



University of the  
West of England

## Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

An Inclusive Design Approach to Improving Community Wellbeing: A Case Study of Architectural Interventions in Derry/Londonderry

- **Format:**

Written Paper

- **Author(s) Name:**

Jak Spencer, Ralf Alwani, Elizabeth Raby, Jo-Anne Bichard, Jonathan West

- **University or Company Affiliation:**

Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, Royal College of Art

- **Abstract (300 words):**

Urbanisation is one of the most pressing challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whilst city living promises economic gain, it often comes at a social cost. Studies have shown that the increased crime, pollution, social isolation and other environmental stressors of city life can heighten the risk of developing mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. In its most serious form, the consequences can be severe; global suicide rates have risen by 60% over the last four decades and are now the leading cause of death amongst 20-34 year olds in the UK.

This paper outlines a two-year active research and design project from the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at the Royal College of Art in collaboration with Public Health Northern Ireland that uses an inclusive design approach to improve community wellbeing. Over the last decade areas around the Foyle riverfront in Derry/Londonderry

have become synonymous with mental health issues and suicide. The 'Our Future Foyle' project aims to decrease the negative associations with these areas and improve overall community wellbeing through the use of community designed architectural interventions.

In this paper, we present how an inclusive design approach has helped understand the relationship between wellbeing and the built environment by consulting with key community groups and engaging over 5,000 local residents. This has led to the development of two architectural interventions that are discussed in detail; an art installation on the Foyle bridge and a series of pop-up portable spaces along the riverfront that have been co-designed with local people. The paper ends by exploring how these two architectural interventions form part of a wider range of five interconnected social, behavioural and physical solutions that have been designed to help engage the public, improve community wellbeing and reduce the most extreme actions of mental health issues.

- **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

**Dr Jak Spencer**

Jak Spencer is a Research Fellow and leader of the Social and Global Research Space at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design. His research interests lie in developing the methods and tools of people-centred design to solve difficult global social challenges.

He has a PhD from Loughborough University which developed new models of design for sustainable behaviour from research in Brazil, India and the UK.

More recently, Jak has worked in industry on a diverse array of people-centred projects for major global brands including Google, Facebook, IKEA and Unilever amongst others. His projects have varied and valuable applications from understanding the laundry needs of middle income families in India, to developing new models of trust for global technology brands or creating strategies for using technology in a dementia care context.

His current research interests include using new technology to solve social challenges; understanding how design can create new models for community wellbeing; and people-centred development solutions for low income countries.

His work has been disseminated at international industry and academic conferences and published in trade magazines and academic journals.

**Ralf Alwani**

Ralf graduated from the Royal College of Art (Architecture) in 2015. His interests lie in architecture and urban scale interventions. Ralf gained his first degree from the

University of Lincoln's Architecture Programme where his final project looked at ageing populations and social neglect within the built environment.

Since then, working for architectural practices on a variety of projects involving the public realm, community and residential schemes, Ralf undertook a master's degree at the Royal College of Art, specialising in new towns and large urban projects. During this time, he also worked on the design and delivery of the Helix Centre's new studio, which operates within the grounds of St Mary's Hospital, London, as a hub to engage with frontline NHS staff and patients as co-design collaborators. The studio has an 'open door' policy with a design which derived from the principles of the Helix initiative of frugal, high impact and efficient design. Ralf also works on architectural projects in his own studio.

### **Elizabeth Raby**

Elizabeth Raby is a designer and researcher, whose work focuses on mental health, graphic design and design as a conversational and behaviour change tool. Lizzie has worked with a range of communities including dependent drinkers, those with mental health difficulties, individuals with autism, Parkinson's patients and those who support and work with these individuals.

Lizzie completed a Master's degree in Information Experience Design at the Royal College of Art (2014). Her first project at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design was the 'Drink Informed' project engaging dependent drinkers with educational material. She also works as an Infographics consultant for the Anna Freud Centre, working with complex data sets and information to increase accessibility and understanding for young people and clinicians. Since graduation she has founded an exciting new venture called the Design Education Society, exploring resource kits for educational use, building upon learning theories and multi-sensory experiences to explain varying themes.

### **Dr Jo-Anne Bichard**

Jo-Anne is a design anthropologist whose research focuses on multi and interdisciplinary collaboration, engaging users participation in the design process. Jo-Anne is co-investigator of Family Rituals 2.0 a multi-disciplinary project exploring how mobile workers maintain family life when away from home and Mapping UK Conveniences (with Gail Ramster) incorporating open data into The Great British Public Toilet Map.

Jo-Anne was Principle Investigator of Robust Accessible Toilets (RATs) funded by the ESRC's Connected Communities programme; Co-Investigator of Tackling Ageing Continence through Theory Tools and Technology (TACT3) funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing programme and Co-investigator on Welcoming Workplace

funded by the AHRC/ESRC Designing for the 21st Century Programme.

Jo-Anne has a BSc (Hons) in Social Anthropology from Goldsmiths College, and MSc in Science Communication from Imperial College. She has a PhD, 'Extending Architectural Affordance; the case of the Publicly Accessible Toilet' from UCL. Jo-Anne has conducted a number of ethnographic studies of working environments and public spaces including medical research labs, corporate offices and public sanitation environments. She lectures and co-ordinates workshops on design ethnography for a number of RCA post-graduate programmes.

### **Jonathan West**

Jonathan has spent 13 years working in design in healthcare, and leads the Healthcare Research Space at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at the Royal College of Art. Jonathan's research interests include design for patient safety and inclusive design. His work on a new resuscitation trolley for the National Patient Safety Agency won two Medical Futures Innovation Awards and completed successful clinical trials prior to manufacture. He has shaped high profile projects such as Design Bugs Out and Design for Patient Dignity with the Department of Health and Design Council, as well as supervising projects with partners ranging from Arjo Huntleigh to the Medical Defence Union. He was Design Lead on the EPSRC-funded project, 'Designing Out Medical Error'. This three-year multidisciplinary project in collaboration with Imperial College, London, looked at the role design can play in reducing medical error on hospital wards. This award-winning project pioneered methods of collaboration and has resulted in a suite of designs for the hospital ward, and paved the way for the HELIX Centre, where Jonathan was seconded. His work has been published internationally in journals, books and as papers.