



# Occupy the Screen: A case study of open artworks for urban screens

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## Abstract

This paper examines the cultural and political implications of and for the proliferation of public urban screens appearing in cities around the world. Through a contextual and cultural study of cities and urban communities, informed by the work of Richard Sennett, Lucy Lippard and Scott McQuire et al., the paper asks what the opportunities are for creativity, intervention and public cohesion through these screens? This paper presents a case study of the authors/artist's practice-based research project "Occupy the Screen" 2014 for Connecting Cities Berlin and Riga 2014 European Capital of Culture. Using a practice-based methodology the authors utilise a method which maps the five elements of play, as defined by Hans Scheuerl in 1965 to measure open and closed systems in order to develop a framework for artists and curators to maximise engagement with public audiences through play.

## Keywords

Telematic, urban-screen, intervention, ludic, participatory art, play telepresent, performance, interaction, networked.

## Introduction

Our cities are networked; the screen allows the constant transmission of the latest information and communication. We are connected to a global digital infrastructure with mobile devices, GPS, Internet. Observed by surveillance cameras, our personal data can be stored and tracked, as can our geographical movements. Urban Screens take many formats to include large urban screens, handheld devices and architectural facades; they can be DIY, temporary, or part of the permanent architecture of the city. Urban Screens have been used to relay news, information sport and advertising, as well as cultural events and transmit 24hrs a day across cities globally. Through this practice-based research project we look at how artists can harness this digital network to offer audience agency, using Browning's definition (Browning 1964) as opportunity for creativity and making real choices, to promote sociability and play through participatory art works.

## Networked Cities

Today's media cities are made up of many communities, which are multicultural, multilingual, and multi-faith, a multiple of strangers are brought together at close

proximity. Richard Sennett sites Aristotle as the first to identify the city as a "synoikismos" or made up of diverse tribes and identifies contemporary cities as sharing a similarly tribal composition, arguing that it is important to respect these cultural complexities. Sennett promotes the idea of engaging beyond the divisive "us" and "them" attitude of a society defined by difference towards a "skilled co-operation" working together through craft skills. (Sennett, R. 2013, p4) The idea of multiplicity as beneficial to a community adding to the cultural richness, was shared by Georg Simmel a century earlier, in his 1903 essay on the city where he identified the demographics of a cultural mix as more enriching than the small close-knit communities of "Germeinschaft". (Sennett, R. 2013, p38) Richard Sennett suggests that contemporary society necessarily involves flux and shift in demographics. (Sennett, R. 2013 p4)

Through this research project we explore the historical and cultural context of our telematic artwork "Occupy the Screen" (Sermon, P. Gould, C. 2014) and the role it can play in connecting communities; to engage with the public and to offer audiences opportunity for agency and sociability through play, creating new narratives establishing new legacies, through public accounts stories and memories, grounded in the media arts context. Scott McQuire argues that artistic practice and research can potentially change and enhance the way that we experience the urban environment and the way that we relate to each other. (McQuire, S. 2008)

## Community

Richard Sennett promotes the idea that sociability and community engagement need to be actively worked upon, and do not happen automatically. In a multicultural society, difference defines us and Sennett proposes that the aim should be a sociability that embraces tolerance as opposed to attempts to achieve consensus. In a contemporary society in which religion and material production play a reduced role in everyday life, Sennett advocates craft and ritual as well as informal discussion and social groupings as potential methods to bring people together as a support network, promoting empathy and tolerance as opposed to sympathy and condescension. He highlights the importance of all participants taking an active role in forging

institutions or community groups as opposed to an impinged “top down” approach. From this perspective the passive audience observes the spectacle promoting the idea that proactive engagement with culture is empowering to the public.

“...when ritual turns into spectacle something happens to communities and to individuals. Spectacle turns community into a hierarchy in which those at the bottom observe and serve but do not participate as individuals with self-standing worth”. (Sennett, R. 2013, p108)

This image of a contemporary city as increasingly characterised by marginalisation and isolation is reflected in Robert Putman’s study on social cohesion. He found that people keep away from those who are different, that passive participation now marks civic society. (Putman, R. 2001) George Simmel (1858-1918) had identified the inhabitants of the city of the early twentieth century as suffering from “stranger shock”. He identified a universal pleasure in pursuing other’s company in German known as “*geselligkeit*” and was optimistic about the opportunities posed by the larger urban communities as promoting “sociality”.

