *Crassula helmsii*
Australian Swamp Stonecrop *Tillaea recurva*
Australian Swamp Stonecrop *Tillaea helmsii*
Catfish *Siluris glanis*
Coypu *Myocaster coypus*
Curly Water Weed *Lagarosiphon major*
Curly Water Weed *Elodea crista*
Floating Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*

Nobel Crayfish *Astacus astacus*
North American Signal Crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus*
Parrot's feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*
Pikeperch *Sander lucioperca*,
Pumpkinseed *Lepomis gibbosus*
Red Eared Terrapin *Trachemys scripta*
Red Swamp Crayfish *Procambarus clarkii*
Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*
South American Water Primrose *Ludwigia grandiflora*

10

10.5

Appendices

Non-native freshwater plants and animals in the UK

- Spiny-Cheeked Crayfish** *Orconectes limosus*
- Topmouth Gudgeon** *Pseudorasbora parva*
- Turkish Crayfish** *Astacus leptodactylus*
- Water Fern** *Azolla filiculoides*
- Water Hyacinth** *Eichhornia crassipes*
- Water Lettuce** *Pistia stratiotes*
- Water Primrose** *Ludwigia peploides*
- Zebra Mussel** *Dreissena polymorpha*
- Curly Waterweed** *Lagarosiphon major*

10.6

Non-native marine species in British Waters

Taken from Non-native marine species in British waters: a review and directory Ed N. Clare Eno, Robin A. Clark & William G. Sanderson, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 1997

Entries are made in the following order: Name, Common name, Effects on the environment, Effects on commercial interests, Control methods used and effectiveness, Beneficial effects, Comments

FLORA

Bacillariophyta *Thalassiosira punctigera*

A centric diatom
Unknown.
Unknown.
None used.
None known.

It is an extremely variable species with regard to size and valve structure (Hasle 1983). It was very abundant in the English Channel in the period 1980-1981 but has subsequently been considered to have an insignificant role (Boalch 1987).

Thalassiosira tealata

A centric diatom
Unknown.
Unknown.
None used.

None known.

The sample containing *Thalassiosira tealata* was collected near Blakeney, Gloucestershire from the river Severn in 1950, but not examined at that time. Its presence in European waters was known for some years (G.R. Hasle pers. comm.) but the species was not described until 1980 by Takano.

Coscinodiscus wailesii

A centric diatom

It can reach high numbers and produce copious mucilage which 'in sinking' can accumulate insoluble skeletons of planktonic organisms and mineral particles, increasing its volume and density (Boalch & Harbour 1977) and blanket the seabed.

Fishing trawls may become clogged or broken by heavy grey slime. It may interfere with the hauling of fishing gear and prolonged washing or air drying may not com-

pg.65

pletely remove it (Boalch & Harbour 1977).

None used.

None known.

Boalch (1987) reported *Coscinodiscus wailesii* to be still present in the Plymouth area and to have become a major constituent of the winter centric diatom population.

Odontella sinensis

A centric diatom

This species has been a prominent contributor to the winter and spring phytoplankton of the western English Channel (Boalch & Harbour 1977; Boalch 1987).

Unknown.

None known.

None.

None.

Pleurosigma simonsenii

A pennate diatom

Presumably *Pleurosigma simonsenii* has displaced native species at times since it was reported dominant in the Plymouth area in 1973; it has since 'settled down' to a minor constituent of the plankton (Boalch & Harbour 1977b; Boalch 1987; Wallentinus in press).

Unknown.

None used.

None known.

Currently it is considered a minor constituent of the British phytoplankton (Boalch & Harbour 1977a).

Rhodophyta *Asparagopsis armata*

Harpoon weed

Unknown.

Unknown.

None used.

None known.

There are two macroscopic phases to the life cycle of *Asparagopsis armata*, the filamentous habit being very similar in appearance to that of *Bonnemaisonia hamifera* but readily distinguished at the cellular level (D.A. Birkett pers. comm.).

Bonnemaisonia hamifera

None

Unknown.

Unknown.

None used.

None known.

There are two macroscopic phases to the life of this species, the filamentous *Trailiella* "pink cotton wool" phase being very difficult to distinguish from the same life phase of related species (D.A. Birkett pers. comm.).

Grateloupia doryphora

None

Unknown.

This species is used in the Pacific as a food and as an industrial source of carrageenan.

None.

None known.

Where the two co-exist, *G. doryphora* usually out competes the other non-native, *G. filicina* var. *luxurians* (W.F. Farnham pers. comm.). The ribbon-like blades of this seaweed can reach a size of 100 cm by 20 cm, but are usually much smaller (Irvine & Farnham 1983).

Grateloupia filicina var. luxurians

None

Unknown, but see under comments.

It grows in marinas but is unlikely to be a nuisance.

None used.

This species is used in the western Pacific as a food and as a source of carrageenan.

The fronds of this seaweed can reach a length of 70 cm (Irvine & Farnham 1983), compared with up to 10 cm for the native variety *G. filicina* var. *filicina*. The non-native may be capable of displacing other species, on account of its potential size (R. Mitchell pers. comm.) although there is no indication of this happening (W.F. Farnham pers. comm.).

Pikea californica

Captain Pike's weed

Possible displacement of native species, but likely to be insignificant.

Unknown.

None used.

None known.

In order to recognise this species, examination of the distinctive anatomical detail is required (D.A. Birkett pers. comm.). Recent research has shown that Japanese populations of 'Pikea californica' are in fact another species (Maggs & Ward 1996).

Agardhiella subulata

None

Unknown.

Unknown.

None used.

It may be a potential source of carrageenan (W.F. Farnham pers. comm.).

Taxonomic research remains to be done to establish which species this is and thereby indicate where it has come from (e.g. see Farnham 1980). The species present in the Solent may be *Neogardhiella gaudichaudii*, not *A. subulata* but W.F. Farnham (pers. comm.) recommends acceptance as *A. subulata* for now.

Solieria chordalis

None

None known.

Unknown.

None used.

It could be cultivated to produce carrageenan.

Previously it was considered that, as well as *Solieria chordalis* on the south coast, *Solieria filiformis* was present in Milford Haven, South Wales. However, W.F. Farnham (pers. comm.) indicates that the Milford Haven population (Farnham 1980; Farnham & Irvine 1979) was misidentified and is probably better referred to as *S. chordalis* (the only known species of this genus in Britain).

Antithamnionella spirographidis

None

Unknown.

It may cause fouling in marinas.

None used.

None known.

Wollaston (1986) commented that *Antithamnionella spirographidis* was introduced into Australia from Europe by shipping and it is associated with dockyards and harbours. In their natural habitats, *Antithamnionella spirographidis* and *A. ternifolia* are very similar in appearance so microscopic examination is required to distinguish them (Maggs & Hommersand 1993).

Antithamnionella ternifolia

None

No effects are known.

It is a fouling organism.

None used.

None known.

More taxonomic research is required to determine whether other southern hemisphere species are conspecific. In their natural habitats, *Antithamnionella spirographidis* and *A. ternifolia* are very similar in appearance so microscopic examination is required to distinguish them.

Polysiphonia harveyi

None

It possibly displaces native species as it can become very abundant.

It is a fouling agent as it is abundant in marinas on artificial structures, but as it is small, this is not a significant problem.

None used.

None known.

