Neighbourly Encounters in the Rapidly Changing City

Document Version
Final published version

Citation for published version (APA):
Gilmore, A., & Dunn, B. (2020). *Neighbourly Encounters in the Rapidly Changing City: Researching Meet the Neighbours project report*. https://meettheneighbours.net/reflections/research-report-neighbourly-encounters-rapidly-changing-city

OPEN ACCESS

Meet The Neighbours

Neighbourly encounters in the rapidly changing city:
Researching Meet The Neighbours
April 2020

Dr Ben Dunn & Dr Abigail Gilmore
University of Manchester

SUMMARY

This report considers the performance and practices of being 'neighbourly'. It summarises research for *Meet the Neighbours* (2017-20), a Creative Europe-funded project that invited artists into neighbourhoods in cities undergoing rapid change. Reflecting on the project's artist residencies and the contexts in which they took place, we investigate how the presence of artists can shape and create public space.

Following Richard Sennett's work on the ethics for city dwelling, we consider how open forms of architecture and urban planning are supported by neighbourly practices of artists, institutions and participants, to offer opportunities for civic participation and social change.

The report finds that *Meet the Neighbours* provided ways to mobilise these various neighbours as political actors, encouraging public discourse and facilitating agonistic public space. Though temporary, the residencies introduced and promoted the spatial practices of open form urbanism which negotiated domestic, private and public spheres and the boundaries and tensions of regeneration. At an organisational level, they changed the ways in which project partners think about and practice their relationships with their cities, and their neighbours.

Further information on all the *Meet the Neighbours'* activities can be found on the website, accessible here and through hyperlinked sections of the research report below.

REPORT CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

What happens when artists come and stay in your neighbourhood? How can the work they undertake and the relationships they develop inform our understanding of urban life, and what does their presence as neighbours change? Through a series of residencies between 2017 and 2019, the *Meet the Neighbours* project invited artists into the heart of selected cities in five countries across Europe and North Africa. Funded by Creative Europe, the project brought together partners whose practice and philosophy stretch across art forms and genres, to work in distinctive urban contexts with a common interest in bringing artists into the public and domestic spheres of everyday life to critical effect.

Informed by a shared sense of the factors driving change within these cities – regeneration and redevelopment, the rise of right-wing politics, the privatisation of public resources and the globalisation of otherwise 'local' spaces – *Meet the Neighbours* questioned the role and response of the artist to these differing circumstances. Florian Malzacher, who served as curatorial advisor to the project, explains this intent with reference to Chantal Mouffe's writing on agonism. In contrast to the oppositional logic of antagonism, agonism proposes the co-existence of contrasting or contradictory social and political perspectives as a necessary step in securing a more equitable society. As Malzacher writes:

> "Democracy is the arena where we can enact these differences… the idea of a curatorial, performative field that keeps things in flux and enables a playful (but serious) enacting of different positions is the, perhaps slightly utopian, vision of what curating in performing arts should aim for" (2014: 120).

Meet the Neighbours explores how such arenas might be curated, by placing the artist as a neighbour at the centre of these concerns, to ask how artists and cultural institutions might hold spaces for constructive disagreement and new understandings to emerge, even as the contexts in which we live transform around us.

The project proposed a set of exploratory questions and an agreed process for selecting and commissioning artists. Over its course, thematic concerns emerged which challenge and enhance shared understanding of how neighbourhoods are formed, practiced and understood, and the ways in which artists and residents might contribute towards or affect these processes. This report explores some of these concerns: we deploy the lens of researchers and observers, attempting to interpret the inflections and articulations of the various actors involved through their reflections (in interviews,

critical writing, presentations and discussions at symposia and meetings) and through our engagement with the processes, practices and spaces generated by and encountered through the artist residencies. We draw on Richard Sennett's distinction between the *ville* as the material structure of the city and the *cité* as the lived experience it inspires and supports (Sennett, 2018) to consider how the mobilisation of the neighbour as political actor can inform discourses of public space within these projects and, ultimately, the role of neighbourliness in facilitating new modes of dwelling in the city.

Thus, the report considers how the interventions and activities generated by *Meet the Neighbours* provided insight into the practices of neighbourliness, defined as regular encounters and interactions with those outside of one's household or immediate family. We are interested in how the artists and institutions involved acted as neighbours, who and what they encountered, and how they created and sometimes disrupted public space through their actions.

The report begins by outlining the research methodology and the project's specific locations, which form the empirical and theoretical contexts for the research. We then explore ways in which artists are invited in to dwell amongst their neighbours through different models for artist residencies and public practices, before turning to the particular encounters observed between artists, communities, individuals and institutions on the project.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research aims to provide critical reflective space in which to explore the conceptual frames and philosophical questions raised by and during the project. Research methods comprised qualitative interviews, participant observation, literature review and analysis of documentary materials. We developed this methodology in conjunction with the monitoring and evaluation strategy for the project, co-designed with Quarantine as the managing partner for *Meet the Neighbours*.

To establish the scope and focus of the research, we began with the questions originally agreed by the project partners at the beginning of their collaboration. These were:

- How are our cities changing shape and what is the role of artists in that process?
- How can artists have a progressive and critical voice in relation to urban regeneration and development?
- How is access to cultural provision affected by the immediate presence of artists in urban neighbourhoods?
- How can artists create potential space and relationships where conversations might happen and action might occur?
- How does the mobility of artists relate to questions around migration and the mobility of people in a changing Europe?
- How can working with neighbouring countries help develop artist mobility beyond and to Europe?

The project's timespan (over 3 years) and geographical distribution (across northern Europe and including North Africa) introduced some parameters to the scope of the enquiry, and its design and allocation of resources provided further boundaries. The focus for partners was for a coordinated programme of artist residencies that supported the development of practice within and with neighbourhoods. The briefs for artist residencies were open-ended and temporary stays had varying durations (from a period of days to 5 months). Some artists had repeat stays in the same place, and some developed their practice by taking their work to neighbourhoods in the other project cities.

The research began by integrating a framework for data collection with that of the process for evaluation, augmented by other methods for analysing primary and secondary sources. We focused our literature review on research drawn from performance studies, urban studies and the interdisciplinary study of arts management and cultural policy, reflecting the researchers' backgrounds, to identify key conceptual threads and theoretical grounding to the practical and strategic ambitions of *Meet the Neighbours*. We also explored a range of case studies beyond the project, to develop an understanding of the different rationales and types of artist residencies

commissioned by cultural and civic institutions that have become a common feature of urban strategies.

Attendance at project partner meetings and site visits provided the opportunity for participant observation, to hear reflection and insights from participants, and to test the developing conceptual framework and case studies. We learnt about the partners' different approaches to hosting artists and their own position within their neighbourhoods, and the ways in which the project was fostering transnational mobility for artists as they moved between cities. We encountered some ambivalence to research and evaluation (not uncommon in practice-focused projects) but surprisingly also to the term 'residency', with some preferring 'stay'. This ambivalence reflected the investigative nature of the project and its intention to facilitate artists to explore their relationship to the sites, participants and social contexts they were resident in, as a basis for artistic development and to expand their own practice.

As the project progressed, the research questions became simplified:
- Who were the neighbours?
- How did they meet each other?
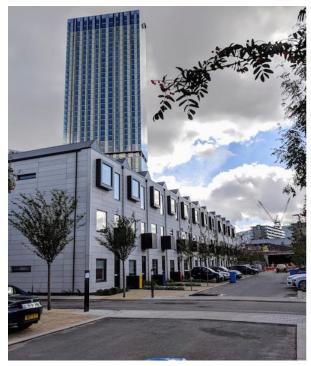- What kinds of encounters occurred?