## Urban Screens

Urban Screens have been set up across the globe, including in twenty-two cities in the UK often used for news, information and sport, some exclusively for cultural purposes such as in Linz and São Paulo. The position of the screens offers huge opportunity for potential to engage with a broad demographic. Freud documents an early experience of an urban screen, in a letter to his family in 1907 from a Piazza in Rome in which he describes being transfixed by the repetition of images and isolated from the crowd. This passive consumption of images and expressed sense of alienation is implicit in the notion of specular culture as presented by Debord. (Debord, G. 1967) Further, the presence of large urban screens could connote an Orwellian image of surveillance and control. Nam June Paik responded to dystopian fears with his “Good Morning Mr Orwell” as part of the New Year celebrations in 1984. He highlighted the importance of video and satellite television as liberating as long as it is used interactively. “Orwell only emphasized the negative part, the one way communication. I see video not as a dictatorial medium, but as a liberating one. That’s what this show is about, to be a symbol of how satellite television can cross international borders and bridge enormous cultural gaps...the best way to safeguard against the world of Orwell is to make this medium interactive so it can represent the spirit of democracy not dictatorship” (Paik, N. J. 1984)

## Art as Intervention

Brecht drew attention to the increased disempowerment of the audience since the development of the radio, “*Let the listener speak as well as hear...bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him*” (Brecht, B. 1986)

Benjamin highlighted the importance of a proactive relationship between audience and producer “*What matters, therefore, is the exemplary character of production, which is able first to induce other producers to produce, and second to put an improved apparatus at their disposal. And this apparatus is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers\_ that is readers or spectators into collaborators...*” (Benjamin, W. 1978)

Others highlighted the implicit dynamism between audience and artist in the development of artworks. Philosopher John Dewey in ‘Art as Experience’ (Dewey, J. 1934) underlined the audience’s role in the interpretation of meaning in art. Marcel Duchamp that the interpretation of artworks involves creativity, “*The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world...and thus his contribution to the creative act*”. (Kupes, G. 1960 p111-112) This was reaffirmed by Roland Barthe’s assertion that the work of art is a dual process between writer and reader, and that authorship involves multiple input. “*We know that to restore writing to it’s future, we must reverse it’s myth: the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author*”. (Barthes, R. 1977 p142-148) The concentration here is on the relationship between the artist, the environment and the audience and the interplay that takes place.

This is a huge leap from the renaissance philosophy of one worldview, truth and divine-right and Henri Lefevre identifies the period from 1910 as a time where all that was taken for granted in the classical world became shifted as developments in technology, philosophy, science, engineering and mass production, had a profound impact on our understanding and experience of the world, the very structure of the city had changed, expanding the way that we inhabit the world into the sky and deep below the earth with high-rise buildings reaching skyward whilst trams are tunnelling underground.

“*The fact is around 1910 a certain space was shattered. It was the space of common sense, of knowledge (savoir), of social practice, of political power, a space hitherto enshrined in everyday discourse just as in abstract thought, as the environment of and channel for communications; the space too of classical perspective and geometry, developed from the Renaissance onwards on the basis of Greek tradition (Euclid, logic) and bodies forth in Western art and philosophy, as in the form of the city and the town.*” (Lefevre, H. 1991, p25)

The new philosophies impacted on our interpretation of art, the avant-garde questioned the very institution of art. Futurist artist Luggio Russolo explored manipulating the senses through cataloguing the sound types brought about

through industrialisation using the street as his instrument. The Surrealists were very interested in the street as a creative starting point, and in-particularly Paris. Surrealist poet Louis Aragon celebrated the urban environment as having “the wonderful sense of the everyday”.