Japanese populations are interfertile with British populations of *Polysiphonia harveyi* (C.A. Maggs pers. comm.), but the correct taxonomy is still to be determined, possibly involving *Polysiphonia strictissima* (described from New Zealand). All species of *Polysiphonia* require microscopic examination to confirm their identification.

Chromophyta Colpomenia peregrina

Oyster thief

It has negligible effects on the environment.

When growing attached to oysters it floats away with the oyster when the air-filled thalli grow large enough, hence its name of oyster thief (Farnham 1980) but this does not occur in England.

None used.

None known.

It is found almost world-wide in temperate areas. There is some debate as to whether *Colpomenia peregrina* and *C. sinuosa* are separate species or variants of a single species.

Undaria pinnatifida

Wakame (in Japan), Japanese kelp

It may cause displacement of other native species (Fletcher & Manfredi 1995).

Undaria is a commercially important edible species. It is a fouling agent.

It is planned to remove all subsequently occurring plants from the marina pontoons in the Hamble. However, this is thought unlikely to eradicate the species or halt its local

spread (Fletcher & Manfredi 1995).

Undaria is a commercially important species, cultivated for food (Guiry & Blunden 1991).

The intentional introduction of Undaria to the north coast of France and its continued farming has been considered extensively and sanctioned by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. Proposals to introduce this species to Ireland were rejected (Wallentinus in press).

Sargassum muticum

Jap weed, wire weed, strangle weed

It causes the physical displacement of native species through over-growing and shading underlying species (Critchley, Farnham & Morrell 1986). There is documented replacement of Laminaria saccharina and Zostera marina at Grandcamp on the French Atlantic coast (Givernaud, Cosson & Givernaud-Mouradi 1991). In Britain, there is observed growth of Sargassum on eel-grass beds in the Isles of Scilly (Raines et al. 1992) and in deep pools and channels Halidrys siliquosa can be displaced by Sargassum muticum as the dominant species (George, Tittley & Wood in prep.). Withers et al. (1975) reported a rich epiphytic community associated with Sargassum collected from the east Solent, suggesting that native epiphytic species are not particularly affected.

This species is a pest and fouling organism which is reported to interfere with recreational use of waterways, particularly when it becomes detached from hold fasts and floats off forming large masses (Farnham 1980). It blocks propellers and intakes (Critchley, Farnham & Morrell 1986). It is also a fouling organism on oyster beds and a nuisance to commercial fishermen, fouling their nets (Critchley, Farnham & Morrell 1981).

Removing Sargassum by hand is extremely time-consuming and needs to be repeated, probably indefinitely (Farnham 1980). Removal by trawling, cutting and suction have also been tried. Chemical methods using herbicide have been tried but failed due to lack of selectivity and the large doses needed. Small germlings can be consumed by molluscs and amphipods but this has no restrictive effect on *S. muticum*. Whatever method is used the alga always quickly regrows and effective methods for its permanent removal have not been found, although cutting and suction is the preferred method applied (Farnham et al. 1981; Critchley, Farnham & Morell 1986).

It is of possible commercial value to the alginate industry. In its native habitat off the coast of Japan *S. muticum* is

much smaller than in Britain (Rueness 1989). The eradication of this species in British waters has been attempted but has failed.

CHLOROPHYTA

Codium fragile subsp. atlanticum

Green sea fingers

It displaces the native species *Codium tomentosum* (Farnham 1980).

Unknown.

None used.

It is eaten in the Far East.

The subspecies of *C. fragile* found in Britain are only distinguishable microscopically. This has resulted in uncertainty as to when they were introduced and how they have spread. A third subspecies, *scandinavicum*, was introduced to Denmark in 1919 and Norway from Asiatic coasts of the Pacific.

Codium fragile subsp. tomentosoides

Green sea fingers

It displaces native species *Codium tomentosum* (Farnham 1980) although there is some recent indication that the native *Codium tomentosum* is making a comeback against this non-native (W.F. Farnham pers. comm.).

It is used as a food in the Far East.

None used.

None known.

See comments on *C. fragile* subsp. *atlanticum*.

Anthophyta *Spartina anglica*

Common cord-grass, Townsend's grass or ricegrass.

The rapid colonisation of *Spartina* over extensive flats in sites with large wintering populations of waders and wildfowl is a major concern because of the birds' loss of habitat for feeding and roosting (Davidson et al. 1991). It is believed that *Spartina anglica* may have helped the die back of the native *S. maritima* as the latter is much less widely spread than formerly (Perring & Walters 1976). In addition, by taking over the mantle of the native pioneer species, *S. anglica* has altered the course of succession. It usually produces a monoculture which has much less intrinsic value to wildlife than the naturally species-diverse marsh (Davidson et al. 1991).

Amenity interests may be affected, though it has been used in the past as an aid to saltmarsh enclosure.

Before World War II, copper sulphate was sprayed on *Spartina* as a treatment (Hardy 1968). More recently there have been several attempts to control *Spartina anglica* where it has invaded nature reserves (Doody 1984) by spraying it with the herbicides Dalapon and Feneron, and attempts have also been made to dig up seedlings. Dalapon is reported to have been up to 80% successful, but is generally considered to be not very effective. Pesticide trials have been carried out at Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve off the Northumberland coast and at several other sites.

The ability of *Spartina* to colonise open mudflats at a faster rate, and further seaward, than its competitors has been seen as of potential benefit to man. As a consequence it was extensively planted throughout Britain (Hubbard & Stebbings 1967), in Europe, and even as far as China, as an aid to stabilisation of coastlines and a stimulus to enclosure and land-claim (Davidson et al. 1991).

Spartina anglica is now the main species of cord-grass found throughout Great Britain.

FAUNA

Cnidaria *Gonionemus vertens*

None

Unknown.

Unknown.

None used.

None known.

It is unlikely that the venom of *Gonionemus vertens* is as harmful to humans as in much studied *Gonionemus* populations of Far-Eastern Russian waters (see Cornelius (1995) and references therein).

Clavopsella *navis*

None

Unknown.

Unknown.

None used.

None known.

None.

Haliplanella *lineata*

Orange-striped sea anemone

Unknown.

It can possibly be a nuisance as a fouling organism.

None used.

None known.

The species is now a common brackish-water anemone in Britain (Barnes 1994).

Nematoda *Anguillicola crassus*

Swim-bladder nematode

Common eels *Anguilla anguilla*, if infected by *Anguillicola crassus*, can show adverse effects if the level of infestation is high. These include higher susceptibility to bacterial infections and death. The wall of the swim bladder may thicken and inflammation occur. Growth may slow and damage to the swim bladder may prevent the spawning migration to the western Atlantic (Køie 1988). Kennedy & Fitch (1990) document the occurrence of these effects in eels in British waters.

In eel farms the parasites have been observed to cause reduction in growth rate. The wall of the swim bladder of highly infected eels may burst (Møllergaard 1988).

No information is available.

None known.

This species is normally found in freshwater conditions, and brackish waters up to 20‰ salinity. However, it has been recorded in hosts in the open sea.

Annelida *Goniadella gracilis*

None

Unknown.

Unknown.

None used.

None known.

It appears that *Goniadella gracilis* has become quite common in Liverpool Bay in sandy gravel below 15 m water depth.