These questions frame our enquiry into neighbourliness and the encounters between artists, institutions and communities, in the context of the rapidly changing city. It is to these contexts that we turn to next.

MEETING THE NEIGHBOURS

Meet the Neighbours brought together cultural partners from five cities in Europe and North Africa: Quarantine in Manchester, England; Comédie de Béthune in Béthune, France; Grand Theatre in Groningen, the Netherlands; Galeria Labirynt, delivered by independent curators Grzegorz Reske and Marta Keil, in Lublin, Poland; and, LE 18 in Marrakech, Morocco. At an organisational level, the purpose of the project was to link these partners in practice and knowledge exchange on the role of artists and cultural institutions as neighbours in contexts of rapid urban change. The contributions of Florian Malzacher and the presence of the University of Manchester as a research partner were designed to support these conversations. Reflections and documentation were shared on the project website, artists were invited to share their learning by contributing to projects in more than one city, and public facing symposia were held in each of the partner cities. It was, in a broad sense, a period of experimentation as each partner took up the opportunity to examine new ways of practicing and understanding their relationship to their city. As Niek vom Bruch, Managing Director of the Grand Theatre, noted in an interview for this study:

> "We had a few mottos when we started and one of them was: 'we do first and then we think about it' […], so we did that with a lot of activities. People would come in and say: 'can we do this?', and we'd think: 'That sounds interesting, let's just do it.'"

The opportunity to experiment with ways of relating to the city was taken up differently by each of the project partners.

Irwell Riverside, Manchester, where the *Tenancy* house was located

Zine making workshop at the *Tenancy* house

Manchester, UK

In Manchester, Quarantine responded to unprecedented development and private investment in the city centre by taking up 14-month tenancy in a newly developed housing estate on the border of Manchester city centre and Salford. The *Tenancy* house served as a focal point for a curated programme of artist residencies and public events that considered the social and cultural effects of these changes. Activities included artist surgeries, house warmings, zine making, photography, exhibitions, performances and knowledge sharing, and examined the social and material environment of the estate, the estate's non-human neighbours, and the context of the city centre more broadly. Between November 2018 and December 2019, *Tenancy* provided an opportunity for Quarantine to draw on the perspectives and expertise of visiting artists to interpret and engage with the city differently. As Richard Gregory, Quarantine's co-artistic director, noted: "One of the things that's happened through *Tenancy* is that we've made new relationships with people… that give us a different kind of place or voice in the city."

Théâtre La Licorne bring music and install a mural at the Docteur Paul Breynaert residence, Béthune
(Photos by Thomas Faverjon)

Béthune, France

In Béthune, Comédie de Béthune engaged with the social and cultural fallout of deindustrialisation by inviting artists to work with disenfranchised communities in the region. Artists stayed in various settings within the conurbation, including heritage site Cité des Électriciens in Bruay-la-Buissière, a public library in Lillers, and in an apartment on the Résidence Du Docteur Paul Breynaert, a social housing estate in Béthune. Traditionally a producing and receiving house, the theatre's projects focussed on sections of the local population that were not included in Comédie de Béthune's usual audience. The practices of the artists varied from photography, mapping, digital storytelling, choreography, puppetry, public performance and craft workshops, and provided a framework with which the theatre was able to develop new networks with non-cultural institutions and expand their relationships with different groups in the area. Cécile Backès, director of Comédie de Béthune: "Now, the Comédie de Béthune is neighbour to the habitants and the habitants we worked with are our neighbours. That means, in a way, the Comédie's team became neighbours to its own district."

The Grand Theatre, Groningen

Resident students Mollie and Leonardo perform at the Grand

Groningen, the Netherlands

In Groningen, the Grand Theatre opened their theatre building to activists, refugees and homeless students in response to the localised effects of internationalisation, and created opportunities for artists to work in unconventional sites across the city. *Meet the Neighbours* came as the organisation was relaunched under new management and the project provided a valuable opportunity to develop and practice new ways of relating to Groningen and its residents. As Niek explained: "we refer to [*Meet the Neighbours*] a lot … To us, it's really central to the relation we want to have with the surrounding city and the surrounding province." Residencies allowed the theatre to work directly with otherwise hidden or underrepresented sections of the population and consider how they might adapt their organisational practices to foreground the influence and experiences of these groups.

The Juliusza Słowackiego estate, Lublin

Artists collaborate with market vendors to install tarpaulins in Lublin

Lublin, Poland

In Lublin, Galeria Labirynt responded to the rise of right-wing politics by inviting artists to revisit ideas of socialist utopianism through residencies in the Juliusza Słowackiego estate, a soviet era housing estate designed by Oskar and Zofia Hansen, architects and proponents of 'Open Form' urban planning. The estate's original design included planned-in artistic activities such as artists' studios and a 'culture house' taking centre space (although this was later converted into a church). Currently the estate hosts the Muzeum Osiedli Mieszkaniowych, or Museum of Housing Estates, a project collecting stories and objects with residents living in post-war housing estates in the city. Galeria Labirynt's residencies incorporated a range of disciplines including theatre, sculpture, sound design and photography. The artists interacted with both domestic spaces of private dwellings and the different public amenities on the estate, including the market, the central café, workshops and shops. Framed by the Hansen's progressive philosophy of urban space and design, each sought to work directly with estate residents to examine the social and political context of contemporary Polish life, and consider the ways in which cultural practice might interact with the environment of the estate to disrupt and revalue public space and social practice.

Meet the Neighbours public symposia in Marrakech, Morocco

Movement on Road 96 protest group, who artist Shayma Nader collaborated with in Morocco

Marrakech, Morocco

Finally, in Marrakech, LE 18 responded to the economic and social impact of international tourism by working directly with indigenous communities in the city and the surrounding region. Projects such as Shayma Nader's *Tussamrt* drew attention to inequitable water rights in the area that allow vital sources of clean water to become privatised and redirected from remote Berber communities, while guided walks through the city traced the paths of now built over streams, rivers and drinking fountains. These works provided opportunities for LE 18 to confront the economic priorities motivating change in their city by aligning themselves with the concerns and experiences of those residents least well served by these forms of development.

A full timeline of activities and locations is available here.