Söke Dinkla identifies the movement away from the traditional gallery setting from the early twentieth century and at the same time a development of interaction within artistic practice from the object as art towards performance and interactivity as a prelude to media art. From this perspective the move away from the traditional gallery and the interest in artist and audience interaction went hand in hand. This also suggests that the movement away from the art establishment towards public engagement was empowering. (Dinkla, S. 1996, p279) Art works moved from the gallery to the theatre exploring active interaction between artist and viewer through typography, performance and sound. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in the manifesto “Variety Theatre” commented:

*“The Variety Theatre is alone in seeking audience’s collaboration. It doesn’t remain static like a stupid voyeur, but joins noisily in the action, in the singing, accompanying the orchestra, communicating with the actors in bizarre dialogues”.* (Marinetti, F. T. 1913)

Lucy Lippard identifies a move during the fifties and sixties away from the fetishisation of the object and the “dematerialisation of the art object” (Lippard, L. 1997), towards audience participation, interaction and performance from the Situationist movement, to Fluxus, which often took place on a stage like venue and Happenings events, taking art events out of the traditional gallery and into the streets, with a sense of theatre and an interplay between audience and performer.

## Play and Ludic Interfaces

Richard Sennett underlines the importance of role-play in society and argues that the modern being’s search for “true” or “authentic” character as a result of capitalism and secularization has led to a “crisis of public life”. (Sennett, R. 1986 p27) In the eighteenth century role-play was an expected part of polite society. “... in a period like the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, actor and stranger would be judged on the same terms, and what one could learn from the one in the domain of art, one could learn or apply to the other in the special domain of impersonal life. And therefore in a very real sense, art could be a teacher about life; the imaginative limits of a person’s consciousness were expanded, just as in an age in which putting other on, posing, and the like seem morally inauthentic, these limits are contracted”. (Sennett, R. 1986 p41)

Viewed from this perspective art can teach and inform us about life and can offer the opportunity for imagination and creativity. Sennett argues that the pre-industrial city offered the opportunity to engage with theatricality as part

of life. Henry Fielding in 1749 spoke of the street and the theatre as “literally” intermixed and no longer a metaphor. Sennett suggests that without the opportunity for play, we are bereft of a basic requisite to a full life, underlining creativity as key to this. “*It is robbed of the expression of certain creative powers which all human beings possess potentially- the powers of play- but which require a milieu at a distance from the self for their realisation*”. (Sennett, R. 1986, p264)

The importance and conventions of play was being asserted and reassessed at this time. Jean Jacques Rousseau referred to play as an essential learning tool in “*Émile*”, or “*On Education*” (Rousseau, J. 1762) and it was during this period, in 1793, that Friedrich Schiller, in a letter to his sponsor defined a new meaning for “play”. He said that it could express the simplest to the most complicated of ideas from: “...*the aesthetic state*”, “*a state of the highest reality so far as the absence of all limits is concerned*” where we can experience a “*unity of human nature*.” (Schiller, F. 1962 p607) Schiller believed that play draws together the objective with the subjective to create culture. Karl Groos had identified a potential for impact of play on culture and on promoting creativity, he also highlighted an “aesthetic presence” in play. (Groos, K. 1901) Schiller, who also identified a beauty in play, reaffirmed this. Huizinga looked to trace all forms of culture back to play; he saw play as a need to create order, therefore as potentially beautiful. (Huizinga, J. 1938, 2008) Friedrich Buytendijk further aligned play to the creative act, describing the play object as figurative, defining play as stimulative and unpredictable, and with the potential to open up opportunities for fantasy, lending it’s self to interpretation and association. (Buytendijk, F. J. J. 1932) Scheuerl made an association of art and play, and saw the relationship as that between process and form, both of which are accomplished in the moment. (Scheuerl, H. 1965)

Johan Huizinga defined play as an activity external to everyday life, but totally absorbing and thereby suggesting a liberating quality, “Summing up the formal characteristics of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious”, but at the same time absorbing the player intensively and utterly.” (Huizinga, J. 1938, 2008)

Roger Caillois identified limitations to this definition as this excludes gambling from the definition of play but also notes that while mystery can be part of play is not a necessary component to make it part of the definition and conversely that mystery can be revealed through the nature of play. (Caillois, R. first published 1958) Caillois identified six elements, which defined play as “*Free*”, “*Separate*”, “*Uncertain*”, “*Unproductive*”, “*Governed by rules*” and “*Make believe*”. (Caillois, R. first published 1958, p128)