Marenzelleria *viridis*

None

In the Tay, *M. viridis* occurred at greater sediment depths than other species in an intertidal mudflat, yet its distribution and population densities were negatively correlated with all other species (Atkins, Jones & Garwood 1987). In the Ems estuary in The Netherlands, increasing densities of *Marenzelleria viridis* in a sandy habitat coincided with a reduced abundance of the polychaete *Hediste diversicolor*, and density fluctuations of *M. viridis* and the amphipod *Corophium volutator* showed a significant positive relationship (Essink & Kleef 1993). However, the

cause of these effects is not understood, and may be environmental factors rather than species interactions. Recent studies in the Ems estuary by Essink, Eppinga & Dekker (in prep.) demonstrated an inverse abundance and biomass relationship between the introduced spionid polychaete *M. viridis* and the previously most abundant native polychaete *Hediste diversicolor*, indicating that competition occurs between the two species.

None.

None used.

None known in Britain. In the Ems, *M. viridis* is preyed upon by plaice *Pleuronectes platessa* and flounder *Platichthys flesus* (Essink & Kleef 1993).

The biology of this species has been studied in the Tay estuary in Britain (Atkins, Jones & Garwood 1987) and various sites in mainland Europe, including the Ems estuary (Essink & Kleef 1993). There are also extensive studies (on the ecology, physiology, genetics, larval ecology and reproduction) of the species underway in German Baltic waters at the University of Rostock, Institute of Baltic Sea Research (K. Essink pers. comm.).

Clymenella torquata

Bamboo worm

None.

None.

None used.

None.

Pilgrim (1965) commented that individuals collected from Whitstable were 15 cm long while those from Beaufort, North Carolina, USA, were only 6 cm long, but were otherwise the same.

Hydroides dianthus

A tubeworm

Unknown.

It is a fouling organism. Nelson & Stauber (1940) reported that *Hydroides dianthus* may kill young oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) by overgrowing them in its native area of eastern North America. It is also the host of certain nematode stages in eastern North America.

It can be removed by scraping of buoys and ships' hulls. Its effects are negligible but see under *H. ezoensis* and *F. enigmaticus*.

While it is possible that *H. dianthus* has been present in British waters for some considerable time (Zibrowius & Thorp 1989), it is known from only a few specimens

collected from Southampton Water (Thorp, Pyne & West 1987; Zibrowius & Thorp 1989).

Hydroides ezoensis

A tubeworm

It has unknown effects, although perhaps some displacement of 'waterline' green algae *Ulva* and *Enteromorpha* occurs (C.H. Thorp pers. comm.). It has not displaced the heavy sea-squirt-dominated fouling community at an immediately lower level.

It is a severe fouling organism on harbour structures and ships' hulls throughout Southampton Water. While this additional fouling load does not appear to have had any deleterious effect on fixed harbour structures, it has caused flotation problems of buoys and added considerably to fouling of poorly-protected ships.

It can be removed by scraping of buoys and ships' hulls. It probably adds to the diversity and success of indigenous species. Within the bulk of its massive encrustations (30 cm thick (Thorp, Pyne & West 1987)) is a protected habitat for free-living and sessile invertebrates (C.H. Thorp pers. comm.). It provides food: the opercula and branchial crown are eaten by fish predators, and larvae and eggs are produced in very large numbers, food for filter-feeders (C.H. Thorp pers. comm.).

This massive introduction, initiated almost certainly in 1976, passed without comment until specimens were removed from the hull of a fouled tug in 1982. Although enquiries elicited the information that heavy tube-worm fouling had been observed in 1980, and perhaps earlier, it was only the 'accident' of a research student collecting fouling algae that brought the massive encrustations to light.

Ficopomatus enigmaticus

A tubeworm

Its effects on native species are more likely to be beneficial than problematic (see below). This species favours waters which present some degree of stress to most open-shore marine organisms. Its requirement for variable-salinity water in which to spawn ensures that the major populations do not interfere with most indigenous species.

It is a fouling species which affects ships, buoys and harbour structures.

It is removed from buoys and ships' hulls by scraping.

While *F. enigmaticus* can be a fouling nuisance it can

also benefit the waters it invades. As Keene (1980) and Davies, Stuart & Villiers (1989) have shown, the presence of large numbers in enclosed waters including marinas, where they would be considered a fouling nuisance, has had very beneficial effects on water quality, reducing suspended particulate loads and improving both the oxygen and nutrient status. Thomas & Thorp (1994) have also shown that a large population of *F. enigmaticus* can remove material from suspension and thus have a very beneficial effect on other benthic species within enclosed or semi-enclosed waters. However, abundant filter-feeders can also deplete phytoplanktonic resources and suspended particulate organic material which might otherwise be utilised by other, native, filter-feeders. Through production of faeces and psuedofaeces in large quantities they also concentrate contaminants from the water column and pass them into the sediment and hence up the food chain.

Recorded initially in 1937 from Weymouth Harbour, Dorset, and within adjacent Radipole Lake in 1952 (Tebble 1953, 1956), this species has been noted there on a number of widely separated occasions over subsequent years. Lack of data render it impossible to determine whether the population in 1937 had survived through many generations for more than 50 years, or whether its observed presence represents a series of discrete invasions, each of which lasted a finite period.

Janua brasiliensis

A tubeworm

In the Goes Canal the density of the settlement of *J. brasiliensis* on the eel grass *Zostera* was great enough to have weighed down leaves such that lay on the canal sediment. This considerably impaired the eel grass' photosynthetic efficiency (Critchley & Thorp 1985).

It is a fouling organism but has negligible effect in British waters.

Not applicable to such a small animal.

None known.

All three records of *J. brasiliensis* from European waters have come about as a consequence of monitoring the spread of *S. muticum*, in the case of the Goes record in particular. It is possible that there are other sites with isolated populations on Channel coasts, both French and English, which have not been visited by competent 'spirorbidologists'. Such sites would be situated in the vicinity of warmed water, coastal power plants etc.

Pileolaria berkeleyana

A tubeworm

Unknown.

Unknown.

None warranted on such a small animal.

None known.

This species, like *Janua brasiliensis*, has been recorded only through the monitoring of the nonnative alga *S. muticum*, and it is therefore likely that there are other sites where this species is present but has not been recorded. In fact, C.H. Thorp (pers. comm.) considers it is likely that this species has spread more widely than *J. brasiliensis*.

Chelicerata Ammothea hilgendorfi

A sea spider

None.

Unknown.

None.

None known.

This is a species of no ecological or commercial significance. Introduction to the lagoon in Venice is also presumed to have been on a ship's hull. Chocolate brown markings on the trunk and legs (as indicated in the illustration) are a useful aid to identification.

CRUSTACEA

Elminius modestus

None

In northern areas, such as the British Isles, *Elminius modestus* competes with *Semibalanus balanoides* (Crisp 1958), whereas in southern Europe it competes with *Chthamalus* species as well. *E. modestus* is, however, also found in low or variable salinity habitats where native *S. balanoides* does not survive. *Balanus improvisus* seems to be retreating where it is in competition with *E. modestus* (Crisp 1958; Hayward & Ryland 1990). *Balanus improvisus* may have been displaced from the Tamar estuary, Devon and Cornwall, and become extremely rare in the Dart, Devon, as a result of competition from *E. modestus* (A. Southward pers. comm.). It has been suggested that since it produces a larger number of larval stages in the summer than *S. balanoides*, it may be in direct competition with other components of the zooplankton, notably the larval stages of other benthic species (Crisp 1958; Farnham 1980). It is a fouling organism in favourable conditions. Ships' hulls and buoys are scraped to remove barnacles.

