LIBIDINAL CIRCUITS

LIBIDINAL CIRCUITS: Evaluation Report.

Summary:

This report outlines the strategies and results of a variety of marketing and administrative processes undertaken for the Libidinal Circuits conference. By first evaluating and then reflecting - this report makes recommendations for any future collaborations between FACT and the University of Liverpool, specifically the School of the Arts (SOTA).

In total 46 academics and artists took part in the event, with just under two-thirds (27) of participants joining the conversation from UK based Universities. There was fairly strong representation from Australia (6) and Canada (6), this was made evident from flutters of conversation on social media. Academics came too from the USA (2); with Ireland, Honk Kong and Spain (1) all being represented by various perspectives too.

This report reflects on the overwhelmingly positive feedback that Libidinal Circuits has received and looks to build on this as a solid foundation for future events and publications for both FACT and SOTA (or indeed any further collaborations)

Legend: UK • AUS • CAN • USA • IRE • SP • HK

Pie chart values: 61%, 14%, 14%, 5%, 2%, 2%, 2%
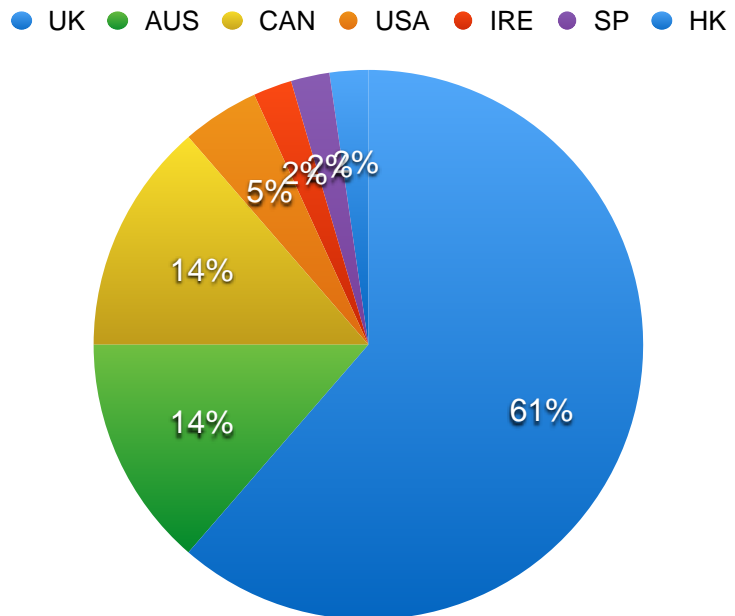
Background:

Libidinal Circuits (LC) was the 3rd annual conference of the International Association for the Study of the Culture of Cities. Jointly hosted by the School of the Arts (SOTA) and FACT from 8-10 July, LC was pitched as a conversation between academics and artists on what motivates our journeys and stories within the city.

The main purpose for this evaluation is to both measure impact/public engagement as well as analyse and reflect upon participant feedback. This will help to build future events for SOTA and FACT both independently and for any further collaborative projects.

Scope:

This report will evaluate various on and offline data streams both while the conference was on (8-10 July) and for two weeks after the event (up to the 28th July). Quantitative data has been gathered from activity on social media, traffic to the dedicated website, traffic to the FACT website, and visitor numbers in the gallery. Qualitative information has been gathered by conducting a short survey among participants (both academics and artists) of their experience of the conference as a whole.

Evaluation Process:
A variety of tools were used to collate this data. Sproutsocial for social media and built-in metrics via Squarespace for the LC website. Crucially, colleagues at FACT have been wonderful in delivering information from both FACT's marketing and gallery teams. The survey was administrated through SurveyMonkey and additional information added from email communication between participants and conference co-ordinator, Emily Baker.

Evaluation:

Social Media
Strategy
General updates and reminders of ticket sales segued into posts which summarised various papers. Abstracts were supported by links to related film/music/web 'stuff' in the hope it would help boost engagement.

Results
Across Facebook and Twitter there was limited direct interactions. This is most likely due to the transitory nature of the conference. Jen Chapman, head of marketing at FACT warned about this, advising that for the most part, social media is reliant on careful relationship building, fostering and maintenance.

It's significant then that while 92 interactions is fairly quiet, to have amassed some 79,500 impressions (that is that nearly 80,000 will have seen something about the conference on their timeline for at least one second).

Libidinal Circuits website

Strategy
To create a slick and easy to use website using a template available on Squarespace. The site was to be a gathering point of Twitter/Facebook streams as well as a place to announce speakers, post about related events and publish the conference schedule.

Results
From May - July the LC page gathered nearly 2500 views. Most notably, some 3 days before the conference this peaked at 711 views in a single day. Without question, this must be due to the act of vandalism on the Byzantium artwork in Ropewalk Square - as reported on by the Liverpool Echo.
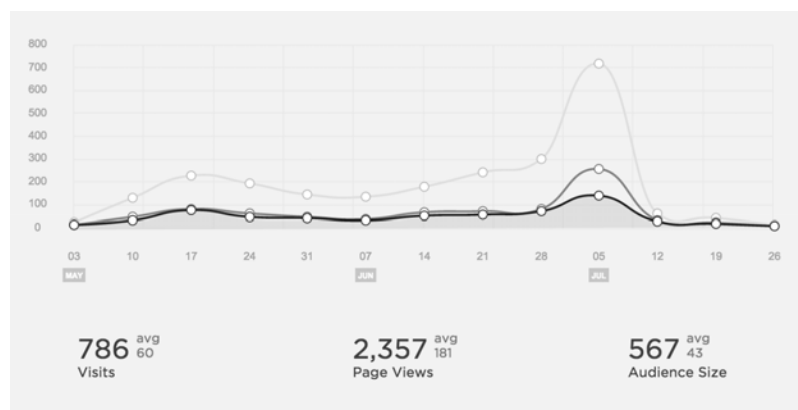
Building on the mantra that 'there's no such thing as bad publicity' (!), this incident represents almost a third of the viewings and suggests that we could have gone further in our exploitation of this incredibly sad moment in the story of LC.