Claus Pias identifies a need to make a distinction between play and games “...*not about games (Spiele) but rather about play (Spiele), about a playful attitude*” (Pias, C. 2011, p164) and notes that the German word for ‘play’ and ‘game’ is the same, ‘spiele’. Hans Scheuerl defined

games as having five attributes; (i) “freedom”, no goal outside it’s self. (ii) “Inerfinitude” with no preconceived ending, (iii) “closeness of the game” the rules or defined area of play, (iv) “ambivalence”, movement between rule and chance, serious and fun, impulse and cognition, immersion and reflection, (v) “virtuality”, separate from “real life” and the self. (Scheuerl, H. 1965, p607)

This definition maps on to Caillois method, however provides a little more distinction than Caillois’ definition of play, which tallies to the characteristics of open systems, specifically the idea of “inifinitude”, in some closed systems there are only one of two possible endings, and the concept of “ambivalence” how far unexpected outcomes are possible, or the potential for rule-breaking, or using chance to impact on outcomes.

For the purposes of this study we have used Scheuerl’s definition of play and games as a method to create a framework for the observations of user interactions in the installation “Occupy the Screen” referred to later in this paper. The framework was used to evidence observations, recording participants reactions, their time spent in the installation, and engagement with the screen and other participants.

## Systems of Interaction

*“All arts can be considered interactive if we consider viewing and interpreting work as a kind of participation”.* (Sakane, I. 1989 p3 in Rokeby, D. 1995 p134)

Whilst this acknowledges a relationship between artist and viewer in the construction of meaning, as discussed above, theorists such as Benjamin have promoted a much more proactive relationship between artist and audience, making a distinction between “producers” and “consumers” identifying the former as active and the later as passive. (Benjamin, W. 1978 p101-120)

Lev Manovich states that by definition the computer interface (HCI) is interactive, but that it is a mistake to identify all art that uses computing as interactive. (Manovich, L. 2005) Sometimes interactive works appear to offer the audience creative opportunity, through an interface that provides choices, however point and click and motion tracking can often disguise nothing more than a series of choices made by the artist. Sharon Daniel argues that the collaborative aim of media arts focuses on the potential to create new experiences and exchange revealing new insights, but can be overshadowed by the appearance of audience autonomy and choice, disguised by the physical function of the interface. (Daniel, S. 2011, p74) Jane Kelly reaffirms this.

*“Real Collaboration is often undermined by the authority of the artist, who retains control of the technology. The apparent autonomy given to a participating spectator is often a false front, simply a product of digital technology’s ability to offer more varied,*

*but still strictly controlled routes through a closed set of prescribed material”* (Kelly, J. 1997)

Sharon Daniel goes further making a distinction between interactivity and collaboration, and sees the former as a passive user experience. (Daniel, S. 2011, p74) Margot Lovejoy, however argues that interactivity can be divided into two approaches the “monologic” (point and click) and the “dialogic” approach which enables a collaborative exchange between artists and potentially multiple participants provided by *“telecommunications that interactively make use of global network connectivity”* (Lovejoy, M. 2011, p14) which Margot Lovejoy describes as *“open”*.

Jeffery Shaw and Peter Weibel identify three narrative types of interactive works, *“transcriptive forms”*, multi-layered narratives, and *“recombinary permutation”* involving an element of chance with random programming and *“distributed forms”* which offer open systems for multi-direction communications to take place. (Lovejoy, M. 2011 p18) These definitions suggest a continuum between open and closed systems; “distributed forms” at the open end and “transcriptive forms” at the closed, with “recombinary permutation” in the middle.

Roy Ascott identifies a focus in interactive art on *“whole systems, that is systems in which a viewer plays an active part in an artwork’s definition and evolution”*. (Ascott, R. 1999, p67) Ascott proposes that the removal of the ‘second observer’ or ‘phantom audience’ is a necessary precursor to the truly “whole system”, so all participants are fully active in the outcomes and the potential for spectacle is removed, in order to achieve *“an open ended evolution of meanings and the closure of an autonomous frame of consciousness”*. (Ascott, R. 1999, p70)

Stiles and Shanken also identify “agency” as an important factor in interactive systems. Meaning and intention as well as effective communication to an audience are important. They argue that artworks *“must activate semiotic signification that is literally full of meaning”* (Stiles, K. and Shanken, E. 2011, p35), potentially changing audience understanding through “agency”. They refer to Douglas Browning’s definition of agency, *“The concept of the agent is required in order to allow for the possibility of freedom, communication, comprehension and mystery. “Culture in general...rests upon...agency”*. (Browning, D. 1964)