None known.
None.

Balanus amphitrite

None
Unknown.
It is a fouling organism.
None used.
None known.
None.

Acartia tonsa

None
Unknown.
None.
None used.
None known.
This species produces diapause eggs (Zilhox & Gonzalez 1972) which may have helped with transport in ballast waters.

Eusarsiella zostericola

None
No effects known.
None.
None used.
None known.
It is one of the many species introduced with American oysters. It is probably present in other estuaries, but as it is not present in British keys it is likely to be mis-identified or not identified. Although it is small in size, yet will be retained on 0.5 mm sieves, it is larger and more fecund than those of studied North American populations (Bamber 1987b).

Corophium sextonae

None
It has apparently negligible effects, although Spooner (1951) considered that its increase in abundance in the Plymouth area was linked to a decrease in abundance of the native *Corophium bonnellii* (not used for other sp.).
Unknown.
None used.
None known.
None

Eriocheir sinensis

Chinese mitten crab
For most of its life *E. sinensis* lives in fresh water. During August adult crabs migrate seawards and gather in large swarms to breed in estuaries (Panning 1939). When population densities are high, *E. sinensis* causes considerable damage to soft sediment banks through burrowing which increases erosion and might affect flood defences. This species is an intermediate host for the mammalian lung fluke *Paragonimus ringer*.
It may damage the nets of eel fishermen. Damage caused to river banks may increase repair costs.
Those caught in eel nets are destroyed. It may be possible to use biological control through maintenance of fish populations leading to increased predation.
Parasite-free individuals, have a small commercial value: In the Japanese restaurant market *E. sinensis* was worth £20/kg in 1995.
Increases in population in the Thames in recent years may be attributable to drought conditions during 1989-1992 having facilitated greater settlement of young crabs (Atrill & Thomas in press). Adults occupy an essentially freshwater habitat but must migrate to mate and release larvae in the saline mouths of estuaries, congregating as they do so. Young crabs in turn migrate up estuaries (Barnes 1994).

Rhithropanopeus harrisi

Zuiderzee crab, dwarf crab
Unknown
Unknown
None used.
None known.
Cardiff Docks harbour other non-native species, including the tube worm *Ficopomatus enigmaticus*, with which *R. harrisi* may associate, possibly on trophic levels.

MOLLUSCA

Crepidula fornicata

Slipper limpet
It competes with other filter-feeding invertebrates for food and space, and in waters of high concentrations of suspended material it encourages deposition of mud owing to the accumulation of faeces and pseudofaeces (Barnes, Coughlan & Holmes 1973).
It is considered a pest on commercial oyster beds,

competing for space and food, while depositing mud on them (Utting & Spencer 1992) and the mud rendering the substratum unsuitable for the settlement of spat (Barnes, Coughlan & Holmes 1973). In parts of Essex slipper limpets were said to far exceed oysters in abundance (Walne 1956).

Dipping infested culch and oysters in saturated solutions of brine for a short period (Hancock 1969; Franklin 1974) is the cheapest, safest and most effective method of control. For clearance of large beds, dredging and disposal above high water mark has been applied (Hancock 1969). It has been suggested that the shells may be used as oyster culch for spatfalls in the Solent (Barnes, Coughlan & Holmes 1973).

It is thought to have been introduced to France with oysters from England. It has attained dense concentrations of up to 1750 m⁻² and in some areas has been the dominant member of the macrofauna (Seaward 1987).

Photographer: Steve Trewhella

Urosalpinx cinerea

American oyster drill, American tingle, American whelk tingle

It predated native oysters; each individual consumes about 40 oyster spat (5-20 mm diameter) per year (Hancock 1954).

It devastates commercial oyster beds through predation. 'Tile traps' have been used during the summer to control this species (MAFF pers. comm.). On the Essex oyster beds at least, bounty was paid for bucket loads of *U. cinerea* (P. French pers. comm.).

None known.

None.

Potamopyrgus antipodarum

Jenkin's spire shell

Unknown other than it eats water cress but that is not a concern as this snail is so small.

In the early 1900s it was reported to be choking up London's fresh water supply (Castell 1962), however, the use of filters overcame this problem.

None used.

None known.

This species is known from southern Australia and Tasmania. Ponder (1988) gives evidence to support the hypothesis that it is an introduction there from New Zealand, by European man or birds (the genus has diversified in New

Zealand, but there is no evidence of this in Australia).

Earliest known dates for Australian introductions are: Hobart area, Tasmania - 1872; Melbourne area, Victoria - 1895; Adelaide area, South Australia - 1926; Sydney area, New South Wales - 1963. It was noted in 1889 that it was found in Tasmania "in the River Tamar and other places within the influence of salt water". In the Sydney area *Potamopyrgus* has bred in freshwater tanks and reservoirs and has even been distributed through water pipes to emerge from domestic taps. In South Australia it has blocked water pipes and meters. It was probably first introduced to Tasmania by way of drinking water supplies on ships and probably entered Europe at about the same time in the same way. The spread of *Potamopyrgus* further north into New South Wales may possibly be limited by high water temperatures, as it has been shown that New Zealand and European populations cannot tolerate a water temperature of more than about 28°C.

Crassostrea gigas

Pacific oyster, Portuguese oyster

No effects are recognised in Europe. In North America it has been known to settle in dense aggregations, excluding other intertidal species.

This species is cultivated widely as it is eaten.

None used.

Its presence benefits commercial oyster farming interests. *Crassostrea gigas* and *Crassostrea angulata* are thought to be the same species and have been treated as such here (see e.g. Smith, Heppell & Picton in prep.). The only remaining population referred to as 'angulata' in Britain is a brood stock kept by MAFF in the Menai Strait. Populations of adult Pacific oysters may persist for years. *Crassostrea gigas* from a disused oyster farm at Tighavullin, Scotland, were observed in 1993, nine years after the farm was shut down, though no young were observed (Smith 1994).

Tiostrea lutaria

New Zealand flat oyster

Unknown.

It is a commercially important edible species.

None used.

It is of potential commercial importance but is susceptible to the disease of flat oysters caused by *Bonamia* sp. so it is not viable to cultivate them commercially in the UK (S.D. Utting pers. comm.).

Tiostrea lutaria is thought to be conspecific with the Chilean oyster *Tiostrea chilensis* with the latter name possibly taking priority (Buroker et al. 1983).

Ensis americanus

American jack knife clam

Unknown.

Unknown.

None used.

It is fished in some parts of continental Europe.

In some places, e.g. Southend on Sea, Essex, in 1995 it was reported to be one of the commonest living bivalves on the shore (J. Light & I. Killeen pers. comm.).

Mercenaria mercenaria

American hard-shelled clam, little-neck clam, quahog, cherry stone clam.

It filled the niche left by the cold weather die-off of the soft-shelled clam *Mya* and thus prevented their re-establishment of *Mya*. Digging and dredging for this clam has a significant effect on the environment, particularly eel grass *Zostera* beds (Cox 1991; Anon. 1992). The populations of *Mercenaria* in the Solent are now very low (MAFF pers. comm.).