Lastly, supporting the prediction by Jen Chapman of the usefulness of social media in these kinds of one-off events, it's clear that participants, or those interested in LC, would use the domain name (libidinalcircuits.com) to get to the site. Indeed, there is a huge difference (142 vs 65) between those who do that and those who simply 'google' the name of the conference. It suggests that the direct domain name was an excellent addition to the digital front of LC.
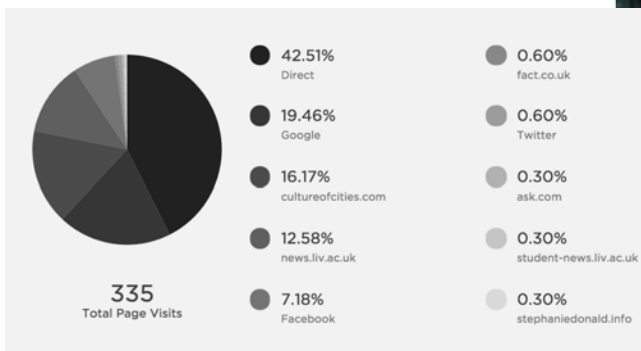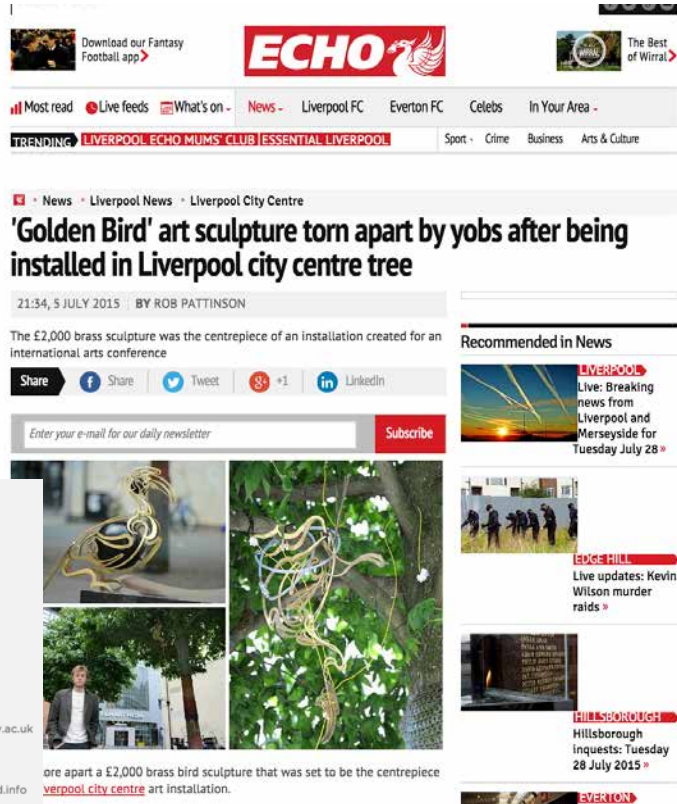
FACT website:

Strategy
Working with the marketing team, we released weekly blogs in the three weeks leading up to the conference. Workshops and information on the artists' work was also made available on the FACT website.

Results
The interview with Adam Scovell gained a modest reach. Perhaps most notable is that those who visited the page, did so for a significant amount of time. To hold the attention of the viewer for over 5mins in the age of click bait and instant gratification is no mean feat!

	Page	Pageviews ↓	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances
		163 % of Total: 0.11% (146,896)	136 % of Total: 0.11% (123,162)	00:05:34 Avg for View: 00:01:20 (319.27%)	110 % of Total: 0.17% (64,250)
1.	/news-articles/2015/06/uncovering-libidinal-circuits-scenes-of-urban-innovation.aspx	163(100.00%)	136(100.00%)	00:05:34	110(100.00%)

Visitor Numbers:

Strategy
This is an area for development. Upon reflection we had no strategy to encourage the public to visit the gallery.

Results
No doubt, these are impacted by the intensity of panels at the conference. Other than the 8th July (the launch party) these numbers are unlikely to include many of the conference participants.

Date	Number of visitors
8th July 2015	46
9th July 2015	23
10th July 2015	32
11th July 2015	21
TOTAL	122

Conference survey:

Strategy
A ten-question survey was sent via a weblink to all participants of LC. Answers were anonymous - a mix of multiple choice and more open ended comment boxes.

Questions were devised to find out:

- initial **awareness** of LC.
- **motivation** to be involved in LC.
- if individual needs were met through administrative processes
    - **dissemination** of information.
    - satisfaction with the **work environments** in both FACT and SOTA.
    - provision of **refreshments**.
- if the **core idea** of bringing art/academia together, worked.
- **overall perception** on the strengths, specific benefits and areas for development.

Results
Just under a third of participants responded to the request to fill out the survey.

Question #1: How did you first hear about LC?

Of these 14 responses, 11 found out about LC via word of mouth, from a colleague or friend. While this demonstrates a particularly strong existing network, it does suggest an area for development to widen the net - especially given LC's inherent interdisciplinary 'make-up'.

How did you first hear about Libidinal Circuits?

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0
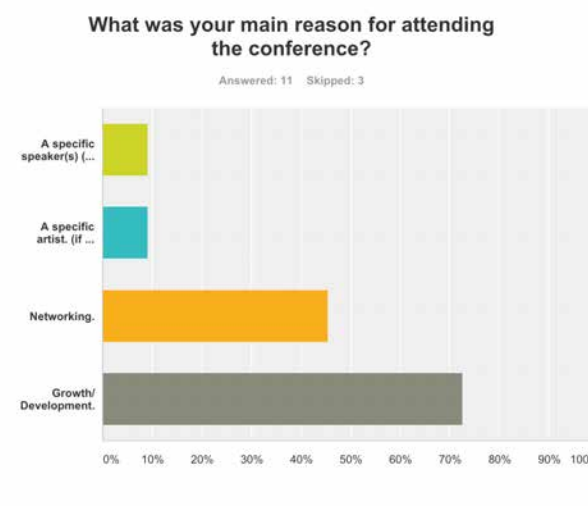
- Online via libidinalcir...
- Online via cultureofcit...
- CFP on mailing list.
- A colleague or friend.
- Other (please specify)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
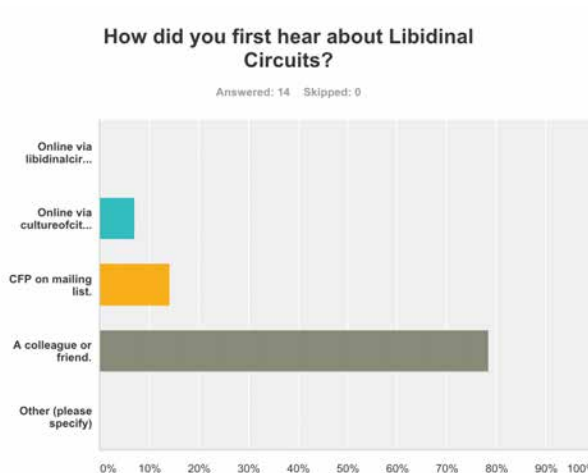
Question #2: What was your main reason for attending the conference?