Stiles and Shanken argue that interactive works should offer the audience “agency”; a proactive role, with freedom to make decisions and be creative, offering opportunity to change and influence society. *“Agency involves the freedom to create, change, and influence institutions and events, or act as a proxy on behalf of someone else. In both cases agency is measured by the ability and the responsibility to have a meaningful effect in a real-world, inter-subjective social conscience.”*. (Stiles, K., Shanken, E. 2011, p36)

## Occupy the Screen

“Occupy The Screen” (Sermon, P. Gould C. 2014) was a site-specific work commissioned by Public Art Lab Berlin for the Connecting Cities Festival event “Urban Reflections” from 11 to 13 September 2014, linking audiences at Supermarkt Gallery Berlin and Riga European Capital of Culture 2014. This installation builds on our practice-based research and development of previous interactive works for large format urban screens such as “Picnic on the Screen”, originally developed for the BBC Public Video Screen at the Glastonbury Festival in 2009. Connecting Cities was a EU consortium involving big screen curators and artists who initially came together for a workshop as part of the Transmediale Festival 2014 in Berlin. Through our presentation of research findings to date the initial workshop considered what the essential criteria were for future urban screen interventions.

This new installation pushed the playful, social and public engagement aspects of the work into new cultural and political realms in an attempt to ‘reclaim the urban screens’ through developments in ludic interaction and internet based high-definition videoconferencing. Through the use of illustrated references to site-specific landmarks of Berlin and Riga, audiences were invited to “Occupy the Screen” by climbing the statues in both cities, with scenes reminiscent of the crowds claiming the Brandenburg Gate after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The concept development of “Occupy the Screen” was inspired in part by 3D street art as a DIY tradition, referencing the subversive language of graffiti. The interface borrows from the “topoi” of the computer game, as a means to navigate the environment; once within the frame the audience becomes a character immersed within the environment.

“Occupy the Screen” linked two geographically distant audiences using a telematics technique; the installation takes live oblique camera shots from above the screen of each of these two audience groups, located on a large 50 square metre blue ground sheet and combines them on screen in a single composited image. As the merged audiences start to explore this collaborative, shared ludic interface, they discover the ground beneath them, as it appears on screen as a digital backdrop, locates them in a variety of surprising and intriguing anamorphic environments (see fig. 1).

“Occupy the Screen” aimed to include the widest range of urban participation possible and aligns to a Fluxus “Happening” in a move away from the object as art towards the street environment and the “every day” experience. It also borrows from a tradition of early 20<sup>th</sup> century media developments where audiences were transfixed by the magic of being transported to alternative realities through early film at the traveling fairs. Lumière contemporaries, Mitchell and Kenyon, whose films of public crowds in the 1900’s present a striking similarity to the way audiences react and respond to “Occupy the

Screen”. These pioneering fairground screenings of audiences filmed earlier the same day possess all the traits of live telepresent interaction, albeit the latency in processing, whereby the audience play directly to the camera and occupy this new public space by performing to themselves and others when screened later.



Figure 1. “Occupy the Screen”. Audience participants in Riga interacting with the screen. 11 Sept. 2014 ©Sermon, P., Gould, C.

The position of the urban screen as street furniture is ideally suited to engage with people going about their everyday life, and often the most interesting outcomes are discovered through the ways that the public interprets and re-appropriates culture through “users tactics”. (Certeau, M. 1980, p480) The interaction is an open system aiming to offer the audience a means of agency, defined as “freedom” to be creative and make individual decisions.

As part of the project development, workshops were held with the local community in Wedding-Moabit, Berlin, a multicultural demographic including various migrant communities. We were keen to ensure that all aspects of the community were represented in the development of content for the work and to find ways of engaging the audience in the installation, reflecting richer layers of experience relating to place through “hybrid nonlinear stories” rather than reflecting a “homogenous view”, (Lippard, L. 1997, p24)

The workshop participants identified personal landmarks and discussed their experience in the local environment, their history and cultural references, also their idea of tourist routes through that part of the city. In this way the public were able to advise the development of the work through their feedback and ideas to inform the content of the environment. We developed the landmarks suggested as well as artefacts relevant to the local and migrant communities, at the same time representing both of the cities involved, including cultural motifs as well as references to the county of origin. This follows the tradition of dialectic art as an intervention (Kester, R. 2004) and supports Roy Ascots proposal that with his definition of a “whole system” “a viewer plays an active part in an artwork’s definition and evolution”. (Ascott, R. 1999, p67) The installation further offered opportunity for

collaboration between audience and artist through an inclusive approach to creativity and sociability employing the “ludic”, nonsensical, and “phantasmagoria” of free play. (Sutton-Smith, B. 1999)

