

**DREAM Conference: Informal Learning and digital media:** constructions contexts and consequences

topic: **digital divides or new citizenships**  
( paper presentation with image slides)

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**Global Town Square** (2000- Present) *how new technologies can involve communities in the regeneration process in a manner that is inclusive and transferable.*

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## **Introduction**

Global Town Square is in effect a ‘social sculpture’. Participants across a broad age range and spectrum of social and cultural backgrounds are involved in visioning ‘Futures’ for themselves and their communities through a workshop process, using traditional, lens-based and digital media. These ‘Futures’ become part of the virtual Town Square – a website with a Forum for discussion, linked with other participating communities – and in the Physical Town Square they are projected on an interactive 8m ‘mega-screen’ and linked to a range of other convergent systems. Elements of the physical environment become interactive, operating like a keyboard or mouse to: access information, discover different displays of futures, use simple voting systems, or just have fun. Importantly, the project works in partnership with regeneration authorities, so visions can become reality.

As part of the process, workshop facilitators are given an induction into workshop practices, child and vulnerable persons protection, and special needs issues. Through partnerships with education and training providers, participants are offered ‘pathways to learning and employment’, thus developing their personal futures while contributing to their communities’ futures. This combination of art and new technologies involves people in the regeneration of their towns and neighbourhoods in a new way with the aim of creating a model that is sustainable and transferable to

other towns and communities. As each new site is developed, they are linked via the Forum on the website, opening the possibility for sharing ideas and issues.

The model aims to provide an innovative bottom up approach to regeneration that is culture led and inclusive, offering new departures in citizenship and community stake-holding. It engages cultural industries in the domain of the civic, and seeks to create a focus of debate for academics, community and youth organisations, regeneration and government authorities, and artists and designers of the Built Environment to interrogate, challenge and apply, to improve upon current practices in the field.

Many of the building blocks of the model are already in place, developed through existing projects; what the current research phase will provide is the means to pull all these elements together into a coherent transferable model that can fulfil its potential and disseminate its benefits and challenges more widely.

### **Background: Out of Resistance – London Docklands**

Global Town Square has been an idea in development for many years. It did not derive from purely theoretical construct, though it has a basis in debates about regeneration and citizenship. It has evolved from a practice that has engaged with regeneration issues since the late seventies, exploring the social impacts of New Town developments (Ruislip and Peterlee): *The Present Day Creates History*. 1977/8, through the protest movements in London's Docklands, *Docklands Community Poster Project*, 1979-89, to my artworks in the public domain through *The Art of Change* ('89- 2000). Of those early roots, the most notable involved a ten-year campaign against the regeneration programme instigated by the Thatcher government in London Docklands. From the beginning (1980) the site of the new Docklands Development was portrayed by the Government and the Developers as a "wasteland" in every sense of the word - a waste of land, of resources, of opportunity close to the heart of 'The City'. Designed to coincide with the deregulation of the stock market, the "Big Bang", it was seen as an eastward extension of London's financial centre. The first Chief executive, Reg Ward, used grand metaphors like, "Docklands is a blank canvas upon which we can paint our vision of the future". In reality over 50,000 people lived in Docklands at this time - mainly working class communities, rendered invisible by the public relations "brilliance" of this campaign - communities who had been made

redundant when the Docks closed and apparently seen as 'unsuitable' for inclusion in this regeneration. During the House of Lords enquiry into the Parliamentary Vesting Act that took powers away from democratically elected (Labour) boroughs and placed them into the hands of the non-elected London Docklands Development Corporation, these communities were described by a government spokesman as "an undesirable social mix". I do not wish to dwell on this period here, suffice it to say that the people of this area of East London (where I am based and where most of my work takes place) have a history of being devalued and disregarded. However they also have a history of fighting back. Against huge odds, these communities battled for almost ten years against government and developers and during that time won some important local victories. We, as the Docklands Community Poster Project working with those communities, were part of that resistance. We never expected to win, but neither were we prepared to let the developers have it all their own way.

### **From Resistance Identity to Project Identity**

*"In a world of uncontrolled, confusing change, people tend to regroup around primary identities: religious, ethnic, territorial, national. In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes a fundamental source of social meaning. Identity is becoming the main, and sometimes only, source of meaning in a historical period characterised by widespread de-structuring of organisations, delimitation of institutions, fading away of major social movements, and ephemeral cultural expressions. Meanwhile... global networks of instrumental exchanges selectively switch on and off individuals, groups, religions, and even countries, according to their relevance in fulfilling the goals processed in the network, in a relentless flow of strategic decisions.*

Manuel Castells, *"The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume I, The Rise of the Network Society, P3, Blackwell 1996.*

The battle for London's Docklands was the Thatcherite opening salvo in transforming the UK into a Globalisation-ready economy, in Tandem with the Reaganism in the US. This 'revolution' was of course made possible by Digital Technologies. Perhaps it

was no accident that the hub of the old imperial infrastructure, the Docks, became the launch pad for the 'sunrise' industries' attempts to establish a new hub on the *Digital Highways* in the critical time zone between New York and Tokyo. As the quote above by Castells clearly states, Globalisation has had an almost instant impact on the whole question of identity. This is not the result of theoretical or existential conjecture, it has impacted on the ground in terms of people's jobs, their wages and conditions of employment – our young people will not be defined or identify with their job (for life) or role as in the old industrial economies. In East London, the temptation to return to so-called 'primary identities' has been strong with the stirring up of racism during the redevelopment and subsequently with Muslim-phobia following the London bombings.