The overwhelming motivation for being a part of LC was that of growth and development. Of the responses given, some drily noted their attendance due to a sense of 'duty'! While others attribute the key note of Alan Blum as a primary draw.
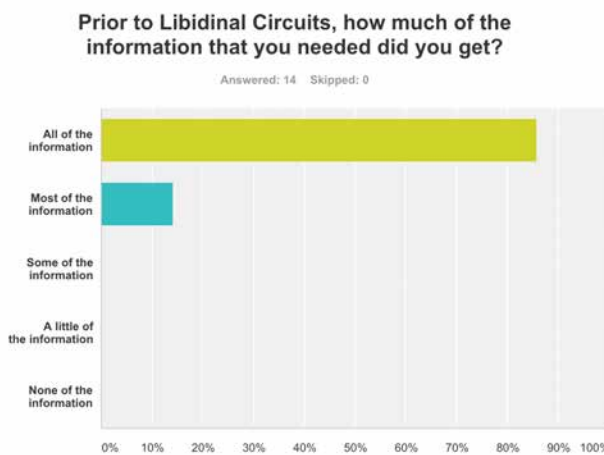
With 'Networking' placed second, perhaps these results suggest that respondents were early career researchers. Certainly, prior to the survey being devised - emails were received by a number of PhD students, keen to be involved in any evaluative process 'to sing praises' (Emma Fraser, PhD candidate, University of Manchester).

What was your main reason for attending the conference?

Answered: 11   Skipped: 3

- A specific speaker(s) (...
- A specific artist. (if ...
- Networking.
- Growth/ Development.

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Question #3: Prior to LC, how much of the information that you needed did you get?

According to these results, participants were very happy with the dissemination of information with regard to scheduling, local/national/international travel, accommodation and refreshments.

In particular, the efforts of Filomena Saltao, Alex Halliwell-Bray and Belinda Tyrell in SOTA; Suzanne Allen, Roger McKinley, Mary Spiers and Kerry Moore should be noted as being the driving force in providing the information required by any participant (as well as other partner enquiries).

Prior to Libidinal Circuits, how much of the information that you needed did you get?

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0

- All of the information
- Most of the information
- Some of the information
- A little of the information
- None of the information

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Question #4: What are your thoughts on the relationship between the art works and the academic papers/conversation?

As one of the primary motivations behind the conference. This question provided a range of reflections and recommendations moving forward. Responses were varied:

Reflections ranged from 'interesting connections' to 'unlikely and fruitful intersections' to be found. To the more critical 'initially very connected but seemed to drift apart as the conference went on' and the succinct 'needs working on'.

The most useful and nuanced response came from Respondent #2:

> "Having previously organised a similar event (combining academics, artists, performers, university and gallery), I felt that this was well managed. I particularly enjoyed panels which combined the theoretical with artist-led talks, including specific presentations which did both, and included examples or media/art content. Although there are always inevitable disjunctures between the theoretical and practice-oriented (there were one or two times where questions/presentations didn't necessarily find common ground), overall this wasn't the case.
>
> When combining art work and academic conversation there is always a danger of losing either side of the audience, and this was mostly well managed at Libidinal Circuits, as far as I could see - although I did note that most of the artists did not attend most of the second day of the conference, and I myself spent more time attending academic talks, so perhaps there was some deeper separation than I detected. The content itself, in terms of the relation between topics, was well-matched, in my opinion. If I had to say anything negative it would be that having the exhibition far away from the conference venue isn't ideal, but this obviously can't be helped."

In this regard then, there was a subtle but noticeable problem - a feeling of disconnect between artist and academic. There was also s sense of disappointment that conversations got started but were left to toy with by the academic community. While both Dennis Del Favero and Pooya Sanjari both gave papers at the conference - these were another side of their research, which perhaps provided space for other artists to also present and extend their initial talks from the launch party.

Question #5: Please enter your level of satisfaction with the conference panels, art installations, registration process, SOTA library, SOTA boardroom, Gallery 2 at FACT, The Box at FACT and the refreshments.

This question was devised to gather an overall impression of the environment both at FACT and in SOTA.

From an administrative perspective, the registration and refreshments offered by UoL catering services fare particularly well. So too does the provision of the SOTA library for this kind of event.

Participants were also

|	Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total
Conference panels	50.00% 7	42.86% 6	7.14% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14
Art installations	57.14% 8	35.71% 5	7.14% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14
Registration process	78.57% 11	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14
University of Liverpool: SOTA Library	64.29% 9	28.57% 4	7.14% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14
University of Liverpool: SOTA Boardroom	28.57% 4	14.29% 2	28.57% 4	21.43% 3	7.14% 1	14
FACT: Gallery 2	58.33% 7	25.00% 3	8.33% 1	8.33% 1	0.00% 0	12
FACT: Box	58.33% 7	25.00% 3	16.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12
Refreshments	78.57% 11	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14

broadly delighted with the art installations and provision of both Gallery 2 and The Box at FACT.

The only problem area identified here is the SOTA boardroom, where over half the respondents were dissatisfied with the room. Upon reflection, we could perhaps have used the room next door (G06?) as this was available - although our partner from IASCC specifically requested that we use this room.

Question #6: Overall, how would you rate LC?

Perhaps the least helpful in terms of qualitative criticism but the one that provides most peace of mind is this one!

A delightful result for all involved!

Overall, how would you rate Libidinal Circuits?

Answered: 14   Skipped: 0
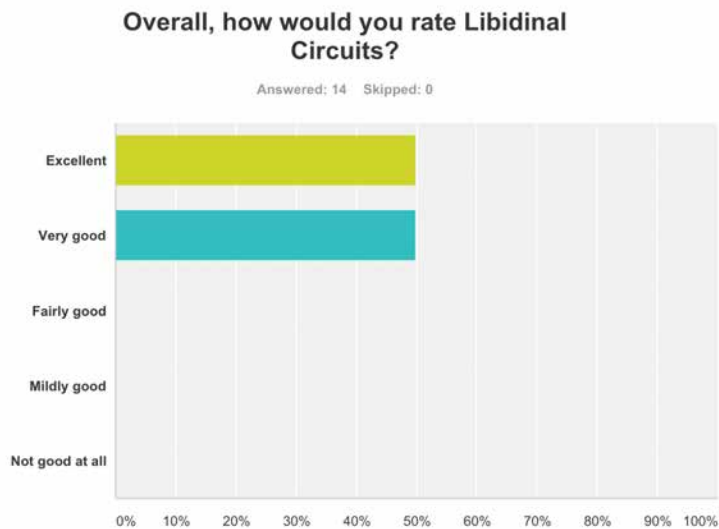
Question #7: What was the most beneficial aspect of the conference?

It was felt that LC provided a rich, diverse and broad platform for networking opportunities and truly interdisciplinary conversations to take place.

Participants enthused about the challenge/ joy in finding commonalities across the academic spectrum; some noted that this process went beyond standard conference protocol, that it constituted '…more than networking, [it] facilitated a relationship between speakers, artists, and practitioners that also produced close engagement and in-depth questions, making the conference very worthwhile, and fruitful in terms of wider thinking'.