What is evident across *Meet the Neighbours* is a willingness from project partners to allow artists' experiences as residents to reframe how their organisations understand and engage with the cities in which they are based. Residencies brought local residents together with artistic responses emerging from the project to offer highly localised insight into the dynamics between domestic spaces, local communities, and cultural venues. Grand Theatre's interest in inviting displaced students, refugees and political activists to make use of the theatre as a resource in support of their own goals proposes

an understanding of the theatre itself as public space. As Niek explains, one of the questions Grand Theatre sought to address through their participation in *Meet the Neighbours* was whether a theatre might "be used explicitly for, like, a public act, and not just a closed-door act". Projects such as those led by Galeria Labirynt and Quarantine, however, perform a different role by introducing artistic practice to pre-existing, external environments in order to stimulate new forms of public discourse within those contexts. The estates in Manchester and Lublin that were the focus for these organisations' projects are closely associated with relatively homogenous discourses of social order, economic practice and political value: social conservatism, poverty and tradition in Lublin, and capitalist inflected individualism and economic privilege in Manchester. In reference to Sennett, these might be described as 'closed' systems of relation and opportunity, and the work of the artist to open them up to more complex and less clearly resolved interpretations of value, social practice and public space. Iwona Nowacka, who took up residence in Lublin with collaborator Janek Turkowski, highlights these effects when she notes of the influence of their project: "I would say the most important thing is this story that can be told by [the estate residents]… of doing something together." Finally, Comédie de Béthune and LE 18 propose a further reading still that focusses the outcomes of resident artists' engagement with the city around the organisations themselves. In contrast to Grand Theatre's invitation for residents to make their own use of the theatre and its resources, and Galeria Labirynt and Quarantine's use of cultural practice to encourage existent communities to participate in new forms of public practice, Comédie de Béthune and LE 18 see the knowledge, practice and experience of *Meet the Neighbours* as preparation for their own direct involvement in the future life of the city. As Cécile explains:

> "The question for us, for the Comédie or for me, is: 'how can the Comédie bring a contribution to this way of living in the city?'. So, now we are neighbours – with a lot of people… so it's interesting for us to imagine and to work with the city, with the mayor, and say: 'okay, we have something to build now with this identity of neighbours.'"

LE 18 similarly position themselves as a fixture within the processual infrastructure of city life, providing a consistent, if dissenting, voice within the various public discourses through which the values and politics embodied by the city are negotiated and established.

Meet the Neighbours, therefore, encapsulates a broad array of social, cultural, political and spatial configurations that invite a fluid and circumstantial interpretation of 'neighbour', 'neighbourliness' and 'neighbourhood' and the consequences of their interaction. Neighbourhoods might be material, social or conceptual. Neighbours might be international partners, itinerant artists or residents in a housing estate. Neighbourliness might express a direct social relation, political solidarity, or an

institutional concern. The precise resonances of these terms and the ways in which they help describe the kinds of encounters that took place as a result of the project cannot easily be distilled into an overarching narrative of cultural value or political intent. What is consistent, however, is an intention to leverage neighbourliness as a practice through which to affect the localised environments in which the work takes place, and to use cultural practice to engage critically with the politics and practice of being a neighbour within these contexts. In the context of *Meet the Neighbours*, therefore, neighbourliness is not simply a shorthand for a localised ethics of mutual responsibility, but a socially and politically networked relationship that positions both artist and resident at the centre of a public discourse about the values reflected in and advanced by urban dwelling.

THEORISING PUBLIC SPACE

The practices of neighbourliness observed in *Meet the Neighbours* had effects on the public spaces in which they took place. If we position *Meet the Neighbours* within a genealogy of politically motivated, socially engaged cultural practice, there are several ways in which these effects might be understood. These each emerge from their own disciplinary and philosophical histories, and trace back to the principle of social constructivism, commonly associated with the works of Michel de Certeau (1984) and Henri Lefebvre (1991). Noting the significance of these ideas in describing the relationship between cultural practice and contemporary social contexts, theatre scholar Helen Nicholson summarises Lefebvre's position:

> "[H]is central thesis is that space is never empty but always actively socially produced. He furthers an understanding of space as a dynamic social practice that is produced and reproduced through social action and interaction." (2005: 127)

De Certeau was also concerned with the dynamism of space, which he characterised as unstable and performative, in contrast to the implied stability of 'place'. Building on these ideas, social geographer Doreen Massey describes space as "never finished" (2005: 9), to suggest that, by this same logic, we might transform the social and political realities in which we live by altering the practices and behaviours through which they are constructed.

Public space can be understood in a range of ways in relation to arts practice. Commenting on the field of site-specific art, Miwon Kwon invites a reading of cultural practice as public space. Arguing against the tendency to describe the effects of cultural practice as an intervention of expertise, practice or influence into a materially defined social environment, Kwon writes:

14

> "…the chance to conceive the site as something more than a place—as repressed ethnic history, a political cause, a disenfranchised social group—is an important conceptual leap in redefining the public role of art and artists." (2002: 30)

For Kwon, an understanding of space as distinct from the material reality in which the arts practice takes place, associates cultural practice with new fields of social and political effect. As Kwon argues, this perspective liberates space from the strictures of institutional critique and the disciplinary values embodied by the artist themselves to allow art to become part of the processes through which space is produced and participation an act of social (re)construction.

Malzacher similarly proposes a reading of public art as an act of curation – not of public space per se, but of the discourses through which public space is constructed. Drawing on Mouffe (2006), Malzacher highlights the potential for performance to allow contrasting and contradictory ideas to coexist, and for these differences in perspective, belief, interest and value to become a public concern. Citing visual culture scholar Irit Rogoff, Malzacher suggests that the role of the artist-curator is not to use their art to work towards an idealised vision of the present or future but, rather, to "not allow things to harden" (2014: 119). As Massey argues, for social practice to productively inform how we live, it is necessary to assert that public space is "always under construction" (2005: 9), that there are "always connections yet to be made" (ibid.: 11). For Malzacher, cultural practice contributes towards this process, foregrounding the performative dynamics of public space by bringing people together in new and unexpected ways.

Lastly, Richard Sennett examines the organisation of city space as the manifestation of two linked ideas, the *ville* and the *cité*. As he writes, the *ville* represents the planned environment of the city: not simply the structures and infrastructures of its material construction, but the politics and intentions they represent. The *cité*, in contrast, is the lived reality of the city: "the feelings people harboured about neighbours and strangers and attachments to place" (2018: 1). The two are intimately connected, but not necessarily harmonious. They rehearse Mouffe's articulation of agonism as contrasting spatial and political logics destined to exist in unresolved tension with one another. Sennett ponders whether the *cité* and the *ville* might be brought together, connected and integrated, through open-ness to experiment and difference, and through 'modest making', the inclination of ordinary man (sic) to make small, quality adjustments to their lives and to promote the lives of others. For us, these terms and their agonism are useful because they help us consider how artists respond to both the *ville* and the *cité* through their engagement with neighbourhoods. They invite us to

consider the artist's work in concert with the forces and structures through which the city is already constructed, and to examine how these influences shape their politics and effects.

Taken together, these perspectives provide a lens through which to consider the practices observed in this study. They highlight the significance of contingency and opportunity in determining the relationship between art and social context, and the potential outcomes for the people involved. The following section explores some examples of different practices associated with artist residencies and public artworks, to provide further context for *Meet the Neighbours*.

PRACTICING PUBLIC SPACE

Conventional 'artist-in-residence' (AIR) models tend to focus on the development of artistic product and practice rather than engagement with the situated social relations that artists enter into during their stay. Traditionally associated with the visual arts, but now common within the performing arts as well, some AIR are specifically established in spaces that provide isolation, aiming to remove the artist from everyday life as a precondition of creativity and protect them from the need to respond to their material environments. Others have 'site-specificity' as their primary objective. These forms of work can incorporate the interests of hosts such as cultural institutions, businesses and science research organisations, and traces of the artist's practice often remain in situ as outputs of their engagement with their context. Residencies can open up spaces for the interrogation of host environments through creative practice, motivated by the potential for mutual benefits for host and artist. The potential for extrinsic value of artist residencies is increasingly recognised within urban planning, seen "as a vital component of any strategy to encourage the growth of a creative community or region" (Lehman, 2018: 13).

