

# DESIGN4HEALTH Melbourne 2017

Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Design4Health Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia

4-7th December 2017

**Editors: Deirdre Barron and Kurt Seemann** 







Cover: Jayden Ryles-Smith Benjamin Chaves

## **Preamble**

Welcome to the first Design4Health Conference in Australia, convened by the Centre for Design Innovation, Swinburne University of Technology, on behalf of, and jointly chaired with, the conference founders, Lab4Living, Sheffield-Hallam University, UK.

The Centre for Design Innovation investigates and validates the key factors that underpin the design of products, services, systems, spaces, and symbols to improve the chance of user uptake and impact.

Lab4Living, who established the conference, is an interdisciplinary research initiative that develops products and environments, and proposes creative strategies for dignified, independent and fulfilled living for all.

This international event invited the world of health and design practitioners and researchers to come together between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of December, 2017 in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

### About the conference

Design4Health is an international conference that brings together designers, health professionals and creative practitioners with researchers, clinicians, policy makers and users from across the world to discuss, disseminate and test their approaches and methods in the ever-changing nexus between design and health.

The conference hosted a series of different events that provided an active forum to explore how the disciplines of design and health might intersect to bring forth new ways of thinking and working in what is a dynamic, innovative and increasingly important area of research and practice. The central question has been:

How can we work together to achieve positive and sustainable impact on the social, economic and cultural factors within our communities and beyond?

The range and insights presented at the D4HMelbourne event has revealed both the enormous value of this movement in research, and the benefits from undertaking serious, applied, and critical efforts that design and health expertise generate when they come together.

We invite you to browse the innovative ideas and critiques scoped in these proceedings

Sincerely

Associate Professor, Kurt Seemann, PhD. | Convenor | Design4Health 2017

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Ms Sarah Markey-Hamm and Ms. Siobhan Bahn, Conference Managing Agents, ICMS.

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# Foyle Bubbles: How can design reduce suicide attempts using everyday social and civic spaces?

Alwani, R., Raby, E., West, J., Bichard, J. and Spencer, J.

Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design. Royal College of Art. UK.

# Keywords.

Suicide, Behaviour, City, Person-Centred

#### Introduction

This paper is submitted in tandem with the related paper 'Foyle Reeds: How can design reduce suicide attempts at a specific place whilst at the same time improving the experience for all?'

The River Foyle and its environments, banks and bridges in Derry/Londonderry in Northern Ireland have become associated with poor mental health and emotional wellbeing. 'Our Future Foyle' is a collaborative research initiative looking at how health and wellbeing can be designed into the riverfront in the city as a means of suicide prevention.

This paper discusses one aspect and output of the research and design process: 'Foyle Bubbles'.

# **Process and Engagement**

### 1. Methods

In order to carry out research and engage with the community as a whole the team have been carrying out a series of architectural interventions during city scale events. Using various co-design methods, the project has sought people from across the community, in an area which is known for its past conflict. Given the importance of providing opportunities for the whole community to have their say, the team created an engaging research space both on land and water, based on a local legend: a killer whale named Dopey Dick who swam up the river in the 1970s (a figure warmly remembered by both communities). The team also hosted a Cinema Premiere of a local film based on the River Foyle. Using the research space, and accompanying events, the team connected with over 5,000 people conducting more in-depth research with over 100 individuals, and have a digital reach of over 10,000 people. These methods fit into the Double Diamond design process (Design Council, 2005).

### 2. Results

City scale events focused on the riverfront increase footfall, temporarily transforming a negative and dormant public space into a destination with activity and positivity. Interviews with public health figures and the local search and rescue team showed that

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during these events, suicidal behaviour and attempts on the riverfront and bridges do not occur, pointing to a sense of community cohesion as a factor.

The team's engagement with the community showed an evident need for public services and destinations along the riverfront. Individuals said they felt that 'there is nothing to do or nowhere to go at the river' and 'there are not enough shops and cafes along the riverfront'. Further interviews corroborated these insights, showing the need for cafes and shops, weather shelters, public toilets, mental health therapy spaces, youth zones and activities.

More broadly, the research showed the need for shared space along the riverfront. People within the community felt that 'one side of the river gets more than the other side'. This pointed to the need for movable spaces that could respond to the needs of different areas of the waterfront without having to be located in one area. Such spaces would allow flexibility, and could be occupied by a variety of organisations and individuals to create a network and reinforce that community congestion.

### 3. Discussion

'Foyle Bubbles' are a series of satellite spaces designed to house arts, commercial, educational and well-being activities around the riverfront; these will act as suicide deterrents and increase footfall and so achieve natural surveillance of the site. These portable pods offer the opportunity for enterprise and community engagement through social and civic functions. The individuals or organisations within the pods will undertake mandatory mental health training in return for reduced rent, thus enabling everyday engagement within the community whilst at the same time providing mental health support and counselling without stigma or a clinical setting. Figure 1 shows the potential uses of the 'Bubbles', along with engaged stakeholders and activities.

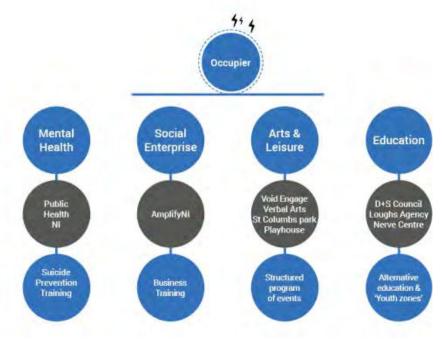


Figure 1. Uses of 'Bubbles', stakeholders and activities

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In addition to the specific activities within the pods, an important function of the 'Bubbles' is to increase the presence of people in the immediate area, and thus improve the sense of life, positivity and community cohesion of the space by bringing people together. The local district council is looking at an alternative education programme in which the hardest to reach youths within the community have the opportunity to learn and develop business skills among the enterprises that occupy the pods. The portability of the pods is key to their success as they are able to respond to identified negative areas on the riverfront, and thus accommodate the changing needs of the local environment and community. Working in tandem with the local city CCTV initiative, the pods can be placed in areas with poor footfall or illuminate to become cultural beacons when not in use at night (figure 2). During these hours, the illuminated pods can light up areas associated with anti-social behaviour (or areas with low lighting), aid statutory services and provide spaces for people at point of crisis.



Figure 2. 'Bubbles' as beacons in night mode

### Conclusion

The 'Foyle Bubbles' concept emerged from a broad research and co-design project with multiple outcomes. With good stakeholder and community buy in, the team are now establishing the initial occupiers of the Bubbles. A pilot phase of a few pods at agreed locations, with co-designed features and functions, is currently being explored. The implementation of this small-scale trial will inform the statutory structures, environmental and community factors that can optimise their effectiveness. This pilot and subsequent measurable data provide the necessary evidence for larger procurement and roll out across the local community and service users with the hope of creating a connected, engaged and positive community on the river with the needs of people in crisis at its heart.

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### **Reference List**

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