No commercial interest is known to have been adversely affected by the arrival of this species. Instead it has supported a thriving fishery from the 1960s to the present. Latterly the fishery has been severely depleted, primarily due to poor spatfall (MAFF pers. comm.), but possibly due also to the large numbers taken and physical damage to the environment.

The species is not controlled although the population has been severely depleted by the fishery.

See above.

The history of *Mercenaria mercenaria* in England has shown that deliberate introductions can work commercially.

Petricola pholadiformis

False angel wing, American piddock

In Belgium and The Netherlands it has almost completely replaced the native species *Barnea candida* (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea; 1972). In Britain, however, there is no documentary evidence for its having displaced native piddocks (J. Light & I. Killeen pers. comm.).

Unknown.

None used.

None known.

Petricola is remarkably similar to *Barnea candida* (an indigenous British species).

Mya arenaria

Soft-shelled clam, soft clam, long-necked clam.

Unknown.

Unknown.

None used.

In the USA this species is considered a delicacy and is used for "clam-bakes" at the beach. However, in Britain its use as a food is uncommon.

Fossils of *M. arenaria* dating from up to the end of the Pleiocene Epoch which ended 1.6 million years ago show it was previously native to Europe. It is thought to have become extinct during the Pleistocene Epoch, when Europe passed through a series of ice ages (Foster 1946). It was introduced either by the Vikings or during the 16th or 17th century and has become reestablished.

Chordata Styela clava

Leathery sea squirt

Serious competition for food between individuals and with other species can result if the population becomes big enough.

It is a fouling pest on ships' hulls and oyster beds.

Biological control through the deliberate introduction of *Carcinus maenas* into cages surrounding the sea squirt has proved to be an unsuccessful control agent. Various combinations of salinity, temperature and exposure to air have proved successful in killing *Styela clava* without causing the host oysters any mortality.

None are known, though it harbours many epibionts so may aid localised increases in biodiversity.

In Lancashire this species was first found in a man-made pool at Morecambe from where it spread to other high-level pools, under boulders and stones and down the shore (Coughlan 1985).

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Bright Sparks is a funding initiative for arts and design led research and development projects which explore the physical and social aspects of public open space in both urban and rural contexts. The Bright Sparks scheme encourages and supports participants and projects which take considered risks within their research objectives, transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, consider contemporary cultural trends, and explore new or experimental materials in new situations. Bright Sparks project outcomes are attracting creative and funding partners and influencing public space design and use.

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Idea for lidos to be 'aquariums'

A Devon landscape artist has called for little used outdoor swimming pools to be turned into giant aquariums to help protect native British sea life.

Alex Murdin said there was a threat from invasive foreign species like the American signal crayfish and Chinese mitten crab.

He claimed there were seven lidos in Devon which are unused for most of the year and would be suitable.

The government said it was not looking to adopt his idea.

'Visitor attractions'

Mr Murdin, who wrote his proposal in consultation with the National Marine Aquarium and is based at University College Falmouth, said: "We urgently need to raise awareness of bio-security in this country as native species are being wiped out.

"Lidos are perfect ready made places to create centres to regulate invasive species spread by showing the public the problem, encouraging them to report bio-security incidents."

Mr Murdin wants invasive species to be show-cased alongside native ones to educate the public about the threat.

"These facilities could be self funding as visitor attractions if they allowed people to come there to fish, dive or swim next to the wildlife," he added.

Tinside Lido

However, the owners of some pools still need some convincing. Plymouth City Council owns the city's Tinside Lido.

A council spokeswoman said the lido, a grade II-listed building, underwent a £3.5m refurbishment in 2003 and was used by swimmers during the summer months.

"We don't see how it would work," she said.

A spokesman for DEFRA said non-invasive plants and animals cost the UK economy £2bn a year.

He said: "We're looking to control the spread of non-native species and launched a strategy in 2008, but we are not looking to turn lidos into reserves."

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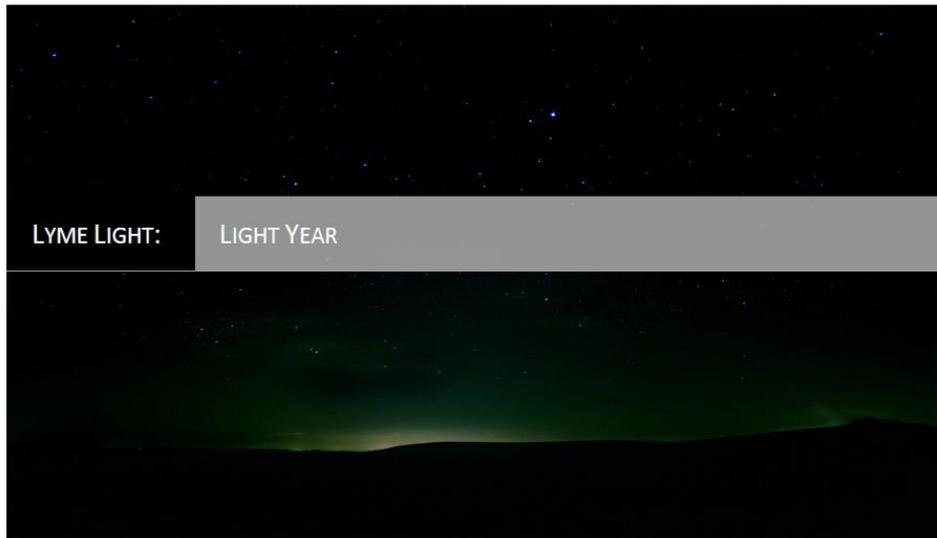
Figure 77. Immersion: BBC coverage (2009)

APPENDIX 8 – LYME LIGHT: LIGHT YEAR

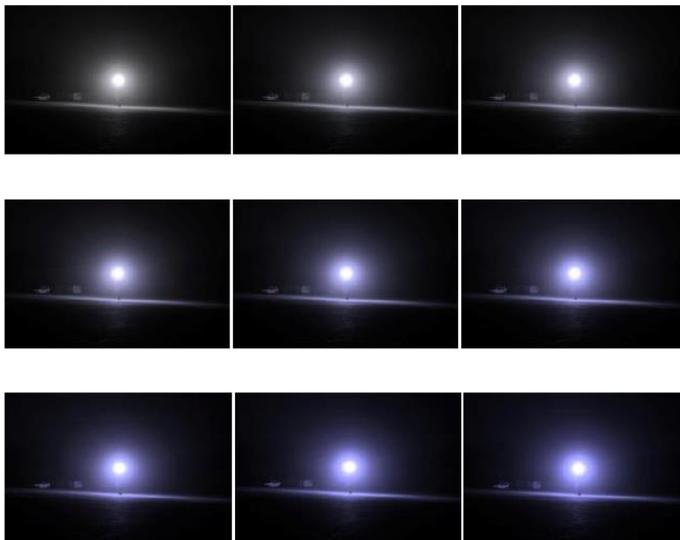
2008-

Proposal for Turn Lyme Green Residency (Pride of Place) in Lyme Regis for Pride of Place residency scheme.

Commissioned Dorset County Council (Dorset Strategic Partnership).



Turn Lyme Green | Lyme Regis Town Council | Dorset Design and Heritage Forum | Alex Murdin



A boy's birth in Lyme Regis

Concept

Light Year is a street light which bursts into colour in response to births, deaths and marriages in the parish of Lyme Regis. In a town where time is usually measured in millions of years and eons this lamp pulses to the shorter span of human time, a light which writes the anniversary of three key events in an individual's life into a part of public infrastructure.