Meet the Neighbours was an opportunity to diverge from the AIR model, and think differently about artists as residents, embedded in the spatial relations and practices of context. As such it belongs to a body of site-specific, context-driven work related to performance, requiring an interdisciplinary framework to explore these practices and their effects, particularly in relation to public space (Ferdman, 2018). The project's approach lies closer to the movement of 'New Genre Public Art' named in the 1990s to identify art in public that consciously engages with 'the field' (as opposed to the gallery, museum or theatre) bringing together a range of process-focused practices that involved cross-disciplinary collaboration with context and with audiences as participants (Lacy, 2008). Its intention was not specifically to create value for identified beneficiaries, but rather to explore public practice that could open up and make space within neighbourhoods.

16

Public Pie, by Dutch artists Maaike Bertens and Marieke van der Bruggen, is an example of 'practicing public space' through the performance of neighbourliness. This two-person performance is a mobile apple pie exhibition kitchen that tours to outdoor spaces, offering free food and haptic experience (the warmth of the oven, the smell and taste of apple) to members of the public. Through conversation and sharing of tasks as their pie is being prepared, *Public Pie* attempts to build temporary relational spaces. However, Merx (2011) argues that the intimate scale and 'little services' that the artwork presents lack the ambiguity and self-conscious awareness of the superstructures of 'big exchanges', which following Bourriaud are necessary to relational art (Merx, 2011: 135). This ambiguity is further obscured by the performance's context: for example, when performed at festivals *Public Pie* is assumed to be a commercial catering stall, and the acts of social interaction on a warm, comfy seat while the pie is baking become merely a market transaction. For Merx, this 'mis-performance' (2011: 132) reveals the lack of stability in public space, which is contingent on both the practices and contexts of its performance.

This contingency can also mean opportunities for creative disruption, and the creation of agonistic public space. *X-apartments*, a curatorial project by Matthias Lilienthal, consciously disrupts domestic space and intentionally plays with notions of the foreign and familiar, the public and private, by inviting audiences to tour around two neighbourhoods in Lebanon to performances that take place within private living spaces, by walking from apartment to apartment (Madjalante, 2017). Repeated in a number of cities, Madjalente observes the particular potency of the project, in bringing strangers into neighbourhoods where walking is strongly discouraged, and playing with the idea of neighbourhood tourism in a place that has an internal political logic based on maintaining foreignness and an uneasy relationship with cosmopolitanism.

Some interventions test the contingency of public space on its context by actively claiming it and making it through playful performance practice. Whereas the contexts for the performance of *Public Pie* informed the ways in which participants engaged with and experienced social relations, *The Roof*, by Amsterdam based arts collective MOHA, attempts to self-consciously differentiate space from the superstructures of logic, order and value that underwrite Bourriaud's big exchanges. Both an action and an object, *The Roof* is a long white sheet, large enough to easily accommodate sixteen people walking down the street with the roof held over their heads, but light enough to be carried by one or two, suspended on string, or hung from a building. It is designed as a practice of both habitation and occupation, operating as a strategy for taking and making space in already coded environments such

as town squares, shopping centres and public streets. Once in place, it becomes a space for barbecues and karaoke, proclamations and conversation, as MOHA write: "actions that can't be sustained and maintained without the others." The creation and occupation of temporary spaces reveals the potential for residency to reframe our experience and expectations of space in ways that challenge rather than accord with existing spatial values.

The examples above concern the role of artists in relation to the *cité*, to the ways of dwelling in the city. Artists are positioned as care-takers, as stewards of spaces and neighbourhoods, the providers of creative solutions and of shelter and food. They can also be researchers, uncovering new knowledge through disruption of the everyday. If the presence of artists can transform the practice of public space even on a temporary or ephemeral basis, then the question arises of how spaces for artists to be neighbourly can be planned into cities, bringing together the *cité* and the *ville*.

THE ARTIST RESIDENCY AS *VILLE*

The establishment of settlement houses in the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Chicago's Hull House, provide a formative model for cultural integration based on participation. These promoted arts and craft activities (alongside other forms of education and training) to encourage cultural integration amongst diverse migrant communities and across socio-economic divides. The social mission of the settlement model is sustained and durational, based on the promotion of mutual understanding and the extension of tolerance through co-existence, education and exchange. They contrast with projects where commissioned artists come into temporary residence in a neighbourhood, to lead a participation programme that promises social outcomes. The extent to which neighbourliness is possible (or even preferable) depends on both place-responsiveness and duration/seriality; in the settlement, these factors are built into the infrastructure for settlement; they are planned into the *ville*.

More recent examples of 'planning in' include [Artist House 45](#), 2015-2020, in which Leeds City Council gave permission for East Street Arts to use a publicly owned terraced house for artist residencies on the condition that they renovated the building. Another can be found in the Juliusza Słowackiego estate in Lublin, where the majority of Galeria Labirynt's *Meet the Neighbours* residencies took place. Designed and built between 1960 and 1966 as an experiment in socialist utopianism, the original plans include artist studios at the top of each apartment block. Plagued by challenges common to public projects under the Soviet regime, the architects' plans for the estate were never fully realised and,

exacerbated by political upheaval after the collapse of the country's single party system in 1989, the studios have now been repurposed or abandoned. As with *Artist House 45*, the artist studios were contingent on a circumstantial relationship between the creative ambitions of the architects and the dominant political regime of the time. The studios failed, not because artistic contributions to the spatial practices of the estate were somehow ineffective or insufficient, but because the political discourse that permitted artists to occupy the studios changed. Whilst artists in residence can have a profound influence on the social, spatial and political environments of the city, their effects are shaped by surrounding power relations, and remain subject to the support of local and national gatekeepers.

Notably, the mere presence of artists in neighbourhoods can indicate broader urban change relating to the *ville*, as testified by the literature on arts-led regeneration and gentrification. For every boosterist account that identifies evidence of positive correlations between the attraction of artists to neighbourhoods as incoming 'creative class' with positive economic benefits (Florida, 2002), there are many more critical accounts that reveal the complexity of transactional relationships between artists and local governance concerning live-work space. For example, in her study of Leipzig, Jacobi (2016) shows how emerging artists are attracted to settle in the town by mutual exchange in first instance, where housing associations and developers offer incentives such low rent or free accommodation in exchange for stewardship of the building/neighbourhood. Their residence is an accepted component of Leipzig's urban regeneration strategy, acting as agents of "pioneer regeneration (or even pioneer gentrification, as some critics suggest)" (Ibid: 188). These three cyclical stages in arts-led regeneration are outlined by Rich (2017): firstly, settlement, where artists become involved in local cultural production; secondly, this production is commodified and legitimated to non-artistic middle class communities (and sold as both commercial product and government-sponsored regeneration); and thirdly, neighbourhoods are gentrified through further capital development down the line, and the displacement of artists through rent rises begins (Rich, 2017:3). The presence of artists as a negative signifier is also noted by Jen Harvie's critique of pop-up performances and installations as regeneration mechanisms in London (Harvie, 2011). She argues that participation in these temporary events is predicated on, and actively reinforces, the relative freedom of movement of the creative middle classes:

> "…when disadvantaged classes are displaced or forced to move to where markets send them. Mobile capital flows but in ways that are decidedly uneven, unstable and unregulated, reinforcing class stability rather than class mobility. Cultural strategies ostensibly designed for the city's growth and liveability risk adversely affecting its liveability, especially for the city's most disadvantaged citizens."
> (Ibid: 17)

Whether artists are perceived as useful, playful or problem neighbours, these examples suggest a relationship between the material circumstances of their residency within neighbourhoods, the ways in which neighbourhoods and neighbourliness are conceived, and the kinds of participation and public spaces that are produced as a result. The *Meet the Neighbours* artists were invited into contexts where deindustrialisation, urban development, population churn and socio-economic disadvantage are everyday material circumstances, with the express purpose of engaging with these conditions through their practice. As Jeanne van Heeswijk, who contributed to the *Meet the Neighbours* symposium at LE 18 in Marrakech, maintains:

> "'[T]he investigative and explorative qualities of the art should serve a process in which we can learn collectively how we can engage and act upon the world in order to renegotiate the conditions of our existence." (van Heeswijk, 2017)

As such, the practices of artists and the public spaces that these open up with and within neighbourhoods, can bring together the *cité* and *ville*, drawing neighbours into dialogue, and providing opportunities for renegotiation. In the following section we explore examples from *Meet the Neighbours* which illustrate these encounters and their effects, through the observations and reflections of artists, partners and participants.