The integration of art and academia in a coherent, structured conference form.
7/28/2015 9:47 AM   View respondent's answers

A very broad and receptive audience who contributed to stimulating discussion.
7/23/2015 10:56 AM   View respondent's answers

Broadening of knowledge. Stimulating talks and conversations.
7/23/2015 10:06 AM   View respondent's answers

A chance to reconnect with people I hadn't seen for a while, meet interesting new people, and engage with some fascinating new work.
7/22/2015 6:01 PM   View respondent's answers

Plenary Speakers and Panels
7/22/2015 2:16 PM   View respondent's answers

The diversity of the disciplines represented.
7/22/2015 12:08 PM   View respondent's answers

Networking, meeting the artists, exhibitions

Question #8: Any recommendations for areas of development?

Question #9: Any other general comments/ messages to the organisers?

Participants were both warm and generous with their praise of the conference. It is worth noting that two respondents identified the dedicated LC website as being particularly useful, 'professional and informative'.

Overall, participants seemed most pleased with the momentum of information, support and relevance of the conference themes and content. From an organisers perspective - it's most pleasing that the general atmosphere was also commented on as being particularly welcoming by a number of respondents.

The integration of art and academia was done very well, and it's something I'd hope to see more of. It was particularly great to see the two keynotes by Alan and Stephi, both of whom were fantastic - and very different - presences throughout the conference. Special mention, of course, to Emily - who, in addition to helping to organise a great conference, was exceedingly kind and generous in her time and attention before and during.
7/28/2015 9:47 AM   View respondent's answers

Perhaps some field talks, or outdoor events. Was such lovely weather!
7/23/2015 10:06 AM   View respondent's answers

Thanks to all for the tremendous effort that went into making it a really fantastic gathering. Much, much appreciated.
7/22/2015 6:01 PM   View respondent's answers

A big congratulations on a great imitative.
7/22/2015 12:08 PM   View respondent's answers

Congratulations to everyone involved in the organisation for a great conference!
7/22/2015 9:46 AM   View respondent's answers

Legacy:
Options for publication are varied but not yet confirmed. Below are a range of interviews (most unpublished) undertaken by FACT.

Artist Interviews:

Adam Scovell (published on FACT website 22nd June 2015)

From 8-10 July Libidinal Circuits: Scenes of Urban Innovation comes to Liverpool. Part art installation, part academic conference, this three-day event is co-hosted at FACT and the University of Liverpool and looks to bridge the gap between academic thinking and art practice. In the first of three interviews with those connected with the conversation around Libidinal Circuits, we talk to film maker and PhD student Adam Scovell, whose short film An Impossible Dérive will be featured in FACTLab.

How do you define a Libidinal Circuit?

The terminology of 'Libidinal Circuit' seems to suggest something sexual because of the psychoanalytical etymology but to me, pleasure drives now seem to lean towards more tangibly

commercial outcomes. I think this is because we're in a permanent paradox where technology ensures an extreme and simultaneous connectedness / disconnectedness.

I suppose, in the context of modern city centres, I imagine it to be some form of pathway or landscape designed to lead walkers to predestined areas of planned pleasure; more often than not for shopping. Advertising constantly tells us that the desire for objects is more sexual than the desire for people - I don't think it has ever been quite believed on such a wide scale as it is now. We live in an era that deliberately blurs the lines between objects and people too so maybe it's just two ideas coming together in one horrific full circle.

Can you tell us a little about An Impossible Dérive and how it intersects with the theories which underpin Libidinal Circuits?

Dérive is French for "drift" but is now a word used commonly in the theories of psychogeography. It refers to taking an unplanned and unmapped journey into an environment or zone, allowing the aesthetics and architecture of the space to guide and control the walker's destination. So, the film is really about questioning the ever-changing landscape of Liverpool and the effects that this has on the will of the city walker as well as the city as a whole. I imagine the purists of psychogeography may object to the dérive technique being used in such a general way though the ideas are addressing something far more pressing than landscape nostalgia which is the aesthetic homogenisation of a city centre.

But I think, in terms of psychogeography, it's only a broad catchment of an idea being used in order to discuss more local evolutions of space and urban landscapes (all of which are relevant to my own reading of what Libidinal Circuits actually are anyway).

As a life-long locally based artist, in what ways did this Dérive introduce new places/ feelings/thoughts about the city?

The actual technique of the dérive was used to find the locations in which to film though it's still not quite in its pure form as I no doubt was unconsciously thinking of finding relevant spaces to film in rather than simply drifting. The actual footage is not from the dérives themselves because, as has been pointed out several times, there's a contradiction between the point of going on such a style of walk and watching footage from said walk. I think the most interesting thing to come from the walks themselves though was a personal shift from pessimism to a slightly more optimistic outlook in spite of the film still being suspicious in its questioning of the general developments within the city centre.

Conversely, what things did this Dérive affirm about your understanding of Liverpool?

When I first started, the film was purely pessimistic, spurred on predominantly by the closure of MelloMello, the announcement that The Kazimier is closing at the end of the year, and the questionable development plans that are still being proposed for the Wolstenholme Square and Lime Street areas.

They just seem to be applying the same blue-print of design onto virtually every street (commercial spaces on the ground floor for big chains, flats above for students only etc.) and the film still rightly questions this practice alongside the effects on the walker of having such a rigid topographical identity as a backdrop. But more positives came out of it than I thought; for example, behind one of the empty streets in which I filmed and took 35mm stills lie the streets that are up for the Turner Prize this year whilst the empty docks and warehouses in the film played host to this year's Sound City festival. There are plenty of ways to redevelop the city's empty spaces outside.

Dan Fallon (not yet published)

Can you tell us what libidinal circuits means to you?

I think for me, one of the key meanings behind this term is the idea of listlessness, particularly in an urban context. It is the idea of following your desires, and in certain situations, an encouragement of fulfilment through the acquisition of capital. What this means is that you get directed around the place by your desires, and I think this is where the circuit aspect of the phrase is useful, because it highlight the cyclical nature, of going round in round…and I think this is the listlessness…

How do you feel your piece fits into the theme?

I think the installation fits the piece at two levels; it fits in both how I recorded the piece, but also sound qualities of the final piece itself.

In the recording process, I was following a sort of intuitive appeal – in a sense, I was getting directed around by the city, more than necessarily asserting myself as the navigator. But on

perhaps a more symbolic level, it also demonstrates that listlessness that I feel is central to the libidinal circuit, and I sought to articulate this through the use of pauses.

Do you feel there is a tension between the academic forms of music and the 'mainstream'– if so, how do you manage this tension?

I came from a background where a producer would quite specifically tell me what they wanted, and then I would try to compose according to that framework. There was a change when I entered academia, but I did not want to abandon everything. I wanted to experiment, but I also wanted to keep working on things that are applicable and accessible to all types, even to those who are not trained. I wanted to tailor this piece of music between the avant-garde and the mainstream. That's one of the biggest challenges for me – that's why I am trying to cultivate a technique that is deliberately flexible.