Light Year is an intervention in the existing lighting of a seaside town, Lyme Regis- a contemplation on public energy consumption. It is a response to questions such as:

- should local communities have more control of public lighting, an important, but often forgotten, part of public space
- can we afford to "double up" on lighting when we use decorative lights to make places more attractive for leisure if we are on the verge of an energy crisis

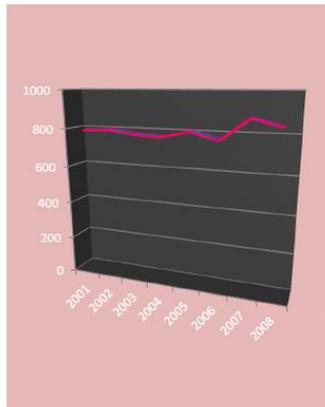
Using up to date but relatively inexpensive computer controlled LED technology a new head will be installed on a recycled street lamp column. *Light Year* will appear to just another part of the existing amenity lighting until the typical yellowish light bursts into life, pink for a girl, or blue for a boy, purple for a wedding. More sombrely it will flicker off as it observes a minute's darkness to mark a death. Events will be overlaid over the lifespan of the project and create new patterns of life in light over time. Simple, beautiful and elegant *Light Year* will become the pulse of the town's population.

Background

Lyme Light was initiated by the environmental group Turn Lyme Green to create an artwork for Lyme Regis that creatively raises awareness of key environmental concerns – sustainable energy use and our impact on the natural environment.

The project is a collaboration between Lyme Regis Town Council, West Dorset District Council and Dorset County Council's Culture Department and Registry Office. It follows research by artist Alex Murdin as part of the Pride of Place awards funded by the Dorset Design and Heritage Forum and aims to make an innovative, low cost, socially engaged art work that also provides environmentally friendly public lighting in a seaside town.

Lyme Light aims to pilot a new type of permanent amenity lighting that can provide a platform for changing and evolving light art in a public space, for potential use by schools, artists and the local community. Using the latest LED technology the project will make street lighting that has low energy use and is adaptive over time.



District birth rate



A girl's birth in Lyme

Location

Light Year will be at Marine Parade, on top of the recently refurbished Shelters area above the amusement arcade and at the bottom of Langmoor Gardens (grid reference SY 338 918) in Lyme Regis, Dorset. The light is also located in an area which has been designed for use as a performance area - a mini amphitheatre which has not been much used - the light will enhance it's use for this purpose.



Light circled (seagull optional)



Light (front left) and view of the Cobb.

Technical

There will be a single computer controlled LED RGB "street light" on a recycled pole in a prominent site on Lyme Regis' seafront, not far from the Cobb. It will celebrate important events for the population of Lyme Regis by glowing pink for the birth of a girl, blue for the birth of a boy, purple for a wedding and off for a death. It will use data from the Registry Office in Dorchester updated every 6 months. There may also be other events throughout the year which could be marked with different colours. By default the light will match others around. It will avoid mimicking the harbour lights which are used by vessels for navigation. Light pollution, also known as photo-pollution or luminous pollution, is excessive or obtrusive artificial light: the unit will not be light polluting and work with the guidance provided by the Institute of Lighting Engineers guidance on the subject <http://www.britastro.org/dark-skies/pdfs/ile.pdf>. By animating this public space and making it feel inhabited at night there is the potential for the project to contribute to the general public benefits of lighting, reducing night time personal injury/accidents and reducing street crime/the fear of street crime.



Gamma Basique Head by Thorn

The supplier will be Drew and Co, an experienced mechanical and electrical engineering company who have recently delivered a similar lighting scheme at Rock Walk in Torquay. The supplied system will use a programmer which enables the pre-loading of planned lighting scenes mapped over a real time clock. An RGB LED light source would be incorporated into the column top which can provide a full range of colours across the spectrum. Different colours could be married to an event type and the programmer could display the required colour on any given day and for any period of time. Colours can be held over an extended time period to mark day long, week long, or month long events. The programmable controller and light fitting control gear would be housed in the column base for ease of maintenance and programming. The programmer, initially the artist Alex Murdin, will be trained in its use and use a lap top to connect on site. The column top utilises a high output very low energy LED light source with running costs of approximately £ 14 per annum. LED's units in general last up to 14 years before needing replacing.

Data collection and marketing

Data for events (births, deaths and marriages) will be collected through a Light Year website and with the cooperation of the Registry Office in Dorchester. Due to legalities it is not possible to register people without their consent so people registering events at the registry office will be handed a postcard inviting them to register voluntarily on a website. Likewise the opportunity to register on the website will be advertised around Lyme Regis.

The data gathered will be uploaded to the light every 6 months; the light will therefore mark the anniversary of the event in question. These events will be overlaid over the lifespan of the project and create new patterns. The artist, Alex Murdin, will take responsibility for programming the light in the first 2 years and then handover to local people who will be trained to use the system and update registry events and programme the light in the future.

Budget

EXPENDITURE	Cost	Notes
Capital		
Lighting Column Conversion to Programmable LED .	£2,755	Inclusive of hardware, software, supply, installation, testing, commissioning and certification, training
Signage for lighting column	£200	
Marketing/data gathering		
Website design	£200	
Domain name & hosting (2 years)	£100	
Registry office postcards (1000)	£150	
Programming/Maintenance		
Artists fees - Data compilation and programming of light	£1,000	2 days per annum @ £250 per day over 2 years
Technical maintenance - LRTC first 2 years	£200	
Contingency	£395	
Total	£5,000	
INCOME		
WDDC	£500	
DCC	£500	
LRTC	£200	
ACE Grants for the Arts	£3,800	
Total	£5,000	

NB All figures are ex VAT

Figure 78. Lyme Light: Light Year - 7 page project proposal for Turn Lyme Green (2008), Alex Murdin.

APPENDIX 9 – SUN STAGES

2010

Proposal for picnic site at Wollabank, Lincolnshire,

Collaboration with Childs Sulzmann Architects and Mike Cox

Commissioned to development stage for the *Structures on the Edge* competition by Arts NK and Lincolnshire Council



sun stages

brief (bogof)

wollabank

enticing contemporary, durable outdoor environment
 attract a 21st Century picnicker
 sympathetic with a natural coastal environment

sea theatre

contemplative space - nature is 'the show'
 occasional outdoor performance
 raised space for inland and coastal views, a look out



site

issues

ecological sensitivities
picnic area has no view of sea or countryside
no facilities

constraints

structures in water = high cost, high maintenance
sand difficult for large structures
remote location



inspiration



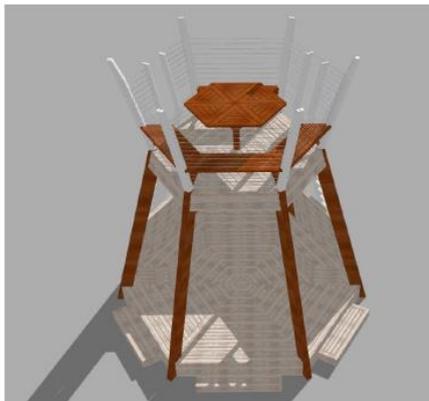
making the municipal mythical

The Sun Stages of Wollabank make up a picnic site that celebrates Lincolnshire as a land big skies and sunrises. With its lifeguards sunrise cinema and sunset cabaret it will become a place to relax, eat alfresco and but at the same time engage with the unique environment, both land and marine.