NEIGHBOURLY ENCOUNTERS

This section discusses some of the encounters that occurred during the project, between artists and residents, residents and institutions, and artists and neighbourhoods (including entire housing estates). We explore how these encounters reveal and revalue public space, and make use of different social and spatial practices within the city. We consider how they include and promote agonism as a fundamental characteristic of neighbourliness with the potential to bring together the *cité* and *ville*.

One of the aims set out for *Meet the Neighbours* was the creation of formally progressive performance work that engages directly in civic life. This ambition can be traced throughout the activities that took place: for example, in Morocco, Belgian artist Jérôme Giller drew on the conventions of carpet weaving within the indigenous Amazigh community to establish new social contexts in which participant-neighbours were able to spend time, share experiences and encounter one another differently. Cécile Backès, director of Comédie de Béthune, observed that Quarantine's staging of *Summer.* in Béthune, provided a forum for people from different sections of social and economic life to come together in ways that contradict spatial convention in the city. As she explained:

> "When I talk about *Summer.*, for instance, it was not a project with poor people, it was a project with mixed people, which is really different. This is the link because you feel fear when [the idea or experience is abstract]. When you are in concrete reality the fear is different. You can feel other feelings."

Rather than attempt to document all of the activities that took place over the project, we have selected four practices that offer particular insight into how *Meet the Neighbours* interacted with the social and civic life of the city, and give form to the cultural and political significance of neighbourly relations within these contexts.

The vegetable market on the Juliusza Słowackiego estate, Lublin

Nowacka & Turkowski, Lublin, Poland

Over four weeks between February and September 2019, artists and performance makers Iwona Nowacka and Janek Turkowski were resident in Lublin on the Juliusza Słowackiego estate. Their work focussed on the estate's well-established vegetable market. An original part of the housing estate design, alongside other recreational and commercial spaces, the vegetable market is currently the only shopping area on the estate. Though there are some coffee shops and cafes on the periphery, a broad corridor of outdoor stalls on which vendors sell nuts, fruits, and fresh and pickled vegetables is the market's main feature. Because of their architectural interest, the market and the estate are protected structures, and vendors protect themselves from the elements with a series of semi-official tarpaulin covers strung up between the sides of the market building.

When Iwona and Janek arrived, their intention was to work with vendors to design and install hanging sculptures in the marketplace. However, as they spent time in the estate it quickly became clear that the covers themselves were an essential component of the social and economic life of the market. They protect the goods that vendors sell and demarcate one stall from another, and also provide a point of interest, tension and commonality. As Iwona explains:

> "…we came with this very theoretical concept: we will hang something like a hanging sculpture there, and we were putting some models up and trying things out and, you know, measuring the wind. Of course, also being interested in attracting the attention of people – of the vendors – and they were asking what we were doing: 'Ahh, okay. It's a sculpture. Ahh, okay. It will not fly. Should it stay like

22

> this?', and so on, and out of this conversation there were more and more relations, and then somebody asked: 'Look, my cover is damaged. Maybe you could do something about it?'"

They refocussed their practice to work directly with the vendors' covers and, as they explained, this served as a catalyst for new kinds of conversation about what the space of the market was for, the kinds of experiences it might contain, and the relationships it could support.

When thinking about 'open form'[1] approaches to integrating the *cité* and the *ville*, Sennett distinguishes between 'sequential' and 'synchronous' spaces, which he associates with the theatre and the agora or market, respectively (Sennett, 2018). Whilst the theatre invokes a sequential spatial dynamic, in which audiences are collectively engaged in the linear unfolding of a shared experience, the market allows for the layering of events, experiences and influences and is, by nature, less predictable: people can undertake many different activities side by side at the same time. The political dynamics of the theatre might be described as passive or, at least, ordered, whereas the agora is where discussion and debate take place, news is heard, gossip shared and behaviour learnt; it encourages sociability and encounter.

By choosing to work on the vendors' covers rather than present a theatrical display of hanging sculptures, Janek and Iwona contributed to the market as a meeting point and synchronic space. This new field of relations drew vendors together and incorporated the visiting artists into the spatial discourse of the market. As Janek and Iwona explained, the market is a place where 'traditional' values are heavily entrenched. They elaborated that just as they felt aware that their progressive values might not be well received by the market vendors, the vendors expressed concerns that, as artists, Janek and Iwona would attack or criticise their beliefs. Within this context, work on the covers provided an important framework within which this unresolved tension could play out in a way that avoided outright rejection or oppositionalism on either side.

---

[1] Public space that promotes synchronic activity is the first of the five 'open' forms important to creating an 'open *ville*'. The other four are: promoting porosity by privileging the border over the boundary, for example, parks should not have high fences but can signal where they start and end in different ways; creating punctuation marks through monuments and markers which modestly help give places without much character some definition, and signpost routes around neighbourhoods; use of 'type-forms' in buildings, providing variations of different periods and styles of architecture and design; seed-planning – the instigation of multiple forms of activities across the city, which are then allowed to take their characteristics, for example, street markets planned around the city which will then evolve into different types based on supply and demand, or libraries which have maximum costs and minimum construction standards but which are then derived by local communities and architects. (Sennett, 2018: 205-241)

As the artists explained, they didn't conceal the ways in which their values were different from those of the people they were working with, rather, they allowed them to be part of an on-going conversation.

> **Iwona**: "I had a feeling that it is so appreciated that we didn't want to start to identify our relationship in this way. At the end it was, for me, a very nice moment with this guy that wanted to talk. He said what he thinks. We said what we think. Then he said: 'Okay, I have to go', and he said goodbye. And the next day, he was even more with us. He was really, like, coming every time he didn't have a customer. He was really running to us and, you know, trying to talk more and more"

> **Janek**: "There were a lot of differences between us and it was very surprising for us how quickly these differences disappeared when we were doing something together."

Grand Theatre, Groningen, the Netherlands

After declaring bankruptcy in 2015, Grand Theatre reopened in 2016 with a new artistic team, led by Mark Yeoman and Niek vom Bruch. As Niek explained, their involvement in *Meet the Neighbours* coincided with the reopening of the theatre and represented an opportunity for the new organisation to think carefully about their relationship to the city:

> "From the very start of the new Grand Theatre we decided it has to be much more open to the city than it used to be […]. We really wanted to make new connections to the city and [*Meet the Neighbours*] is about making new connections to the city."

