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# Digital-Cultural Ecology and the Medium-Sized City

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## Abstract Submission Form

- 1. Paper / Proposal Title:** The DIY art market: economics, art and communities in the Bristol Art Trails.
- 2. Format:** Verbal presentation (plus paper submitted for publication)
- 3. Author(s) Name:** Sarah Sparke
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- 5. University or Company Affiliation:** CMIR, UWE

### 6. Abstract (300 words):

The Bristol Art trails are a growing phenomenon within the city's thriving art scene. The eight weekend events, each involving circa one hundred artists, are located in the urban infrastructure of specific areas of the city. The trails emphasize physical place through the trail names (eg North Bristol Art Trail, South Bank Art Trail), area of activity and other rules of engagement. However, it is the digital which makes the trails possible, revolutionizing the local art scene and enhancing the cultural life of the city.

The trails rely fundamentally on digital communication such as websites, emails - and in one case an app - to attract artist participants, organize the event, promote their trail to audiences, and encourage new forms of audience engagement. One might say that the trails, and the associated development of economic and artistic practices would not be possible without digital engagement and the border-removing, power-circumventing opportunities afforded by the digital.

This paper asks:

In what ways has the advent of the digital enable the development of domestic/DIY art market engagement as an alternative to the gallery-controlled scene?

How has this informed perceptions – and the reality - of Bristol?

What are the challenges and opportunities afforded by that opening/removal of physical boundaries?

Drawing on a 10 year anthropological study of the Bristol Art Trails, this paper considers the different approaches of the trail organisations to balancing the creation and maintenance of a sense of place and community (physical grounding, with boundaries) whilst using – indeed, needing – the openness of digital communications.

## **7. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Dr Sarah Sparke is a researcher at the Centre for Moving Image Research, University of the West of England (CMIR, UWE). She draws on marketing and socio-economic theory to examine and critique production and consumption practices, with a focus on systems of value and the social uses of value-discourses. Within this, her primary interests are moving image art and its place in the art market, the co-creation of meaning and co-creation of value, AV research methodologies, and teenagers' moving image practices and systems of value.

She is also Producer for CMIR's major industry-facing research events such as the Bristol International Festival of Cinematography (BIFC), and the CML camera and lens tests, reaching practitioners, manufacturers and suppliers globally.

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