sunset cabaret

The first stage of the project is a sunset cabaret, centred around the picnic theatre. Sheltering between the legs of a picnic table with ideas above its station, visitors can take a break from their seaside walk and break out the sandwiches. For the more adventurous the top table provides a great place to look over the dunes to the sea, or out across the wildlife reserve to the distant Wolds. Armed with a pair of binoculars and a camouflaged picnic umbrella this also makes a great place to watch the local birds.





sunrise cinema

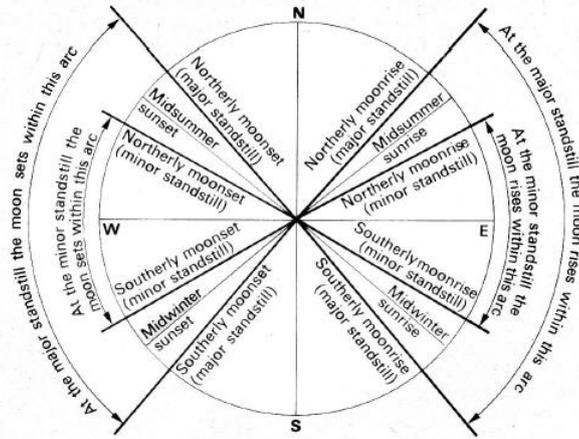
In contrast early risers can take advantage of the lifeguards sunrise cinema. Based on the dimensions of cinema seats and complete with cupholder / popcorn tray these comfortable perches are for admiring the sunrise. Alternatively just chill, watch the ships go past or admire the terns wheeling over head. Their commanding view also serves a very important functional purpose, enabling mum and dad to keep an eye on the kids playing in the surf (as well as the ones hiding in the dunes) or for anglers to cast a weather eye on the size of the swell before venturing down the beach.

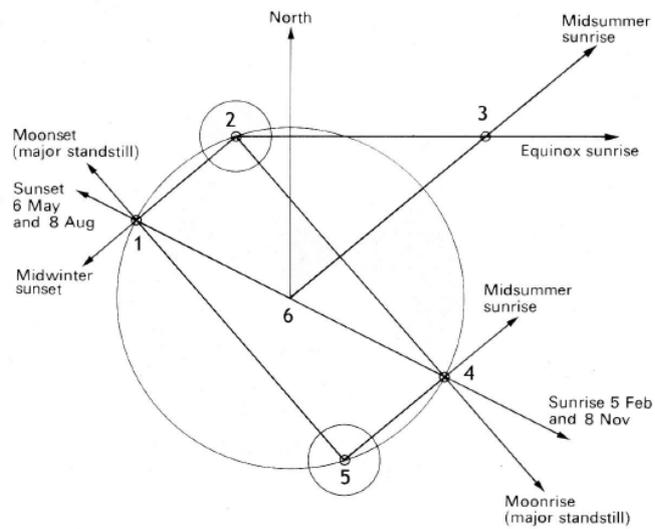


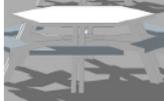


sun spotting

The sun stages celebrates the sun and land by connecting the two in the same way as henges did. Alignments of picnic table, the theatre and lifeguards chairs will join together to form a solar / lunar observatory.





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sustaining

As an al fresco dining area we'd also like to see the Sun Stages at Wollabank as a place for education, perhaps using the theatre as an outdoor class room or encouraging people to forage responsibly and enjoy the natural, seasonal foods on offer such as shrimps, razor clams, sea beet or sea buckthorn berries. This could be done through interpretation on site or remotely through the web.



material considerations

Made from sustainably sourced hardwoods such as oak, with stainless steel fittings, these structures will blend into the natural landscape and weather gracefully. Resistant to localised flooding, general salt spray and deliberate damage they don't require heavy foundations and respect the ecological sensitivity of the site, whilst enabling people to enjoy this as a place to socialise and have fun.



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childs+sulzmannarchitects

www.ruralrecreation.org.uk
www.candsp.co.uk

Figure 79. Sun Stages: 14 page project proposal for Arts NK (2010), Alex Murdin and Childs Sulzmann.

APPENDIX 10 – LINES OF FLIGHT

2012

Turn Lyme Green residency project

Temporary installation of mirror ball bird boxes.