The piece utilizes a solo cello part that is integrated with recordings that you have recorded from urban settings and objects from around Liverpool. Is there a particular reason that you selected the cello?

I think the reason was three part. The first, is out of practicality; the lines of communication when it comes to the cello are clear. It means you have a great foundation to experiment with and get across the music that you want.

The second is out of an adoration of the qualities and ranges that the cello is able to produce – I was hoping to capitalise on the cello's broad range of timbres that I feel would fit into the urban soundscape. It can produce a lot of metallic resonances and sounds that are comparable to the industrial sounds that we hear in the city. This play on the 'real' and the 'artificial' urban sounds then encourage people to hear the sound of their environment in a musical way (which I wanted).

The final reason relates to the question of openness and accessibility that I discussed earlier. Using the cello allowed me to play on listener's expectations. There is a strong identity to the cello, and that's very useful for setting up a relationship between these found sounds and the music that is played by the instrument – there is something recognizable. It makes the audience open their ears and go: "I am listening to music now". You can't detach it from its association with music.

Richard Koeck (not yet published)

Professor Richard Koeck is the Director of the Centre of Architecture and the Visual Arts (CAVA) at the University of Liverpool. Richard created two short films for Libidinal Circuits, "Béton Armé & Écrans Urbains". We further asked him about the relationship between architecture and 'meaning-making', and his decision to use mobile technologies to capture his short films.

What your understanding of the libidinal circuit of the city?
I think the first thing we need to establish is that it is a misunderstanding to state that it relates to the Freudian notion of libido - it is not the idea of an erotic image of the city! The term 'libidinal circuit' is actually derived from the philosopher Lyotard, where the drives of the city are the economies of the cities, the elements of desire. So it's about understanding the driving force of cities.

Could you briefly describe your artwork and how you feel your installation reflects this theme?
My pieces are observational - I was walking around Paris one day and captured them on my mobile phone. I come from an architectural background and for me - and this is going against the grain here - architecture, is meaningless by itself. There is more to the architecture, than just form, material, and functions. Space, is what it is because of its inhabitants, through the way that space is inhabited, through people performing the spatial acts.

My film-making was an attempt to highlight and identify these everyday micro-narratives. This is what makes space meaningful. In other words, what I was aiming to do with my piece was identify the incidental narratives within the city that reflect the libidinal circuit - these ideas of desire - these driving forces of the city!

There are two sets of short films you are showing: *Béton Armé* and *Écrans Urbains*. In the first, the people are in the foreground, and the other, though there are people present, they are part of the background and remain relatively absent. If we retain the centrality of people in making space meaningful - what is the story that you are trying to tell with this second piece?

Well, I grew up in Germany and I was trained in a modernist perspective - and at that time there was this focus on functional spaces. Function here, is comparable to the notion of bodily function - you know, we talked about bringing light to the buildings, to make them more healthy for example, but what we see here with regards to 'function' is the notion of serving the human.

You'll see that particularly in Écrans, there is a brutal, inhumane quality of the space and we see the insignificance of people in a supposedly 'function-based space'. But I feel, these spaces, like airports, and malls are actually non-functional spaces, at least in the sense where functional is, as I have defined, to serve the human. These spaces don't serve a people, but rather, a process (a transition, a movement), and relating us back to the theme. For me, they raise the question of who these spaces are actually designed for? Spaces which serve libidinal circuits, libidinal economies.

Your installation at the event uses mobile technologies - what drove your decision to use your mobile rather than more 'professional' forms of equipment?

Yes, in my work, it is a deliberate move to use the mobile. With the digital revolution, we see film-making has become much more democratised and so my work, in using the lowest common denominator, does reflect this. There is a power involved, in taking out a camera and just shooting - and they allow us to comment on issues like architecture and people. Furthermore, they show that others can do the same - they highlight what one can capture in everyday life; the sheer beauty of the every day, which allow us to see the world in a different light.

As part of our on-going series surrounding the Libidinal Circuit, we interview Pooya Sanjari, a PhD candidate/ Post Graduate Researcher at the University of Liverpool. We ask him about his collaborative piece with Professor Richard Koeck, his on-going research on the fascinating Iranian peepshow device, and what libidinal circuits means to him.

Tell us about your interpretation of Libidinal Circuits.
For me, it is about the economy of the city with specific regard to images. We live in an age where there is an over-saturation of images and these images, for example, of the Eiffel tower (and other famous buildings), become part of the fabric of the city – part of its libidinal circuit.

Your instalment "Moment 2:45", which was done in collaboration with Richard Koeck, is video installation with a magnifying glass placed in front of the piece. Can you explain your process and what you wanted to highlight to the audience within the piece?

'Moment 2.45' is actually a display of a workshop that we ran at the University of Liverpool. We invited students – and they did not need any pre-requisites in filming, to bring along their mobile phones. We then asked people to, at 2:45pm to record a scene for one minute, a scene that they felt would represent the libidinal theme. People filmed these supposedly insignificant events – like people waiting for a taxi for example…'insignificant' maybe, but something does happen in that one minute – and these micro-narratives are, I believe, significant, and this attention to the 'everyday' is something that we wanted to highlight.
It is also about disrupting a singular perspective; in getting people to record in the very same temporal moment, is, for me, also to highlight the multiple perspectives that runs through our world all the time. One can say it is a postmodern reading of the landscape.

You presented a paper at the conference – a paper that reflects your on-going research on an Iranian peepshow device. Can you tell us more about that?

Yes, my research is on an Iranian pre-cinematic device called the *Shahr-e farang*. More specifically, it is a mobile children's entertainment device and there would be an operator who would charge a small fee to allow children to peep through these machines, where these children would see images of different places, often western cities or places. What interests me about these machines was that these operators would narrate stories as children looked at these images – often fictional accounts, yet, it is not the truth of the story that matters, rather what was going on in the imagination of the children. I think there is something interesting there.

Do you feel that the ideas behind this device may be of contemporary use?

A contemporary use? Well, the peepshow device would often display western places to the East and, I am thinking that, particularly in today's situation where the media representation of the East is still so limiting, so singular, this device could be reversed - to introduce images of the East to the West. This is one idea.

What is your interpretation of libidinal circuits?

I see libidinal circuits as the systems that are created around desires, and around animal urges… For me, it is about a subconscious drive towards fundamental human needs, of which perhaps the more significant, or elemental, is social interactions. I think this drive derives from the fact that human beings are born broken – we've evolved to have these holes in us that need to be filled, and it is this brokenness that compels us towards interacting with others.

Thus, what I feel is that the underlying core to libidinal circuit, is make connections with people in a society. And is making those connections exactly not what a circuit is?