Grand Theatre's intention was not just to use the opportunity to build relationships with sections of the population that weren't already regular audiences, but to see how the practice of being a neighbour to different groups and communities within the city might inform how they worked as an institution.

Niek contrasts this approach with that of the city's municipal theatre, who had managed Grand Theatre's programme during the months of its bankruptcy. As he explained, internationalisation and increased in-migration are having a profound effect on the social, cultural and demographic makeup of the city, but "the city isn't really changing its identity". He identifies prominent cultural centres such as the municipal theatre as helping maintain the city's sense of itself as a 'provincial Dutch town', by continuing to produce and programme work designed for a middle-class, middle-aged, Dutch-speaking audience. The result is not only that Groningen's new population are implicitly and practically excluded

from these spaces, but that cultural discourse in the city reinforces a narrative of belonging and identity that is at odds with the lived reality of the city itself.

In response, Grand Theatre focussed on work with sections of the population that were under-represented both within the theatre and within civic discourse in the city as a whole. As well as working in a variety of city contexts, they also invited people to live in and make use of the theatre building, including: residents on the *Amanpuri*, a former riverboat now permanently moored as housing for long-term asylum seekers; two students made homeless by a localised housing crisis; and local members of the international environmental activist movement, Extinction Rebellion. Each residency involved conventional processes of participatory cultural practice, as guests worked with a range of artists to produce public outputs in the form of readings, performances and sculpture. They also, however, implicated café staff, technicians, administrators and theatre management as individuals throughout the organisation, who were brought into contact with the resident guests' contributions to the spatial discourse of the theatre, disrupting the cultural orthodoxy of the space. Niek describes this dynamic as a relational 'triangle' between neighbours, artists and the theatre itself, in which each is seen to learn from the influence of the other two and the new situations they create. As Niek noted of Mollie and Leonardo, two homeless students who temporarily took up residence in the theatre:

> "I really enjoyed that period of them just being here. It was funny because they would just walk, like, from the kitchen to their room. Sometimes they were just in the kitchen, and I think really, literally – especially with Mollie – it happened, a group coming into the kitchen and she would introduce herself: 'Hello, I'm Mollie. I live here.'"

By opening the theatre to disenfranchised sections of the population, Grand Theatre is not just providing a space where people from different backgrounds can co-exist but is entering into exchange with those who come into the building. The micro-adjustments required to accommodate sections of the population with different needs, experiences and values to those traditionally embodied by the theatre were forms of Sennett's 'modest making' and, in similar terms, we can see their influence extend beyond the relational practice of the residency itself. For example, Niek reflects on how Extinction Rebellion are now incorporating theatre techniques in their plans for disruption and protest; while Mollie explains that opportunities to volunteer at the theatre and participate in projects such as *The Grand Pillow Society*, a weekly storytelling night, continue to play an important role in her understanding of Dutch culture and how she engages with and experiences the city. In the other direction, as Niek explains:

> "The way we went along with *Meet the Neighbours*… is really how we want to relate to the rest of the world. So, it's really in our identity. It's not just intellectual, it's really how we want to work"

This can cause tensions: facilitating activist organisations requires flexibility and opens up spontaneity and risk. The short lead times and uncertainties of these forms of public event lie in tension with the longer-term planning arc of 'usual' theatre practice. But there are skills that can be learnt: Niek refers to the professional "radical flexibility" of the refugee organisation, borne of necessity, as "a chaos partly based on need". In accommodating their guests, and the different ways they embody and construct the space of the city, Grand Theatre evokes a new way of practicing public space which, in its complications and uncertainty, adds a counterpoint to exclusionary narratives of provincialism and identity that hold sway in the city.

The *Tenancy* house, Manchester

An ice sculpture installed by the Surman-Winters family

Tenancy, Manchester, England

In November 2018, Quarantine took up 12-month tenancy at 2a Springfield Lane, Irwell Riverside. A new estate of seventy-two 2- and 3-story terraced houses on the edge of Salford and Manchester city centre, Irwell Riverside was, at the time, the most recent outcome of a boom in development and regeneration initiatives that has seen the population of the city centre grow from a few thousand in 1998 to over 50,000 at the start of the project. This rapid increase in population has been facilitated by a series of 'place building' strategies that seek to reshape city neighbourhoods and attract

economically active new residents, amidst media debate and council concerns over the release of available land for affordable housing and the growing problem of homelessness in Greater Manchester.

The *Tenancy* house reflected the tensions and paradoxes of its broader environment. As Sennett notes, "[b]uildings are seldom isolated facts" (2018: 2); rather, they enforce through their form, design and arrangement the politics and attitudes of the regime that built them. Urban Splash, the development company, marketed the estate to prospective buyers as a 'proper neighbourhood', whilst residents are encouraged to buy into the brand of corporate identikit urban living: regimented, identical, pre-planted front gardens; modular, prefabricated, minimalist interiors. As Peter, a resident and *Meet the Neighbours* participant, noted: "If there's a bin out of place it causes conversation." Where the estate's promotion of privatised individualism is most apparent, however, is in its attitude to public space. Except for a small triangular park, gated to keep out non-residents and too small to accommodate another property, the only common space on the estate are the roads residents use to commute to work. As a mapping of relational potential, the social contexts of the estate are almost exclusively indoors, confined to pre-existing family or social groups, and isolated from other residents.

The ways that public space is arranged and practiced are a product of the dominant forces driving change in Manchester. In taking up tenancy, Quarantine hoped to understand and interrogate these influences. The residencies they hosted offered subtle interventions into this space, inviting residents to participate in relational practices that challenged the logics and values structuring social discourse within the estate. For example, performance artists Grace Surman and Gary Winters were resident in the house with their children Hope and Merrick. Over four separate weeks, coinciding with school holidays, they drew on "play, experimentation and creativity" as tools to examine how their lives as a family might "transpose" to the *Tenancy* house and create spaces for neighbourliness through this practice.

When framing the ethics of an 'open' city, Sennett highlights the distinction between borders and boundaries: whereas a boundary might be understood as a social or material limit that keeps social groups apart, a "border is an edge where different groups interact" (2018: 220). The Surman-Winters family provocatively played with this distinction as it is written into the material context of the estate. The Irwell Riverside estate has been built across the road from one of Salford's many social housing estates for families and individuals receiving state benefits. The economic disparity between the two

neighbourhoods is emphasised by stark differences in appearance as the off-white exterior cladding of the taller Irwell Riverside houses contrasts the industrial red brick of the adjacent estate.

During their first residency, the family commissioned two ice sculptures designed to reference the stone standards typically found at the entrances of aristocratic estates. On a cold December evening these were illuminated and positioned on either side of Springfield Lane, the road that separates the two estates. Using the sculptures to frame the border between the estates as an opportunity for conversation and exchange, the family hosted an evening of hot chocolate and biscuits as an invitation to residents from each of the estates to come and meet one another.

Similar practices in the summer months saw the roads between houses within the Irwell Riverside estate repurposed as a stage for a filmed choreography between neighbours, and gardens used to bury time capsules documenting life on the estate in 2019. Set against the closely monitored equilibrium of the Irwell Riverside estate, these practices take on a transgressive dynamic. They butt up against the aesthetic, material and social borders of high garden fences, locked front doors, access roads and unadorned exterior walls to question the behaviours that govern the production of space within the estate, while inviting residents to take part in practices and begin relationships that would allow that space to be thought and practiced differently.