While I do not endorse everything Castells says about the impacts of digital technologies, I believe he makes some salient points on the issue of identities. The crucial issue is how these identities are constructed, by whom and for what purpose.

Castells distinguishes 3 main areas of collective identity building:

- 1. Legitimising identity** - by dominant institutions or power bases to extend and rationalise their domain vis a vis social actors (e.g. Nationalism)
- 2. Resistance Identity** - grounded in opposition to the rationalisations of domination - in positions/conditions that are perceived as marginal, devalued or stigmatised by the dominant legitimising means. Identity built on principles defined as a polarisation from, but in relation to, the dominant forms of legitimisation- in crude terms, its mirror image.
- 3. Project identity** - often grows out of resistance identity, building a new identity that redefines a position (e.g. 'I'm black and I'm proud', 'glad to be gay') and by doing so, seeks to transform the whole structure of an institution or society.

In relation to my own practice, firstly in the Docklands Poster Project back in the 80s - as part of a campaign - I was primarily involved in Resistance Identity, though at times beginning to move towards Project Identity by working with those communities in their desire to construct alternatives. As The Art of Change however, the emphasis shifted from Resistance Identity towards Project Identity, and to try where possible to create new models. A key transitional work in this process was the *Wymering Public Art Project*. Furthermore a series of cover-related artworks using the figure of A reader

21 – which came out of the Rio Earth Summit - in order to create an environment that projects the history, identity, desires and aspirations of the people of Wymering. This project has been described in detail elsewhere (see index), suffice it to say that the model of involvement developed in working with a community, *using exploration of identity as the driving force* to create a physical and cultural space for themselves led to developing a new approach, exploring the use of public space within the context of a network society – the ‘Global Town Square’.

### **Futuretown And Beyond - FAB**

The specific form of Global Town Square began to take shape in Gravesend, Kent, with the *Futuretown And Beyond* (FAB) project that I initiated in 2000, and two years later with the development of a sister project *Poplar Futures* in Poplar, East London.

In thinking about how identities, space and citizenship converge, I could not ignore the historic origins of this relationship. A Town Square is a social, cultural, political and economic place: it is about identity and identifying. Its historic model (in the west) is the ancient Roman Forum, synonymous with the ‘Civitas’ (body of citizens), from which our ‘Civic’ derives. The original term implied participation and involvement in a dynamic, interactive way (albeit exclusively for patricians). Since the last century 'civic' is conflated with 'municipal', implying (at best) well-meaning paternalism.

The ‘Global Town Square’ initiative began therefore by taking that metaphor of the ancient Roman Forum into the 21st Century, to create a more inclusive place of debate and interaction - a crucible of ‘Citizenship’. It seeks to combine material and virtual design, utilise convergent technologies and the potential of global links to extend the physical space into the virtual, to expand its use and aesthetic potential. Local identities become the key to locating this space within the global *space of flows*, and as the basis for users to feel ‘at home’ using it. GTS seeks to move Community-networking, Stake-holding and *Planning for Real*’ into a new phase. It does this by mobilising existing cultural and community networks and, through new configurations in decision-making processes to create a dynamic in which people can be involved and see the tangible results of their involvement. This requires the development of a social process, software and hardware prototypes, for the creation of

a model that is transferable and may be used in customised form in any town, city or rural community.

The development of this initiative in Gravesend involved a co-ordinated programme of work that built on the success of the existing *Futuretown* initiative in the town and drew upon the government's (then new) proposals about the introduction of 'citizenship' into the school curriculum. While the government's proposals were not implemented as planned, we were at least able to use their formal commitment to citizenship as a lever into the curriculum. Our aim was to create a holistic approach involving a significant arts/creativity focus delivered through Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and, crucially, extend participation to a broader age range and a wider spread of communities. In short, 'Futuretown' was expanded to encompass a 'life-long learning' dimension, was linked to the educational *Widening Participation* schemes and created 'pathways to learning'. We aim to involve participating groups in research and prototype development, glimpsing possible futures for themselves and creating a vision for the development of public spaces, physical and virtual, for their town.