How do you feel your work fits into this theme?

Byzantium fits into the theme by trying to seek out those desires that are common amongst the people of the city. And these desires lie dormant within us. So much of what we do and say is done without thinking about the motivations behind it.

Byzantium however is not so much concerned with the individual unconscious, but rather, a group's unconscious, the city's unconscious. What we are trying to do, is to find a common element and language within the people of a city, and allow them to collaborate on a single utterance. What we also wanted to do, was use technology to facilitate this process. Really, at the heart of it, what we have here is an experiment in language.

What was the function of the golden bird and why did you want to put one of the birds outside?

We have been recording the voices of Liverpool, and in the gallery, getting people to re-arrange short sentences to compose it into a poem. The big idea behind the bird, was to give it the ability to imitate what other people have been doing, so that it can sing; of what is past, present and what is to come. We really wanted it to have the flavour of the place that it lives in – after all, it was tapping into the unconscious of that city,

The bird in the tree was an output part of the project. We put the bird outside because wanted to create something that would go out into the public - we wanted to communicate with the public! We also, I think, wanted to touch someone unexpectedly, and hopefully draw them into FACT.

What the bird was supposed to do, was to sing the verses that people had made in the Gallery to the public. That is, the intention was that the bird would communicate these desires to the city.

How did you feel when the bird was destroyed? Have you managed to re-appropriate its 'death' in any way?

I felt wounded and felt like I experienced a great loss. To see the destruction of something that you had so many plans for, and then for all of it to be just gone. We did manage to use the shell of the bird, and in a way, it has actually worked out well. The bird, was supposed to be a marker of past, present and future – something like divination. And you know, the roman tradition was to draw the entrails from the bird to tell the future. In line with this thinking what we have now done is use the body of the bird as part of the divining of the future – the pieces of words are retrieved from inside the bird.

What is the role of programming and algorithms in the installation?

There was of course practical aspects in our use of programming and algorithms. But there was also a deeper sense that we wanted to tackle.

Computers are automations of processes that humans can do, albeit slowly. This can be used in a good way, or in a bad way. What is happening now, is that the human aspect of this relationship is being exploited. It is brutish. These algorithms are no longer made to assist human capacities but to exploit them in the worst possible ways - to produce micro-jobs, where an individual feels no sense of ownership and fulfilment.

What we wanted to do, was to combine that flavour of the technological and the human, but in a way that wasn't dehumanizing. We wanted to give people a great deal of freedom, and in our piece, it is done so that the technological works alongside the human in a facilitation process.
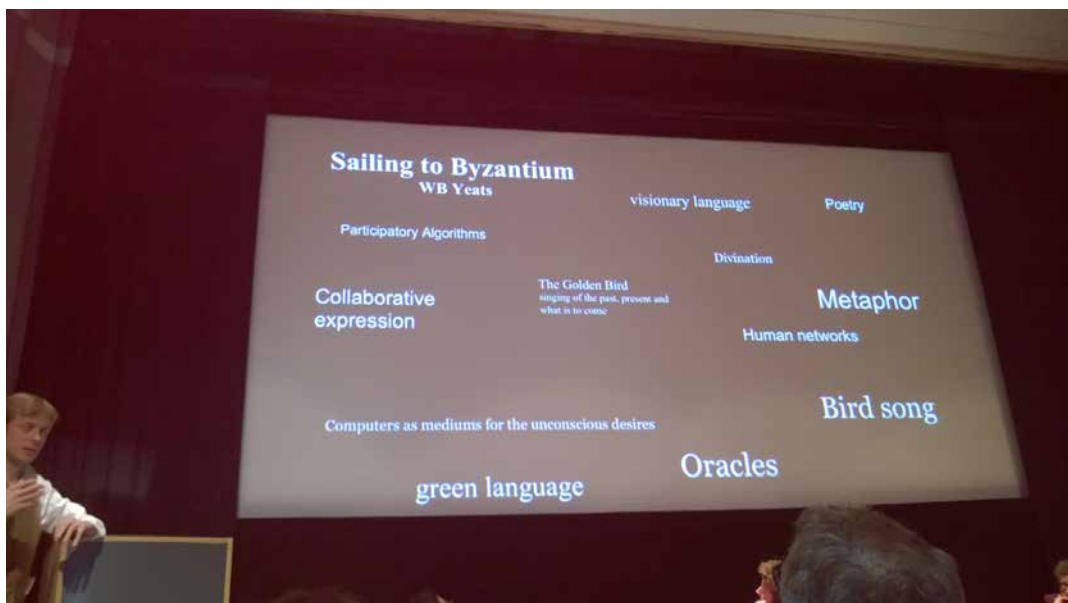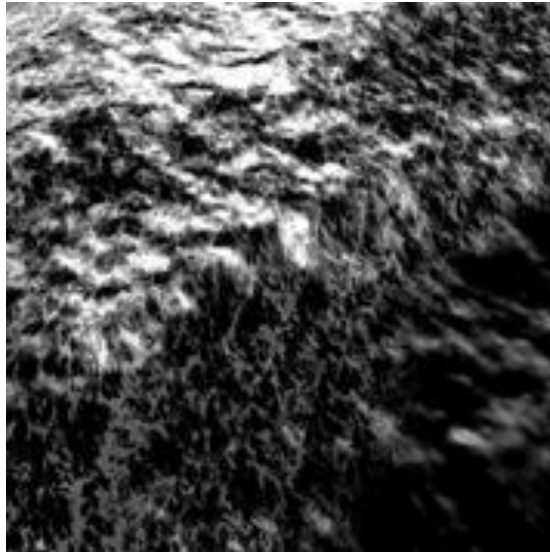
What is your understanding of the theme libidinal circuit?
For me, it is about the way things are never isolated; they both interact and interconnect with other objects and subjects in their environment. Less abstractly, it's about how the urban and the social interact, and how this interaction in turn defines the social and the urban.

How do you feel your work fits this theme?
One thing that underlies libidinal circuits is processes; movements. This resonates with my work for movement is a significant theme in Tampa. Within the piece I sought to articulate two, conjunctive types of movements. The first, is the movement of the human - the movement of people across water towards a horizon of hope - whilst simultaneously, interacting with it. The second is the nonhuman movement, the movement of water from one ocean circuit to another. It is this interaction that forms a lifeworld...the human and the non-human are fundamentally interconnected.