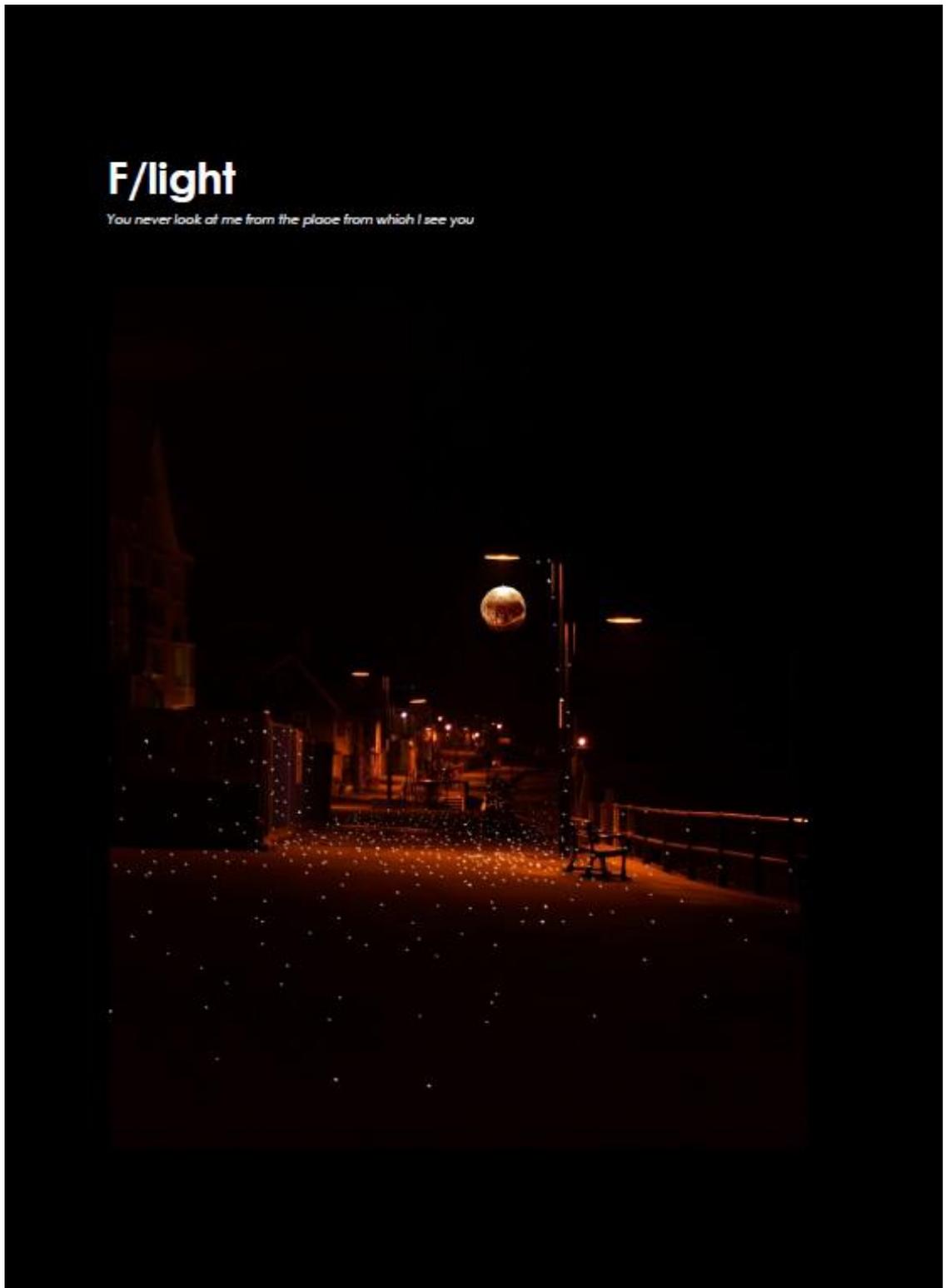


Figure 80. Lines of Flight: project flyer (2010), Alex Murdin.



Figure 81. Lines of Flight: temporary installation (2010), Alex Murdin.

APPENDIX 11 – TATS FOR BATS

2012

Bat box laser etched with tattoo designs in the international Maori style, copied from residents own tattoos.



Figure 82. Tats for Bats: laser etched bat-box 55cm x 25cm x 25cm (2012), Alex Murdin.



Figure 83. Tats for Bats: installation view (2012), Alex Murdin.



Figure 84. Tats for Bats: tattoo in international Maori style as basis of design (2012).

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Access: the means or opportunity to approach or enter a place. Used in the context of this thesis this word can encompass physical access to a site as well as a political right to occupy a common territory or space, e.g. disability access politics or the “right to roam” in the Countryside Rights of Way Act in the UK.

Aesthetic regime: Jacques Rancière’s term for a period of art and culture where meanings are no longer fixed in a well understood schema (this being the “representative regime” pre the Modern period).

Aesthetics: the sensual qualities of perception (taste, touch, sight, hearing, smell) e.g. a “visual or auditory appearance which is pleasing or displeasing for its own sake” (Parsons, 2008: p. 17) and hence the philosophical study of related constructs such as “beauty” and “art”.

Agonism: Chantal Mouffe puts this as “consensus on principles but disagreement about their interpretation”.

Biopolitics: Michel Foucault’s proposition that power relations are founded on the recognition that humans are another biological species and therefore can be managed by environmental and medical effect.

Cognitive dissonance: a term from psychosocial disciplines describing the awareness of the difference between how one believes one should act and behave and the reality of one’s behaviour and action.

Complementarity: Literally the way in which different objects, ideas or people emphasise or enhance each other when together, the whole being more than the sum of the parts. Hence philosophically: “...complementarity conceived as the impossibility of the complete description of a particular phenomenon — is, on the contrary, *the very place of the inscription of universality into the Particular*”, as we can never “...speak from a neutral universal place of pure metal language exempt from any specific context” (Žižek, 1996: p. 214). The paradox that the universal inevitably appears within a particular subject - it is always present even in its absence.

Consensus: the process of reaching majority decisions.

Contingency: a sense of an individual’s life or being as being out of control, dependent on external factors such as nature, the state, other people or societies.

Dialogical aesthetics: Grant Kester’s schema of sensory effect created by conversations between people on an equal basis (in contradistinction to Relational antagonism).

Dissensus: As defined by Jacques Rancière - political opinion voiced by those outside of the consensual system. More specifically in relation to aesthetics, the act of making sensible (apparent) the “part of no part” – those outside of the consensual system.

Environmentalism: A political and cultural movement, starting in the 1960’s and 70’s concerned with preventing the destruction of the natural environment and living more sustainably.

Epistemological: of the philosophical study of knowledge.

Fluidarity: political or cultural movement of disparate positions able to work under an umbrella, a coalition or “unified disunity” (it is a combination of the words fluidity and solidarity).

Future-natural: The state which would develop if man’s influence were completely and permanently removed from nature.

Impossible gaze: a Lacanian psychological concept - the fantasy of being able to see oneself from the outside.

Instrumentalisation: the use or direction of people or objects to serve the purposes of another entity, person, group, institution, etc.

Intersubjective communicative action: used by Jürgen Habermas to describe the free speech between individuals which is a prerequisite of democratic politics and action and guaranteed by bourgeois institutions, for example the courts of justice or the press.

Isothymia: the desire to be recognised by others.

Megalothymia: the desire to be recognised as superior to others.

Moral relativism: a respect for people’s beliefs and opinions as equally valid.

Ontological: of the philosophical study of being.

Parallax: the displacement of subject and object (context) according to the movement of the viewer, hence the way in which an object appears to change although it does not move – a key philosophical tool of Slavoj Žižek.

Place-making: used by people involved in planning, urban design, art and other fields which describes an approach that reinforces, protects or introduces locally distinctive characteristics into building, landscaping and infrastructure projects.

Political aesthetics: the sensory effects used by those involved in politics which range from direct propaganda to cultural policy, urban planning and architecture.

Politics of aesthetics: essentially the power relationships played out through art, by artists and within the art world.

Post-historical: the situation which exists after the end of the “modern” era of perceived strong philosophical, economic, social and cultural narratives (before the second world war and after the Enlightenment establishment of rationalism), characterised by a diversity of ways of living and a global fluidity of culture, knowledge and belief. Related to “post-modernism” used of culture.

Public commons: Spatial, biological and other assets shared equally amongst people. Traditionally land shared amongst farmers or smallholders for grazing or firewood. This term can be also applied to shared public urban and rural space e.g. recreational areas as well as the commons of infrastructure such as communication networks, transport conduits and energy supplies. It also encompasses global biological commons, e.g. oxygen, natural pharmacological compounds and the genetic heritage of both humans and the living world generally.

Radical ruralism: Coined by Rupert White - to “question, critique or resist the processes by which Western societies become urbanised, and culture becomes globalised”.

Relational aesthetics: Term suggested by Nicholas Bourriaud for the sensory effect created by the relationships between people, in contrast for example to art created by the relationships between people and objects (film, paintings, sculpture, etc.).

Relational antagonism: Term suggested by Claire Bishop - the idea that artists use a projected internal conflict as an essential part of their social practice (in contradistinction to Dialogical aesthetics).

Risk society: Ulrich Beck uses this phrase to describe the way in which humanity, its science and technology, generates and responds to transnational risks, particularly environmental ones such as pollution, nuclear meltdowns, global warming etc.

Rural: The Oxford English Dictionary defines rural as “in, relating to, or characteristic of the countryside rather than the town”. There is difficulty in precisely defining this territory, as the urban - the rural, cities, towns and countryside, intermingle on ill-defined geographical, social, and political boundaries, producing the suburban and the subrural.

Sustainability: literally “able to be maintained”. The term has come to be associated more specifically with maintaining an ecological balance and using natural resources without upsetting the ecological balance of a place.

Uncanny: strange or mysterious in an unsettling way, things which are familiar but different at the same time. This term is particularly used in Freudian psychoanalysis.

Undecidability: something which is unable to be completely defined and remains ambiguous, for example artworks which provoke many different interpretations.

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