### **Digital Divides (UK perspective)**

As part of our research into how we might implement such an approach it was necessary to appraise the impact of digital technologies in public spaces, on the ground. From the last decade of the twentieth century, public spaces have been increasingly 'invaded' by new technology. Most of this has developed piecemeal in the UK, driven by developments in public display systems. These tend to be additive to, or replacement of, existing systems: continuous information flow for transport terminals and commercial advertising are the most common examples. They proliferate as public space 'accessories' justified by functional or commercial expediency. By their very nature such systems are designed to be competitive, to 'outshine' other visual elements within the spaces they occupy. This is creating an insidious form of visual pollution in our public spaces: LED poisoning.

Much of this technology is still in its infancy and often regarded as too 'fragile' for outdoor use. Consequently when it is used in public contexts it is not designed *into* the space but simply placed into the space as an 'off the shelf' piece of technology, often clad in ugly steel armouring as a functional security measure. This problem does

not reside in the technology itself but in its application. New forms of public communication, interactivity, and exciting new aesthetic possibilities could be combined with imagination and flair. The technology can be designed into spaces as part of either refurbishment or new build. A range of technologies can be incorporated, from simple pressure pads or infrared beams built into walls, floors, decorative elements, to more sophisticated activation devices using peripherals. Convergence of technologies such as mobile phones, personal audio systems, palm top computing, with home entertainment and commercial systems, means that these technologies will become increasingly interchangeable and capable of transmutation into many forms. Screens and display systems are also becoming more flexible and variable in scale, shape etc., through developing plasma, LED and laser technology. We are reaching a point where 'the screen' as the usual glass rectangle will just be one of many forms that image display and transmission will take.

Interactive systems in public spaces have the potential to redefine The Civic; to enhance citizenship, tackle cultural and social exclusion and to engage the arts and publics in new and exciting relationships. Convergent technologies are impacting on the workplace, particularly in the Creative Industries, and the markets in mobile communications devices are racing ahead, mainly aimed at the youth entertainment sector through mobile phone and I-pods (now visual devices). Why then, in our public places, do we see little more than 'smart' notice boards or animated advertising? There appears to be scant evidence of any holistic thinking about how these technologies can be introduced into our environments or how they might impact upon it. Current planning legislation and policies in the UK appear inadequately framed to deal with any potential onslaught (as witnessed in the US and Japan). We have a small window in which to research, create alternative models and initiate policy debates.

We believe that this initiative is timely because all the major companies using electronics have labs researching convergence. Alongside this – and perhaps in response to an increasingly alienated and functionally brutal environment – there is a growing rekindling of interest in the hand-made, craft-based, traditional skills and processes. The fusions created by such apparent contradictory trends have found a sympathetic home in *Sustainability* - once seen as 'alternative' and now rapidly becoming part of the mainstream. We see these trends also emerging in major *Regeneration Strategies* (e.g. Thomas Gateway which is now also key to the 2012

Olympics Regeneration, 'Cultural Olympiad' and 'Legacy Strategy') where the role of Cultural Industries is now being recognised as having key importance, not only in terms of quality of life and environmental improvement but crucially as an economic generator. The concepts of 'life-long learning' and the 'Learning City' are no longer just part of educational parlance but are becoming key elements of regeneration policies and 'citizenship'. There is however a large gap between rhetoric and practice on the ground in all of the above mentioned strategies.

We believe it is important therefore for artists, designers, architects, technologists and planners, and community organisations, to explore the concept of the 'Global Town Square' as both a practical means and the metaphor for the future development of public space across the physical/virtual divide. The 'Global Town Square' can provide public place for, and a democratic space within, the development of new technologies. And this within a context of sustainable development, using renewable energy systems.

*"The potential integration of images, text, and sounds in the same system, interacting from multiple points, in chosen time (real or delayed) along a global network, in conditions of open and affordable access, does fundamentally change the character of communication. And communication decisively shapes culture. As Postman (1985:15) writes, "our metaphors create the content of our culture. Because culture is mediated and enacted through communication, cultures themselves - that is our historically produced systems of beliefs and codes - become fundamentally transformed, and will do more so over time, by the new technological system...Its global reach, its integration of all communication media, and its potential interactivity is changing and will change forever our culture.*

Castells, M *ibid*, (1996): p328

## **The Method – a two stage process in two towns**

### **Stage 1: Visions, Networks, Partnerships.**

The first step in the process (initiated in Gravesend in 2000) was to set up a steering group representing all the main partners, from the Regeneration Authorities of Kent Thameside, through Council Officers across all the relevant departments from Chief Executive to Town Centre Management, Local and Regional Education



Institutions Regional Arts Funding Bodies and English Heritage. This group gave us our initial networking and through their contacts, mailings and newsletters, together with the Council's lists of tenants and community organisations, we publicised the project and invited community participation. During the first month we contacted 27 local schools and made presentations. Later we repeated the process with community groups. We circulated draft-briefing notes for teachers and workshop facilitators, followed by an *Inset Day* where we worked through the workshop processes with them and refined the briefing notes.