The title of your work is "Tampa", a deliberate reference to the Tampa incident in Australia. Can you, for people who are not acquainted with the incident, briefly describe both the event and the significance of the event?
Tampa is one of the most important political and social events within Australian History. In the 70s, Australia had an open border policy. We took in up to 25, 000 Vietnamese Refugees. What makes Tampa significant, was how it marked the start of a new policy, and accompanying it, attitude towards refugees and asylum seekers. The event can be summarized as the following: in August 2001, the Howard Government of Australia refused permission for the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa, which at the time, was carrying 438 rescued, predominantly Hazaras of Afghanistan refugees to enter Australian waters. What is interesting is of course also the Post-Tampa narrative - these refugees all

eventually made their way into Australia through New Zealand - which clearly illustrates that the significance of the event is political rhetoric rather than these refugees being an actual threat.

As a fellow Australian, I felt there was a key question of Australian identity that was reflected in piece. Was this something you had intended to address in your work?
It was. Our ocean, the very boundaries of Australia, are definitely key parts of the Australian identity. Yet, this identity has over time become increasingly xenophobic, and I think we have begun to define ourselves by what we close our doors to. It is, as the Tampa incident shows, clearly problematic. I think this notion of an isolated island has also been used as a form of twisted Utopian tourist hook. But it's a paradoxical impossibility – this aspiration to be isolated is impossible for, by virtue of being an Island, it is paradoxically dependent on its surrounding by the very fact it is surrounding by 'elsewhere.'

Your work seems to be placed at this interesting intersection between technology, the human, and the natural. Do you think these bodies are separated, or are these binary distinctions increasingly blurred?

My work can be seen in a way of trying to connect up three parts of the lifeworld: the human, the techno and the natural. I feel that they each define each other. I do feel that we, are now more embedded in this triad than ever before, even if we ourselves feel separated from them. And this is something I address in my paper, in a concept that I call the physical - virtual continuum. My thesis is that the lifeworld is increasingly embedded within the physical - virtual continuum.

My feeling is that Australia has increasingly placed refugees within the inner space of this triangle, as if it were not connected to anything, anyone. There is, thus, a problem with framing refugees as fleeing, and framing this fleeing, this act of movement, as a threat. We were all in a way refugees once. As homosapians, every population has been the consequence of migration from one time or another.

Relating back to the piece – our identities are really no more than libidinal circuits: just flows of genes and means - particularly if you take a longitudinal view of evolution. And to reject this will be a denial of how we're interconnected with each other.

Jessie Liu (not yet published)
Reflection piece on Libidinal Circuits

On Sunday morning, July 5th, a brass bird, one of the pieces of the Libidinal Circuits exhibition, was destroyed. It had been placed outside, singing its song to those who past…and then, its raspberry pi was torn out, leaving behind only the metallic skeletons; no song.

This current piece is a reflection (of sorts) regarding the Libidinal Circuits Exhibition and Conference that recently took place at the FACT. It seeks to achieve three things. The first task will be to, for the absent reader's benefit as well as my own, condense the broad and plural talks into themes and genres, so as to better comprehend the vast amount of ideas and materials that were present. The second is to re-introduce the bird. Perhaps like I was, you are tired of hearing about it. However, I feel that the fact that talk of this bird does return, again and again, should not be thought of as a point of annoyance, but as an act and an event that is significant in and of itself. The final task, is to interweave the academic ideas of the conference with the bird itself and articulate how for me, this bird in fact represented the very notion of libidinal circuits and several of the ideas and questions that were raised in the conference.

Before we begin, it is perhaps fitting to address the theme of the conference: what exactly is Libidinal Circuits? I will return to my own interpretation at the end of the piece – and interpretation does seem to be key word here for the attendees themselves seemed to have a diverse range of opinions about what it meant to them. For example, artists and academic Dennis del Favero stated that for him:

"It is about the way things are never isolated; they both interact and interconnect with other objects and subjects in their environment. Less abstractly, it's about how the urban and the social interact, and how this interaction in turn defines the social and the urban."

On the other hand, we have Professor Richard Koeck who states that:

"The term libidinal circuits is actually derived from the philosopher Lyotard, where drives of the city are the economies of the cities, the elements of desire. Thus, I feel, it is about understanding the driving force of cities."

As we can see, the interpretation and the meaning of the term is diverse – and this was, as already stated, reflected in the very nature of the conference itself. But however 'scattered' the topics seemed, there was, I felt, several emergent themes; themes that I'd like to articulate presently.

I believe the conference can be condensed into four general themes: collaboration, interaction between the human and the non-human, critical reflection, and last of all, temporality.

Let us begin with the first theme at hand. Collaboration was, in many ways, a strong underlying idea to the conference. This presented itself in the artworks (where, several of the pieces were acts of collaboration) as well as in the academic presentations. We saw this for example in Alexandru Balasescu's piece on the need for cities to seduce rather than compete with each other, as well as in Dennis Del Favero's presentation on his collaborative game 'scenario', where the humans had to collaborate with each other to win against the virtual characters. But what is pertinent about this theme of collaboration was also the fact that the conference itself was an act of collaboration; that it sought, in sowing these seeds, to create "circuits of knowledge, and immerse oneself in the vitality of finding people who want to think of the city and the world in a different way" (Steph, opening night).

The second theme that struck me, and this is perhaps the largest theme of the ones that I have noted, is 'the interaction between the human and the non-human'. This topic manifested itself in several pieces: in Dennis' art which examined the relation between the human, the sea, and the virtual realm; it also presented itself in the work of PhD students Pei Zhang's piece who, through her examination of Geoff Nicholson's book "Bleeding London", examines the question of corporeal mapping, and discloses to the

audience the fluid relationship between the individualized body and the city body; how the city might be embodied and reclaimed through and individual's exploration of their own bodies.

The third theme was 'temporality'. This was an emotive theme, and we saw presentations by Julian Ferraro on retro-futurism. This portrayed for me, a sense of nostalgia, albeit not in the sense of a nostalgia for merely the retro (for the way things were), but rather a nostalgia for the future – for the idealized mass consciousness of the future that once was. We further had presentations by Elke Grezner on the question of trauma and collective memory. What we saw was this question of memorializing the past, and how museums like the National September 11 Memorial & Museum play a role and contribute to the construction of our memories and the narratives that we construct and re-construct.

The final theme, was 'critical reflection'. This was the central thesis to Alan Blum's opening talk to the audience; a discussion that highlighted the importance of engaging with particulars rather than absolutes, and proposed the need for a double-back – an examination of our own valuations and judgements. This theme also found itself in Abrar Mujaddadi work, who in showed how racist slurs in movies are entextualized from their original context when they are translated from English to Arabic - a process that not only breaks the meaning and tone of the movie, but also, may have the effect of infantilizing the audience. This attitude as Deleuze argues, has become increasingly prominent in the media, and it is a process that may prevent the audience from themselves critically engaging and reflecting.