In conversation, Richard Gregory and Renny O'Shea, Quarantine's co-artistic directors, highlighted what they see as a decline of experimentation in Manchester as economically driven development suppresses the rich opportunities of border life. Within this context, neighbourly practices that remap or reconsider public space are of political as well as social concern as they offer an alternative to the boundary making homogeneity of economic growth. *Tenancy* provided a framework for thinking through different ways of being open to the city and for facilitating and moderating encounters. As Richard explained, reflecting on the influence of the project:

> "It's a sort of part of a mapping, really…. It's like they're all part of the map of this city and our history in the city and no one is more dominant than another... I'm interested in what happens when you bring very different sets of people into the same space."

The story of development in Manchester is a story of imposition; as Richard noted, "Manchester's identity feels like it is being curated from the top down." Property value has fuelled the city's economic strategy, whilst the failure to provide the promised quota of affordable housing in the city centre was an act of boundary formation, excluding people and practices not seen to be economically valuable (Pidd, 2018). In this context, the mapping that the artists in residence provided offers a different way

of navigating the city, identifying borderlands and opening up public spaces through which to explore a more equitable, socially experimental version of the city's future.

The Cité des Électriciens, Béthune

Aleksandra Borys runs a workshop with local children

Comédie de Béthune, Béthune, France

For fifteen days in September 2019, Polish choreographer and visual artist Aleksandra Borys took up residence in the Cité des Électriciens, a heritage organisation in Bruay-la-Buissière located 10km from Comédie de Béthune and established to promote the history of coal mining in the area. From the mid-19th century, for close to 100 years, coal mining was the main industry and employer in Pas-de-Calais, the region of northern France in which Béthune and Bruay-la-Buissière are located. As firms discovered new seams, small towns of low-cost terraced housing designed for workers and their families proliferated across the region and, as a result, there are no large cities in the area. Instead, Béthune and Bruay-la-Buissière are part of an agglomeration of over 100 settlements of between 100 and 20,000 inhabitants. Béthune serves as the main cultural centre in the agglomeration and Comédie de Béthune have a well-established relationship with the region, typically taking adapted versions of their main stage work to around 25% of nearby towns.

The Cité des Électriciens itself occupies the mining town of 8 streets and around 30 houses from which it gets its name. Originally built between 1852-61 and largely abandoned after deindustrialisation, the Cité has since been restored to its original condition and now comprises public gardens, allotments,

social housing for 10 Bruay families, accommodation for artists and tourists, and a museum and interpretation centre. In addition to preserving the history of the mining industry and its impact on the social and material landscape of the region, the Cité also has a clear social mission. Anthony Martin works as a heritage guide for the Cité and was a close collaborator with Comédie de Béthune during the project. He describes Bruay as a 'difficult city', still suffering from the collapse of the mining industry in the 1990s, with accompanying social division, high levels of unemployment and low educational attainment, and a more pervasive lack of purpose and identity for residents in the area. Within this context, the role of the Cité is not simply to document the events of the region's past, but to re-present these in a way that is meaningful for its current residents. As Anthony explains: "We want them to feel proud to be from this area… I don't know if it changes everything, but we try to get them just to be proud."

Aleksandra's practice focusses on the dynamic relationship between the body and the social and material world within which it is located. As she explains: "Within each body you have the social, the political, the economic." She planned to examine issues of cultural identity and migration through work with the area's large Polish population, however, after arriving she refocussed her practice in response to the open spaces of the Cité. Housing in the Cité is arranged around a series of gardens and grazing areas originally intended to supply food for miners and their families. Now incorporated into the heritage work of the organisation, they are, in Sennett's terminology, synchronous spaces, some of the few in which the multiple interests of the Cité overlap. Residents, many of whom are elderly, take walks around the gardens and tend to crops of tomatoes and garden vegetables; young people from neighbouring estates, often with recent memories of the Cité as a desolate 'no-go' area, drift in and congregate; tourists take breaks from the museum to sunbathe and eat lunch; heritage staff, identifiable in their branded polo shirts, make journeys from one part of the site to another. As Aleksandra explains:

> "I never took it [the invitation to 'meet the neighbours'] literally, as, you know, a time just to go and meet people who lived in a particular area and have coffees with them and get to know their life… I'm more interested to learn the timing and the use of space of people of a particular area."

By spending time in these places, observing how they are used and the physical and spatial relationships that occur within them, Aleksandra developed a physical practice which investigated the use of space in the Cité that was then re-presented as a workshop for local people. Anthony described a workshop with a local school group in this way:

> "With the children it was really interesting because she always starts a workshop... and she asks them to be barefoot, and just to make a tour [walk] in the gardens, and after it's just about the connection between all the children and also with the nature, and it was really good. They enjoyed it because they don't have any occasion to do that... Aleksandra wanted them to be quiet almost all of the time. The only word they were allowed to say was 'bonjour' – 'hello' to the nature – and in my head I was thinking: 'it will not be possible; the children will just talk all the time.' And they just stay silent! For example, there were nine on the floor for 5-7 minutes and no-one was talking, they were just connected with her and the ground."

Within the institutional framework of the Cité des Électriciens, the open spaces are equivalent to Sennett's agora or marketplace. While the carefully choreographed environments of the interpretation centre and museum trace the chronology of the mining industry and are explicitly aligned with a linear unfolding of meaning, the gardens are spaces of cross-pollination, in which different interpretations of space, belonging and history have the potential to take on new and unpredictable forms. Where the function of the market, however, is framed by a clear unifying intention, the open space of the Cité holds an uncertain status, both within the framework of the organisation and within the living culture of Bruay-la-Buissière. As Aleksandra explained:

> "You have the teenagers coming every afternoon, and I have a feeling that they still have a memory of the ruins here where they would hide and do their stuff... You can see they approach it as a rough environment; as a place where they can be rough as well. And then you have older couples walking between the tomatoes. I think there will be a few years before this place gets its own personality."

Heritage scholar Laurajane Smith describes heritage as a "process of constructing or reconstructing cultural and social values and meanings" (Smith, 2018), commonly orientated around material objects and physical sites but independent from them. Just as Malzacher proposes a reading of public art as the curation of public space, Smith posits heritage as a curation of "identity, place and memory". Within this context, Aleksandra's focus on the open spaces of the Cité takes on a subversive dynamic, reframing the Cité des Électriciens conceptually and performatively to give rise to interactions beyond those initially intended by those leading the project. The invitation to explore the body's relationship to place and identity making within the site goes beyond the linguistic strategies of the heritage centre and invites residents to consider how the new and uncertain spaces of their shared belonging are negotiated and performed. As Aleksandra noted:

> "This place was open three months ago, so you can feel the freshness of it. How it is unused. It has this *massive* past, this short moment of refreshment [the renovation], and now it's ready, but it doesn't know what it's ready for."

As a new organisation, the Cité is still working out how to manage the relationship between the history it represents and contemporary processes of social construction in the city. Aleksandra's residency drew attention to the role of the gardens and the natural parts of the Cité in providing new ways for local residents to engage with the region's complicated history, and provided a template for the organisation's curatorial activities that they hope to replicate in the future. Through an embodied exploration of the city's common heritage, it formed a space for public curation of the Cité's possible futures and proposed a more open and unpredictable relationship between the *cité* and its *ville*. As Anthony explained:

> "At the end it was interesting because you feel that it's not about how you speak but how [you] interact with your body as another form of language… Meeting Aleksandra, it was amazing... Speaking with her changes a lot of things for me. It's a relation to the world that is quite new for us."