The core process resides in the 'visioning' workshops where experienced artists and communicators work with participants to develop ideas for the future of their area, are encouraged to go beyond initial stereotypes, critique the issues and refine ideas in order to communicate their 'visions'. Workshop participants are asked to identify and explore a 'site' somewhere close and of significance to them – e.g. around their home or a place they see as a central focus for their community, the town centre or market area. They are asked to think what they feel is 'not working for them', or 'missing', and from there to establish options for change. They also undertake a series of 'blue-sky' thinking sessions to see if there is an idea, an aspiration or desire that had not been recognised or expressed so far. Participants are encouraged to start from their own experience, and then develop their idea more broadly by thinking about the impact of the environment on other people (for example, the elderly or differently-abled). They do not have to take cost into account in developing their idea, though in some cases – particularly with more experienced participants - they may be encouraged to think about whether it might be expensive or take a long time to implement. Crucially they are given a role: they work in pairs, one given the role of artist/designer and the other as member of the 'public' and are encouraged to enter into dialogue. Then they swap roles and examine the option again. When each participant has taken on both roles, they discuss what they have learned from the situation, do they have a better understanding of things to think about if they are to start designing something, what else might be left out. Having established their preferred option for change, they then explore the best way of presenting this, to communicate as clearly and precisely as possible:

- What they want to change.
- What it will look like.
- How will it make things better

- How will people behave or benefit as a result.

We ask them to try and break down the proposal into different elements and decide what the best method is to most clearly communicate these to make the scheme understandable to others. They make drawings, models, and diagrams, write texts and take photographs. They are then asked to consider how best combine these into a total 'package' to excite and stimulate people into believing in their 'vision'? Participants are encouraged to present this material to their peers, to see if it is communicating in the way they think. Where possible and appropriate, they then amend their proposals in response to this before presenting the material for inclusion on the Website. They are encouraged to consider design, layout and scale and how the combinations of image and text work by showing examples from websites. Detailed technical specifications for this are provided for the following processes: scanning and word processing, adjusting image contrast and resizing (where necessary). They work in small groups to log on and upload the materials onto the website and with a password and full instructions on using a specially designed 'Content tool'.

Workshops have inputs from local colleges and training agencies so that participants may see opportunities for further learning and training – pathways for their personal futures is developed alongside their contributions to their communities' visions. During the first workshop phase, over 400 participants took part in Gravesend and over 300 in Poplar, and similar numbers have participated in the two successive phases.

We began to explore these 'pathways' more intensively in 2005/6 with smaller 'hard-to-reach' groups from the Bangladeshi and Somali communities in Poplar. This was done through workshops at the *Idea Store* and other localised venues in the network; included 'taster sessions' in collaboration with arts and cultural industries courses; with 'buddying' and peer mentoring with students from partner institutions; workplace placements or exchanges through partner organisations. This stage was funded as a 'Pilot' through the Flexible Discretionary Fund, Department of Works and Pensions UK. We have established commitments of involvement from: Tower Hamlets College, the Curriculum Co-ordinator for the Idea Stores, and the Life-long Learning Co-ordinator for London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The 'Buddying Pilot' is funded through University of Westminster 'Innovations & Widening Participation' programme. Participants, from a range of ages and backgrounds, upload their 'visions' onto a specially designed website in each area – currently in Gravesend and

Poplar. Visible Local Identities become the key to locating these virtual spaces, each group designs its own *Cyberspace Portal*, and the sites are linked via an electronic forum, so that ideas from different areas can be compared and debated. There is also a digital postcard facility that enables participants or visitors to the site to select an image, add a message, and email it. In Gravesend, hard-copy exhibitions were also exhibited in the Town's Information and Regeneration Centre, annually after each phase, and were attended by the Mayor and key department heads who gave certificates to participants.

A range of Regeneration and other partners are involved in sponsoring the project, either financially or through participation. Partners to date have included: ART.e @ the art of change, University of Westminster, Greenwich University Regeneration Dept and Cultural Industries BA, Tower Hamlets College Outreach and Regeneration and Life long learning, English Heritage Education, Electrosonic PLC, Media Projects Associates, British Telecom's Research Unit at Ipswich, Gravesham Borough Council, Kent Thameside, Leaside Regeneration, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (arts, youth, Ideas Stores Co-ordination). We have a participant network that has created over 900 'Visions' in Gravesend, and over 600 in Poplar. East London. As part of 'signing up' to the project, these authorities agree to develop or implement proposals, wherever practical or possible.

We plan to extend the project to other areas of East London where four new *Idea Stores* are opening over the next three years and by extending our Network of Partners. We also aim to develop partnerships with 2012 Olympic Cultural Action Plan via their core themes: 'Community and cultural engagement', 'Building capacity and forming partnerships', 'Securing a desirable legacy' and 'Connecting the Gateway – integrating the cultural component of Thames Gateway regeneration. While we have no illusions about the rhetoric of the London Olympics and what it is likely to deliver, we cannot ignore it and at the very least we will become part of the lobby to keep up the pressure on the government to live up to its rhetoric.