Our method of evaluation referred to earlier involved audience observation, both during the event and via line-out video recordings (see fig. 2) directly from the installation. The latter provided us with the most accurate record of audience engagement allowing us to observe the participants and their interactions through the very same image they caused and reacted upon. We also had local assistants to support the work and talk with audience participants in a familiar context and language.



Figure 2. “Occupy the Screen”. Line-out video of participants in Riga and Berlin. 13 Sept. 2014 ©Sermon, P., Gould, C.

The outcomes from both the observations and the line-out video were then plotted on a data map using a y-axis informed by Hans Scheuerl’s definition of games; from “freedom”, “indefinitude” and “closeness of the game”, to “ambivalence” and “virtuality”. (Scheuerl, H. 1965, p607) Against an x-axis aligning to open and closed systems.

Drawn from a 31:44 minute line-out extracted video recording (Sermon, P. Gould, C. 2014) the following edited observations and analysis, using the Open/Closed matrix based on Scheuerl’s definition of games: “Freedom” to respond to each other at times negating the suggested environment is evidenced at 06:10 when a boy break dances across the floor, while a woman reaches forward to get into the bath. Examples of “virtuality” include instances of ludic play where people engage in nonsensical activities such as at 08:45 two men (late teens) in Riga flap their arms as if to fly, another lifts his arms as if to glide. Imaginary play and narrative sequences emerge through participant’s interactions drawing other participants into the scene including at 04:18 a man (20s) in Riga shuffles from side to side while children in Berlin chase behind. There are many instances of “mimicry” across age groups and locations such as at 02:02 two women (in their 40s Riga) enter the screen and hold out their hands to rescue a boy and a man both in Berlin. Examples of “visual trickery” centered on the joining together in the two locations include at 07:45 three men

(20s) in Riga, and two women (20s) in Berlin form a line and dance.

Instances that fit into the category of “closeness of the game” happen when participants remain faithful to the environments, and do not diverge from the suggested scenes, such as at 09:13 a man and woman in Berlin (20s) balance on a plank across a hole, a man in Riga (20s) steps in and gestures a wobble as if to almost fall.

Instances of “indefinitude”, take place when the ending is unpredictable, they are situations that were unexpected so often have elements of the ludic which is closely aligned to “virtuality” such as at 11:07 a boy jumps from the quay into the boat, joining the boy in Berlin, while a woman in Berlin stands on the quay.

Instances of “ambivalence” or the movement between rule and chance, occur when people respond to the environments, often with unexpected outcomes such as at 06:55, three woman, two in Berlin and one in Riga (20s) sit on chairs at the table while a man in Riga (20s) stands on the table. At 07:00 the woman in Riga moves to stand on the table then jumps to the floor, the women (20s) in Berlin move their hands to spur her on. In the next frame 07:11 the woman in Riga (20s) moves back on to table top, the man (20s) in Riga moves to crouch in front of the table, all three woman stroke his head. The unpredictability of the actions are encouraged through the changing interface and in the next scene at 07:24 two men in Riga and a man and woman in Berlin stand on the floating cube of turf, while a woman holds the ankles of a man in Berlin.

Through this research we found that the environment and timing have a large impact on the way that an audience responds to an interactive work. Participants were at liberty to decide whether to engage with “Occupy the Screen”, and as soon as we turned the installation on even for testing people were keen to participate within the work, aligning with the notion and criteria of “freedom”. Having no goal outside it’s self; the environment was available for people to engage with as they wished. The inspiration was drawn both from the cities of Riga and Berlin, with input from the communities, but also from the idea of street interventions such as anamorphic pavement art where from a particular position the characters can look as if in a precarious situation.