Here, I return to the brass bird. For me, it embodies almost all of the themes of the conference. The bird stood as a symbol of collaboration. The piece itself was a collaboration between artists – but taking a more (new) materialist perspective, the piece also reflected the collaboration between the metallic nature of the materials, the silicone chip, and the artists who inscribed upon it with algorithmic data. And in this way, this bird further embodied the interaction between the human and the non-human. This emerged in the practice of the piece – in the way the bird 'sang' its song to the people, but also in its very structure. It stood as a testament to the increasingly entangled nature of the human/technology world for the bird itself was, in a way, part mechanic with its organs, but also, through its song (which was created by people in the gallery), part human, a

reminder that perhaps dichotomous distinctions of 'us and them', 'the human and the mechanic', may (increasingly) no longer hold true.

Of course, one could not discuss the bird without turning to a debate as to why the event occurred – was it a "mindless destruction" (Paul, opening night) or an act of 'maliciousness' (Alan, conference)? Was it exemplar of the poverty of the city or an artist's detachment (to put out a bird worth more than £2000 pounds)? Though some of the debate became too tied to questions of 'truth', for me, what was more powerful was the very emergence of the debate itself; what the bird had accomplished was the 'double-back' – a reflection upon the very reflection that has taken place, leading to ever new conclusions, ideas, and evaluations. And as we double-backed, the bird takes on 'temporality'; as we saw from the discussion on collective memory by Elke Grezner, the past is not written, but always in a process of 'writing and re-writing'. As new events and happenings come to fore, new ideas will too accompany it, highlighting the flexibility of the past, disrupting the linear notion of time as we know it.

I have taken the reader through an odd twisting path: from the bird, to the conference, and back to the bird again, and our journey now ends, as promised, at my own interpretation of libidinal circuits. The truth is, I cannot answer what it is, but, only what it is not. My contention is that it is not a loop - though the term circuitry does appear to elicit the idea of the repetitious adventure of an electron that moves through the copper wires again and again…Rather, drawing on from the Deleuzian concept of difference, one must proclaim that even in repetition, nothing is ever the same. Rather, there is only difference: for everything is constantly changing, and reality is a becoming, not a being. And indeed, this is what the conference (and the bird) stood for me. What I derived from the conference was not a series of answers, but rather, the very act of critical reflection itself - an opening of taken for granted ideas and notions – which were then re-formed and re-articulated in different, novel ways. After all, is this not the root of all these themes, but also the very task of an academic conference?

Recommendations:

Social Media

This was difficult to maintain. Scheduled tweets to broadcast information did have limited impact. Platforms like Tweetdeck have useful functions to schedule tweets but perhaps a little further research to automate and cross-pollinate from Facebook to Twitter might be useful.

Alternatively, if the goal is to focus and build on the total impressions of LC across social media - to garner more public interest - then enlisting the services of a volunteer/intern to focus solely on this would be highly beneficial.

Libidinal Circuits website

The functionality of Squarespace provided a useful set of tools to create a professional website that is both public facing *and* that could be used by participants as a digital programme.

If at all possible, this is worth maintaining. It is simple to use without any knowledge of HTML or programming language. Any digitally literate RA will be able to carry this part of the project forward. The subscription was paid for by the Culture of Cities organisation, so should anyone in SOTA or FACT wish to take this forward - this would need to be negotiated.

FACT website

Support from the marketing team at FACT has been invaluable. The process of getting articles online is simple and any corrections/ edits can be quickly updated. There is perhaps an area for development in the maintenance and building of social media streams, as mentioned earlier.

Visitor numbers

Whilst numbers are certainly a little lighter than expected - an opportunity was missed to gather qualitative data from those who did attend. Between FACT and SOTA we should have employed somebody to undertake a survey and interview a cross-section of the public.

Similarly, these results are problematic in that they only show numbers for Gallery 2. A flurry of interest on Twitter identified that the idea of having lift music gained a certain traction with the public imagination and again, an opportunity missed to capture the audience response to it. It may have been an idea to create some kind of mood board or provide a second box for those who experienced the music to post their feelings on how the music affected them.

Finally, participants should be given enough time to enjoy and experience the art works as part of their time at the conference. For example, with greater collaboration between SOTA and FACT there is perhaps opportunity for delegates to be part of artist led workshops which in turn could be turned into reflective/responsive articles.

Conference survey results

Upon reflection, it may be prudent to carefully word the calls for papers/art works. One participant (respondent #3) acknowledges this in their response to a later question (Question 8), that LC needed to be:

"Clearer thought about what the conference is 'about', which is not obvious from the title…"

But they concede that "However, this element actually became a strength of the conference once it had been put together". Indeed this is really important in the sense that the title itself could be

perceived to be somewhat impermeable, let alone the detail given in the CFP/CFA's. Looking forward, the call might be better communicated if co-written by an interdisciplinary/ cross-partner/ institution conference panel.

While the majority of participants were apparently delighted with the two-venue, multi/ interdisciplinary event, improvements, modifications and recommendations can be drawn. The idea of the two poles of art/academia 'drifting' apart from an initial connectedness was echoed by another respondent, that 'few, if any papers addre[ssed] the [art work] directly'. This demonstrates a specific challenge - an interesting (if not highly ambitious in terms of the simple practicalities of how, when and where!) idea to perhaps pair artist and academic in the co-creation or creation/critical reflection of a new piece of work. This would present a different kind of project being featured as part of any subsequent LC conferences.

The SOTA Boardroom may need to be rethought as a conference venue - or certainly would benefit from the kinds of excellent tech provision in the SOTA Library.

Question 8 of the survey deals with various recommendations
It is interesting that while the diversity and breadth of the conference themes were seen as positives, the scope of methodologies were identified as being somewhat limited by one respondent. Similarly, respondent #11 notes:

> 'Perhaps if the conference were a teensy bit smaller and there were no need for double panels, there would be sustained attendance throughout the conference, ensuring ongoing conversations. In the roundup it was mentioned that it seemed as though there were at least two different conferences that had happened, and there well may have been more.'

One way of reading this challenge then, is to reduce (perhaps eliminate) double panels to enable a more involved relationship with the art works and to distill themes which may, as respondent #10 suggests '[develop] the space for the conversation between art and analysis'.

Lastly, conversations around activism were also identified as an area for development. This respondent (#9) also identified a lack of reflection on cities in the Global South or Asia - which perhaps points toward a focus for future conferences.

Legacy
Interviews
All the interviews - including the reflective piece by Jessie Liu - sit somewhere between journalistic and academic writing. How these might be included in a formal publication is as yet unknown but is worth further conversation between FACT and SOTA. Indeed, with the publication on the horizon, the potential for a fruitful legacy lies ahead - although it's too early for this report to detail the inner workings of this part of the LC 'story'.

LiNK
Having the support of LiNK placement students was especially valuable. Simply being in the same office space - forging work relationships with new colleagues has sped up various processes and procedures. FACT offer induction sessions for LiNK students which helps in fostering and negotiating those relationships. It would certainly be worthwhile timing any future events with this programme.