## **Stage 2 Site Transformations:**

This involves identifying a physical 'forum' for Global Town Square where ideas can be displayed and interactive prototypes tested. In Gravesend this is sited at the Cornish Street Transport Interchange – essentially this is where people wait for

buses and is next to the train station, but there are plans to combine the two functions under one roof. Here we have created an interactive outdoor projection system – a 6m screen with a ground-level ‘pod’ activated by thermal (hand heat) system to alter displays and to execute simple voting mechanisms. This is run in collaboration with TOWNCENTRIC (the Tourism, Regeneration Information Centre).

We launched the system with a ‘festival of light and renewal’, running from Diwali in November through all the diverse cultural festivals to the Muslim New Year (Al-hijra) in March - a period that also included: Ramadan (Muslim), the Birthday of Baha'u'llah (Baha'is), Shichi-go-san (Japanese Shinto), Birthday of Guru Nanak (Sikh), Hanukah (Jewish) Bodhi day (Buddhist) through the winter solstice, Advent, Christmas and New year (Christian), Ganjitsu (Japanese new year) through the Chinese New Year (Yuan Tan) and Teng Chieh (lantern Festival) in February. This created over 300 images, some attached to these traditional festivals but many participants just explored the theme in any way they chose. This was followed by an exploration of the site where the projector was installed – community proposals for the Transport Interchange – these were put along side the draft ideas of the architects commissioned to develop the scheme. Later proposals for a Cultural Quarter around the market and old town were explored. Currently the images used are animated ‘stills with text’ but the system has the capacity for full-motion video and this will be explored in future projects, possibly through mini-festivals of ‘digital moving image’.

In Poplar we use the Market Square, working with Leaside Regeneration and the Poplar *Idea Store*. A similar large outdoor projection system has been established there on the side of a tower block, adjacent to the Ideas Store. This becomes interactive in October 07 with a touch screen system on the window of the *Idea Store*, surrounded by a ‘stained-glass’ artwork comprising of ‘Ideas for the Idea Store’. This is essentially a montage of images of people’s representations of what an idea might look like, ranging from explosions of energy and colour through inter-connecting complex patterns to metaphors for growth and change. We have added the possibility of mobile phone activation and with the ability to download certain materials onto mobiles, or upload materials from mobiles onto the projection system – the latter within a defined project context.

While the websites have a ‘Forum’ to aid dialogues across communities, these have previously been under used. We have recently received funding from the charity *Children In Need* to work specifically to develop this area and have worked on a

project designed around using the forum to get dialogues going between participating groups in the two towns. For child-protection reasons this is restricted to registered participants, so outsiders cannot communicate directly with the young people involved. However, we have also created a separate Open Forum for visitors to the site.

These are the first steps in what we see as a more developed Global Town Square in the next Phase, where elements of the physical environment can be activated through a range of convergent systems, pressure-pads, break-beams etc - acting like a keyboard or mouse - to entertain, stimulate, inform and educate through a range of hardware and software prototypes. As well as creating these through the processes discussed above we shall also seek to curate a range of festivals and events foregrounding uses of art and technologies. By demonstrating the potential of this aspect of the model we believe the potential host locations of Global Town Square can be promoted as a place of innovation for creative use and democratic engagement with new forms of 'Architechnology' (combining 'place' design with interactive technology interfaces).

### **Objectives for the next phase**

The project thus far has been shaped in a piecemeal fashion by the necessity to develop it within the constraints of public arts project funding for discrete elements, all of which required specific outcomes and emphasised practical rather than research outcomes. For the project to realise its full potential, sound and systematic research is essential at this point in its evolution to refine and refocus the project holistically.

We will evaluate the lessons, strengths and weakness of our twenty years of practice in the art and regeneration realm, particularly in the two models of 'Global Town Square' developed in Gravesend and Poplar, East London since 2000. Monitoring and Evaluation will be carried out by experienced and respected external monitoring and evaluation experts. The findings will be fed back to partners and be part of the dissemination to a wider audience so that it can be used as a tool for improving practice and developing the field. The evaluation seeks not only to witness and celebrate, but also to challenge and question in order to stimulate and support development; it will report on the process of change and development in order to support the activities and to identify learning outcomes that are transferable.

The report will enable participants to see how they contributed, give funders and those responsible for the project impartial feedback on the processes of design and development. An illustrated publication (paper and electronic) will explain how strategies and working relationships can transfer to other settings. This will be of particular value to artists working in community settings, community groups, council officers, businesses and funders. Methods of evaluation include strategies and techniques that partners can use to generate evidence, reflect on their practice and comment on their experience. Phase 1 of this report, for Futuretown And Beyond, has been completed and sent to all the stakeholders.

The next phase will seek to create a customisable and robust model of how citizens can contribute to and promote potential 'Futures' for their communities and town centres in a manner that is inclusive and sustainable. Through this social, virtual and physical transformation of the 'town square', we aim to contribute to debates and action on social inclusion, community development and urban regeneration, and increase the awareness for the creative potential of new technologies in the public realm.