BEING GOOD NEIGHBOURS

As Sennett writes, the *cité* and the *ville* are not abstract ideas, but two parties within a relationship between the material context of the city and the diverse formations, values and experiences of the population. The ways in which they appear and the actions that might bring them into closer relation, to write the 'collective place-consciousness' of the *cité* more explicitly into the metastructure of the *ville*, are highly and specifically circumstantial. The examples discussed here demonstrate a commitment on the part of *Meet the Neighbours* partners and artists to respond to these circumstances. Throughout the three years, five cities and over forty residencies of the project, artists were given permission to engage, not only with the institutional and economic imperative to 'meet the neighbours', but with the nuances of neighbourhood and neighbourliness in the contexts in which they worked.

There are multiple ways in which to interpret the outcomes of this approach. From an instrumental perspective the project certainly supported access to cultural opportunity for excluded sections of the population, and led to ongoing strategies for audience development and widening participation. From an artistic and aesthetic perspective, it provided a foundation for innovation as new interests, perspectives and experiences were foregrounded in the process of making art, and boosted the opportunities for mobility of practice and exchange of ideas as the residencies moved between cities. For the cities and the residents of their neighbourhoods, the legacy of the project lies in the way in which it addressed what Sennett describes as the 'jagged' relationship between the *cité* and the *ville*, by creating public space in which the values, experiences and predispositions of city life might be encountered and reconfigured.

In Britain at least, much recent academic commentary has focussed on the 'instrumentalisation' of artistic practice that actively seeks to engage with places and their communities. Claire Bishop, for instance, has criticised top-down models of participatory practice as "soft social engineering" (2012: 5), based on the premise that the capacity of artistic practice to interact with and reshape public space is exploited by government interests through the mechanism of public funding. The models for practice in *Meet the Neighbours*, however, invite a more democratic reading of art's relationship with social context. Here, numerous examples – such as Grand Theatre's hiring of a translator so that the stories of a migrant artist could be read out loud to a Dutch audience for the first time, or Magdalena Franczak's examination of physical labour in the Juliusza Słowackiego market – draw on embedded, localised perspectives to interrogate the social fabric within which the practice is located. What emerged was not the suppressive influence of Bishop's critique, or the recirculation of uneven

privilege and opportunity voiced earlier by Harvie, but a recognition of the resistance and agency of the residencies' locations and a sensitivity to their differences in perspective, experience and aspiration.

> "When we conceive of public space as nothing more than a stage for different performances, we tend to overlook the fact that what is at stake in all these performances is the actual and continuous formation of public space itself… By considering public space as a performance, we can see how all actors have the potential to re-shape public space from a place where people pass by anonymously to a space for personal encounters, or conversely, from a site of intimacy into a late capitalist marketplace." (Merx, 2011: 137)

Meet the Neighbours provided ways in which different neighbours were mobilised as political actors, encouraging public discourse and facilitating agonistic public space to reveal, map and critique the tensions and fissures of rapidly changing cities and highlight the need for rethinking the ethics of city dwelling. Though temporary, the residencies introduced and promoted the spatial practices of open form planning espoused by Sennett (and the Hansen's): synchronous spaces, modest making, and the identification and use of borderlands to dilute the private spheres and boundaries of city centre regeneration. At an organisational level, they changed the ways in which project partners think about and practice their relationships with their cities, and with their neighbours, exchanging and learning new practices, such as radical flexibility and embodied and communal heritage interpretation.

The conversations opened up between neighbours actively resisted any single, unified narrative of place and value as might be associated with processes of gentrification or instrumentalism. Instead *Meet the Neighbours* promoted neighbourly discourse with the varying perspectives, relationships and experiences necessary to tell more expansive, complicated stories about the contexts in which people and institutions live and act as good neighbours in the city.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bishop, C. (2012) *Artificial hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso

Byrne, J. (2012) "Grizedale Arts: Use Value and the Little Society", *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, Issue 30 (Summer 2012), pp. 100-107

de Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life* Berkeley: University of California Press

Eagles, S. (2009) "Thomas Coglan Horsfall, and Manchester Art Museum and University Settlement", *the encyclopaedia of informal education*, http://www.infed.org/settlements/manchester_art_museum_and_university_settlement.htm

Ferdman, B. (2018) *Off-sites: Contemporary performance beyond site specific* Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press

Florida, R. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002

Fox, J. (2005) "Whose Culture?", *ArtsProfessional*, 106, 26 September 2005

Gilmore, A. & Doyle, P (2020) in Belfiore, E. & Gibson, L. (eds) *Histories of Cultural Participation, Values and Governance* London: Palgrave MacMillan

Harvie, J. (2011), "Social mobility: Cultural policy, art practices, gentrification and social housing", King's College London: Performance Research Group, Public Investments, 2011/12, London paper given 24

van Heeswijk, J. (2017) *Jeanne van Heeswijk Public Art and Social Practice Presentation February 23, 2017*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1P0NEKle-GI [Accessed: 21/04/20]

Jacobi, S. (2016). "Beyond the art school: pedagogic networks in the visual arts and their engagement with the city of Leipzig", in Comunian, R. & Gilmore, A. (Eds.), *Routledge Cities and Regions: Higher Education and the Creative Economy* London and New York: Routledge

Kwon, M (2002) *One Place After Another: site-specific art and locational identity* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press

Lacy, S (2008) Time in Place: New Genre Public Art a Decade Later in Cartiere, C. & Willis, S (eds) The Practice of Public Art, London: Routledge

Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space* Cornwall: T.J. Press ltd.

Madjalanie, L. (2017) Foreign Strangers: Matthias Lilenthal's *X-Apartments* (2002-) in Empty Stages, Crowded Flats – Performativity as Curatorial Strategy in Malzacher, F. & Warsza, J. (eds) Empty Stages, Crowded Flats: Performative curating performing arts, Sidsel Graffer & Ådne Sekkelsten (eds) Scenekunsten og de unge, Oslo: Vidarforlagt; pp116-127

Malzacher, F (2014) Empty Stages, Crowded Flats: Performative curating performing arts, Sidsel Graffer & Ådne Sekkelsten (eds) Scenekunsten og de unge, Oslo: Vidarforlagt; pp116-127

Massey, D (2005) *for space* London: SAGE Publications

Merx, S. (2011) "Public Pie Performing public space", *Performance Research*, 16:2, 132-137,

Mouffe, C. (2006) *The Return of the Political* London: Verso

Pidd, H. (2018) 'Housing crisis: 15,000 new Manchester homes and not a single one 'affordable'', *The Guardian*, 5 March. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/mar/05/british-cities-developers-affordable-housing-manchester-sheffield [Accessed: 21/04/20]

Rose, M and Woods, A (1995) *Everything Went on at the Round House: A Hundred Years of the Manchester University Settlement* Manchester: University of Manchester.

Rich, M. A. (2017): "'Artists are a tool for gentrification': maintaining artists and creative production in arts districts", *International Journal of Cultural Policy*

Sennett, R. (2018) *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City* London: Allen Lane

Smith, L (2018) Laurajane Smith, CELAT, *"Cultural Heritage and the Mediation of Identity"*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHNKxauGdiI [Accessed: 21/04/20]