In “Occupy the Screen” this included suspended on a plank high above a lake, or on an over sized wooden bridge. The installation was designed for the audience to engage in an intuitive way and there was no preconceived ending, in-keeping with the characteristic of “Indefinitude”. The area of play was clearly demarked as a space via a blue box groundsheet in both Berlin and in Riga identifying a theatre of play, once in the space the participant engages as they wish. The environment may suggest activities or events but the audience is free to respond as they choose so that rules are limited and focus on the defined area of play in relation to the category of “closeness of the game”. This also meant that

“ambivalence”, movement between rule and chance, serious and fun, impulse and cognition, immersion and reflection, were constant and in flux throughout engagement with the work. It is this fluidity, which is key to the characteristic of an open work, that there is much opportunity for the unexpected and that chance encounters can change the direction of a narrative that is unfolding.

We used our experience of previous installations to inform elements of the design to include objects that people can engage with, but also playing with perception of vision and illusion. This included a Pop-Art inspired tunnel, which participants intuitively jumped into, and steps which disappear into an underground bunker. There were also other events staged in Riga’s Esplanade Park, with loud pop music playing through out each night, which initially seemed a little intrusive, but in actuality contributed to the work. From our observations optical illusions acted as a signifier of play, people inherently recognised the environment as playful, this may have been successful particularly because it represented “virtuality”, a space separate from “real life”.

We also used the notion of the computer game as a design reference, inspiring a child in the audience at one point to shout “Wow Supermario”. We incorporated references such as box hedges suspended in space, which participants recognised as a game platform to jump on and between. The environments often implied a physical response such as jumping, diving or climbing, including a swimming pool to dive into, coloured boxes to climb across and a bridge to jump off. This may have contributed to the active approach that the majority of the participants took. This may have been further enhanced by the music, and many people engaged with the environment through dance. One woman stayed for several hours at the installation dancing and interacting with the other participants, returning the next night to do the same.



Figure 3. “Occupy the Screen”. Audience participants in Berlin interacting with props. 12 Sept. 2014 ©Sermon, P., Gould, C.

The night-time showing of the piece, further added to a sense of playfulness, as people walked through the park on their way out and back from bars and clubs. The installation ran each night until 1pm to co-inside with the

Berlin festival. We introduced ludic or nonsensical elements at times such as a boat (see fig. 3), which people responded to immediately by jumping into it.

People of all ages took part and adults were as likely as children to engage, particularly because of the late showing. We observed an uninhibited willingness to play from children. One girl played for hours engaging with the set, pretending to sit at the table, jumping into the tunnel, walking the plank etc. She engaged in a very performative way, with confidence and exaggerated movements. We also observed this enhanced ability to perform in some adults as well as responding to the environments they tended to engage with others from Berlin, pretending to scratch someone’s head, or hold hands in order to jump into the tunnel, or lift someone up from the pool. The remoteness of the installations appeared to give confidence to cross into personal space that might otherwise be seen as a physical invasion of space. In many ways “Occupy the Screen” broke down cultural and social barriers, both in the local communities, but also between two cities, Berlin and Riga, where new collocated spaces and creative encounters could be founded and occupied.

Through this research project, we have developed a framework for open participatory artworks for urban screens to maximise audience agency through play, engaging the public in new ways in the urban environment, offering the public agency and developing events that create memory. Levels of openness were measured through a data map, from which we were able to define key characteristics, to provide a framework for open interactive systems for urban screens.

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Charlotte Gould (<http://www.charlottegould.org>) has developed a number of interactive environments for urban screens. She is currently developing location specific work in which the user becomes an active participant in the narrative and explores methods of user driven content. She graduated with a BA Honours Degree in Graphic Design from Chelsea School of Art in 1990 and was awarded an MA in Creative Technology from the University of Salford in 2003. Charlotte Gould is a Principle Lecturer and Academic Programme Leader for Visual Communication at the University of Brighton.

Paul Sermon (<http://www.paulsermon.org>) is Professor of Visual Communication at the University of Brighton. He has worked for over twenty years as an active academic researcher and creative practitioner, primarily in the field of telematic arts. Having worked under the visionary cybernetic artist Professor Roy Ascott as an undergraduate Fine Art student, Paul Sermon went on to establish himself as a leading pioneer of interactive media art, winning the prestigious Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica in Linz, Austria, shortly after completing his MFA at the University of Reading in 1991. An accolade that took Paul to Finland in the early 1990s to develop one of the most groundbreaking works of his career Telematic Dreaming in 1992.