The main objectives for this phase are to:

- Develop a working prototype offering a diversity of interactive systems, integrated with art and architectural forms in a holistic design setting that is based around the existing large-scale, interactive outdoor projection systems in Gravesend and Poplar, East London
- Curate festivals and events that bring a range of temporary installations and activities into 'town square sites', including for example moving image, mobile phone upload/download, convergent interactive forms incorporating lighting and sound.
- Consolidate the 'Pathways to Learning' for workshop participants via collaborations from partner institutions in the workshops in order to evaluate and more particularly to identify the processes required to make these transferable and customisable in other contexts.
- Extend the current Network of Partners in the next phase by focusing particularly on the academic, research and development fields where we can draw upon more in-depth involvement with the partners we already have and also research new contacts.
- Produce materials in the form of publications and a resource pack that will disseminate the work of the project widely and enable the model to be transferable

The schedule for this could be compressed with additional funding (or a major commission such as the Olympics). We are currently embarked on Year One of this schedule and seeking funding for follow-on phases. The actions outlined below represent a notional order in which certain elements become a major focus, though some of these are happening already and others may be ongoing throughout -indeed the process of testing, feedback and modification, is a cyclical one.

- **Hardware Developments:** will focus on upgrading the current GTS on-site technologies (interactive projection system) in order to support the new 'modules' that we will be testing.

- **Research ICT companies and research institutions** via electronic databases and trade publications – in the field of convergence especially – to establish what appropriate emerging technologies exist and what trajectories their research is taking, to identify possible collaborations and future possibilities.

- **Conduct an international literature review** of the uses of communications technologies in public spaces internationally.

- **Research policies from Local Authority (Planning and Highways departments particularly) and national government sources** to establish what if any impact assessment or strategic thinking there is on the issue of Interactive Technologies in public places in the UK.

- **Fieldwork to determine:** how these technologies are being used in public places ‘on the ground’, what is the policy for their introduction, if there is consistency across regions and who is responsible for decisions (locally, nationally)

- **Assess the process of Visioning Workshops** we have developed with participating organisations as a means of developing 'Futures' proposals effectively through the processes and technologies used.

- **Test the use of our website Forum** as an effective vehicle for communications between participants, both locally and between sites.

- **We will then begin bench-testing new hardware systems.** including site testing the modules developed in previous phases and begin round two of bench testing.

## **In Conclusion**

There are a number of key ethical issues that arise from working with communities, particularly young the vulnerable people, that can be identified as specific to, or at least heightened by, the use of digital technologies.

• ***Protection of Young and Vulnerable People.*** It is a condition of employment that our artists/facilitators undergo Police checks (*Enhanced Disclosure*). We provide training in the Protection of Young and Vulnerable People (PYVP) as part of their recruitment and induction. We always use approved centres or schools where there are trained staff who also have formal procedures regarding disability access, health and PYVP. Our artist/facilitators never work alone with young or vulnerable people, but work with facilitators from these venues. They are trained to identify and report suspected abuse via agreed procedures. Permissions are always obtained from participants before any photographs are taken and their personal details, other than first names, are never attached to any publication of these. All those who complete in the workshop process have the right to have their work published on the website (we do not select on ‘quality’ grounds) and on the interactive projection system in their town. Should any proposal be selected for implementation, the regeneration agencies involved should involve the participant in the process of development. Should any proposal have commercial implications we can offer basic IP advice or can refer them to specialists should this become necessary – though to date this has not arisen but we may need to involve additional expertise if it does arise.

• ***What is the role of young people in the process and who benefits?*** In Global Town Square the role of participants (of all ages) is that of designer/artist in creating schemes that will benefit their community. In the process they are also introduced to ‘pathways to learning, training and employment’ to enable them to glimpse how the skills they are developing might be used to shape their personal futures. By publishing participants proposals prominently in public – on large display screens and on the website - and by getting regeneration agencies to sign up to taking these proposals seriously, we hope to create a ‘bottom up’ model that can benefit individual participants and their communities. If a proposal is good but ignored by the authorities, the public exposure might serve to create platform for debate and, where appropriate, the first step in mounting a campaign for implementation. One scheme we will be exploring for the future is the Programme for Youth Volunteering in



England, which supports ‘youth led action’, which includes campaigning to meet their needs. There isn’t a scheme of this kind of older residents but as discussed above, many are already veteran campaigners.

• *Do we want to leave our young people’s involvement in ICT to be driven by commercial exploitation of ‘play’?* Computer games are now part growing up in Western cultures. They are very well researched to engage people in a learning process, in expressions of (adopted) identities, skill development and goal orientation. Sadly they do this far more successfully than our current education systems and most training programmes but their purpose is successful games sales, as Professor Gee has pointed out in his book *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy* (Gee, J (2003) NY Palgrave, USA.). Of course there are also wide ranging debates about the ethical issues around the contents of games. It is not the purpose of this paper to revisit these debates but to propose alternative strategies for engaging young people in processes of creative engagement with these technologies and, in the Global Town Square model, linking this to a bottom up approach to Regeneration and ‘Architechnology’ (combining ‘place’ design with interactive technology interfaces).

Global Town Square is still a work in progress and we hope that, by using the focus of Art, Creativity and ICT and our ‘Visioning Workshops’, we can present this model as a ‘bottom up’ approach to regeneration and contribute our findings and experiences into regeneration debates among local authorities and public sector; to artists, designers, academics and educationalists who wish to research and develop similar kinds of initiatives, and to contribute to new departures for Cultural Industries in the domain of the ‘Civic’. And we welcome your contribution dear reader to this debate by contacting us with your comments and suggestions. Visit our website on [www.arte-ofchange.com](http://www.arte-ofchange.com)

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***Key Terms and Their Definitions*** (in order of appearance)

**A Social Sculpture:** a term used to describe an artwork where working with people is the main 'form' of the work.

**Mega-screen:** in this context, a large outdoor screen 6-8 meters wide.

**Convergent systems:** these are digital systems which may currently be, or in the recent past, operating as separate systems – such as mobile phones, digital assistants, personal computers, home entertainment systems – which are being developed to create a relationship so that they link up, exchanging information and data and may modify the performance and capabilities of each linked system. In short they become part of a network.

**'Thatcherite' and 'Reganism':** terms used to describe the so called 'economic revolution' in the 80s when Margaret Thatcher, then UK Prime Minister, and Ronald Regan, US President, introduced a series of measures to cut public spending, deregulate business and curb the power of trade unions in preparation for Globalisation.

**The Present Day Creates History.** (1977/8) A two year project using exhibitions images and texts by Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson that explored the development of two towns from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Ruislip (S.E England) and Peterlee (N.E.England). For further information on this project see: Dunn P & Leeson L (1977), *The Present Day Creates History in Art & Politics*, Edited by Brandon Taylor, published by Winchester School of Art Press, pp 117-115: also Dunn & Leeson (1977) *The Present Day Creates History In Art and Communication* No6, Supervision Publications, Toronto, pp 5-8; also Dunn and Leeson (1979) *The Fire and the Fireplace* part 1 & 2, Block magazine issues 1 & 2, Edited by Bird, J. Curtis, B, Putnam, T, Robertson, G, Tickner, L, published by Middlesex University, London UK. pp 15-26.

**Docklands Community Poster Project** (1979-89) this was a ten-year project initiated by the author that spawned an organisation of the same name, co-founded

with Leeson. For further information see: Bird, J (1990) Dystopia In Docklands, Art in America, Vol 78, No7 July, Brant Art Publications Inc., USA; Dunn & Leeson (1987) State of the Art. Ed: Nairne, S, Channel, 4 publications and Chato and Windus, London, UK pp 182 –189 (plus TV Programme Tapes, Tape 4); Dunn & Leeson, (1986), The Changing Picture of Docklands, Block Magazine issue 12, ibid, London UK, pp 41-44; Dunn, P, (1986) The Changing Picture of Debate, AND Journal of Art AND Education, issue 8, Ed Boswell-Jones and Saray, published by AND, London UK pp 6-12; Dunn & Leeson (1986) The Changing Picture, Photography Politics: Two, Ed Spence, J, Methuen, London & New York, pp 108-118; Dunn & Leeson (1982) interview with Conde, C, , 'The Changing Picture', Fuse Magazine, Arton's Publishing Inc., Toronto, Canada, pp 96-100; Dunn & Leeson (1981) Towards a Political Practice, Camerawork magazine No21, pub Half Moon Photography Workshop, UK pp 11-13.

**The Art of Change** ('89- 2000) another project that spawned an organisation that I founded with Leeson. For further information on this project/organisation see: Dunn, P (1997) Colour Matching the Chameleon: identity in the information age, in Art and Urban Futures, Ed Miles, M, Intellect Press Vol 1, UK; Dunn & Leeson (1997) The Aesthetics of Collaborations, in Art Journal, The Subject of Aesthetics, Ed Kester, G, pub C.A.A. press USA, pp 26-37; Dunn & Leeson (1996) Artists Stories, AN publications, Sunderland, UK, pp 18-13; Dunn, P (1996) Incorrect Distance, Ten 8 Magazine/internet –pub Anti-ROM, London UK; Dunn, P (1996) Dancing with the Devil, Mailout Magazine, June/July 96, Ed Schwarz M, pub Mailout, UK; Dunn & Leeson (1996) 'Digital Vision in Docklands', 20 20 Magazine, Issue 3 Autumn, Ed Hornsby J, Bash Street Publishing, Brighton, U.K, pp 23-28, plus centre fold image and front cover. Dunn and Leeson (1994) Seeing through Prejudice, Mailout Magazine, UK, Issue Feb/March, pp 9-10; Dunn & Leeson (1994) The Art of Change, in Domini Public, Department de Cultura del la Generalitat de Catalunya, cat, Centra d'Art Santa Monica, Barcelona, Spain pp 62-51 and 156-158; Dunn & Leeson (1993) The Art of Change in Docklands, in Mapping the Futures, edited by Bird J et al, Routledge Press, London and New York pp 136-149; Bezencenet, S (1993) The Art of Going Public Camerawork, Vol 20, No 2 fall/winter, Ed Graham B, S, pub San Francisco Camerawork Inc., USA pp 9-11.

**Digital Highways** (sometimes called Information Highways) used here to denote the communications networks that allow for global transfer of information and data almost instantaneously which radically changed the way capitalism operated globally, particularly multinational corporations, Time zones became crucial in stock-market dealing across the main regions of economic influence. Digital Highways, Local Narratives was the title of a multi-media installation I created for the Agnes Etherington Arts Centre Kingston Ontario Canada and the subject of the keynote address I gave at a conference – Fragmented Power; art voices for 2000 - at the same venue in 1991: See Dunn, P, (1992) ‘Digital Highways Local Narratives’, AND, Journal of Art AND Education, No27, AND publications, UK pp 4-5 broadsheet; Dunn P (1991) ‘Digital Highways’, Ten 8: Digital Dialogues Vol 2 No2. Autumn, Ten 8 Ltd, Birmingham, UK, pp 28-31.

**Wymering Public Art Project** (1996 –00) I was lead artist on this major project involving the creation of seven substantial artworks as part of the creation of a new sports and arts complex at the centre of a large public housing estate in Wymering, Portsmouth. For further information see Peter Dunn (2000) ‘Flavours of the Month’ in Mailout Magazine, April, Ed Champion H & Cadie J, pub Mailout Trust UK, pp14-15; Dunn, P (2000) ‘Afterlife’, in Public Art Journal, March 2000 Vol 1 No3, Ed Thackera D, pub Public Art Forum, UK, pp 4-11: Dunn (2000) ‘Wymering Public Art Project’, Landscape Design, the journal of the landscape institute, March Edition No 288 ISSN 0020-2908, pub Landscape Design Trust, UK pp 22-24; Dunn (1999) The Wymering Public Art Project, pub Portsmouth City Council: Dunn (1999) ‘Currents’, AN Magazine, Dec edition, AN publications, UK pp 8-9

**The space of flows:** A term used by Manuel Castells to describe the amorphous flow of information across global cyberspace, “repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions...in the economic, political and symbolic structures of society”. Manuel Castells, (1996) The Rise of the Network Society, Blackwell, 1996.

**Planning for Real:** A workshop based process of involving people in the planning and redevelopment of their local environments or facilities that emerged in the 1980s

and 90s in the UK

**Futuretown:** is a nation-wide scheme introduced in the late 1990s to raise awareness among young people of the importance of our towns and cities. It was initially sponsored by Sainsbury's and Boots the Chemists PLC, and later supported nationally by the Government's Urban Task Force. In Gravesend, the annual Futuretown project has developed over several years and is now an established event in the school's curriculum. This year over 750 students from twelve schools, junior and secondary participated in Futuretown, to create a vision of Gravesend into the Millennium. Of fifty towns who participated nationally, a Gravesend school was chosen for inclusion in the Urban Task Force Report "Towards an Urban Renaissance" and presented with a special award by the then Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott.

**Widening Participation:** a scheme developed in the late 90s and sponsored by the Blair government to encourage Universities, Higher and Further Education Institutions to actively seek to become more inclusive in their student intake, albeit an attempt to partially mitigate against the disadvantage created by the replacement of grants with loans initiated by the Thatcher government of the 80s.

**Sustainability:** There are three basic elements to this in the context of Global Town Square: (a) Practically, to ensure the processes and practice can be sustained beyond transference, after our direct role diminishes, albeit in a customized form related to the context and inputs of participants and partners; (b) by contributing to the development of Sustainable Communities through capacity building and stakeholding as referenced the Agenda 21 declaration at the Rio Earth Summit of 1991, (c) and wherever possible and practical to seek solutions that use re-cycled and renewable materials, environmentally friendly processes and renewable energy sources.

**Inset Day:** in the UK this is a training day for teachers and school workers.

**Idea Store:** The 'Idea Stores' are a new initiative in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. They are effectively a 'library for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'. As well as lending books, CDs, DVD's Videos etc, they are an 'internet café', have learning labs where

they run courses for their constituent communities and where organisations can run workshops.

**Cyberspace Portal:** In this context it is an image designed by participants to put onto the website that marks their identity and is the gateway to the rest of their work – i.e. you click on this image to gain access to what they have produced.

**Children in Need** is a UK charity which funds projects working with young people, specifically as the name suggests with those who are deemed as ‘socially excluded’ in some way.

**Enhanced Disclosure:** this is a certificate provided by the police in the UK to certify that, having checked their records, there is no evidence of criminal conviction for an individual, in particular those of a sexual nature. We introduced this as a requirement several years before this became mandatory in the UK for those working with young people.