



**Publics and their problems – notes on the remaking of the South Bank, London.**

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2 **Publics and their Problems — notes on the remaking of the South Bank, London.**  
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13 **Abstract**  
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17 Cities are full of disputes about organising public life. These disputes are not only important for deciding  
18 how spaces get used, they are integral to how publics form and develop. They in all sorts of ways define  
19 the potentialities of urban public life. This article tells the story of the Southbank Centre's plans to  
20 redevelop their central London site, and Long Live Southbank's protest of these plans to save their  
21 skateable space. Through this detailed case study the article develops a distinctive conceptual apparatus  
22 for making sense of public disputes. Drawing links between Deweyan pragmatism and assemblage theory,  
23 the article explores how publics were drawn together as assemblages of humans and non-humans with  
24 the capacity to act and argue. It follows the arguments that each side made – and the justifications  
25 underpinning them – to explore the different ideas of public-ness that were at stake in the disagreement.  
26 This also helps highlight the space for cooperation that existed. The article emphasises the role affect  
27 played in shaping the dispute; recognising its role in public reasoning, and in how people get pulled into  
28 different publics. This is a story not only of disputation, but of how a corner of London expanded its  
29 public-ness.  
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44 **Key Words**  
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46 Public space, pragmatism, assemblage, justification, affect, urban politics, London  
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## 1. Introduction

On 15th January 2014 the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, told a preliminary planning meeting of the London Assembly that he would not support a plan to expand the Southbank Centre — a charitable arts organisation located on the southern bank of the River Thames in central London [1]. The Southbank Centre had planned to expand the space they provide for music rehearsals, performances, community gardening, education and entertaining. This was designed to provide access to the arts in one of the poorest boroughs in London. To pay for the expansion, the Southbank Centre had planned to create a series of commercial units on the high value land beneath the Queen Elisabeth Hall — one of their facilities. This space has been used by skateboarders from across London and the UK since the 1970s. Affectionately named ‘the undercroft’, many consider the space to be the home of British skateboarding (Hawk, 2013), and the world’s oldest continually skated space (Borden, 2014). Intervening Boris Johnson effectively backed the arguments of a coalition of skateboarders over the plans of the Southbank Centre, citing the importance of the social value of the undercroft and its importance to the community of young people that use it. It was a remarkable decision and one that blindsided the Southbank Centre (Brown, 2014; Vincent, 2014). Three weeks later, on 5th February, the Southbank Centre capitulated. They withdrew their application for expansion, and began to consider possible alternative funding models that would retain the skateable space.

This is a remarkable and heartening story. A tale of the weak beating the strong; of the powerless defeating the powerful. A group of outsiders asserting their ‘Right to the City’ and in the process pushing back at the relentless commercialisation of public space — indeed this is the argument made by Jones (2014) and Mould (2015). Developed through the work of Lefebvre (1991; 1996), these analyses offer a compelling account of the sense of insurgency that animated the conflict. However, they leave us with relatively few resources for making sense of what happened next. For example, Mould (2015) felt that there might be ‘further plans for development [that] were perhaps subtle but no less determined in their appropriation of the skate spot’ (p. 146). Yet what actually happened is possibly the most interesting part of the whole case. Since the Southbank Centre withdrew their plans for redevelopment at the expense of the undercroft skateable space, the skateboarders have launched a campaign in *co-operation* with the Southbank Centre to *extend* the amount of space set aside for skateboarding at the site [2]. A striking development. It is a development that highlights the need for critical urban studies to develop what Simone and Pieterse (2017) would call a more ‘prospective’ register. There is a need to be able to tell this story in a way that can account for the new coalitions of publics and new configurations of public-ness that have developed through the Southbank Centre and the skateboarders’ dispute.

In what follows we trace out how these two protagonists went about assembling, articulating, and

1  
2 manipulating, competing publics. We tell a story about how urban publics are pulled together in relation  
3 to specific issues in specific material situations (Latour, 2005; Marres, 2012). Following the work of  
4 people like Iveson (2007), Watson (2006), and Sennett (2018) we want to add to critical urban studies'  
5 repertoires for producing empirically nuanced accounts of urban politics and urban change (see also:  
6 Barnett, 2014; Bridge, 2014; Amin, 2012). We are interested in exploring how notions of justice and worth  
7 emerge, develop, and are contested in particular situations (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Blok, 2015;  
8 Barnett, 2017). Attending to these processes expands our accounts for how it is that urban public spaces  
9 are remade and reconfigured, and allows us to further develop our capacity to make sense of and evaluate  
10 urban change. This is with an aim to develop 'potential point[s] of leverage in efforts to configure better  
11 and more democratic forms of urban public life' (Koch, 2015: 1231).

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21 The aims of this article are twofold. Empirically it tells the story of the Southbank Centre's plans to  
22 redevelop their central London site, and the saving of the undercroft as a skateable space. Conceptually  
23 it develops a distinctive conceptual apparatus for making sense of public disputes. We trace out the  
24 assemblage of relations and alliances that different sides of the disagreement pulled together; in the  
25 process bringing Deweyan pragmatism into conversation with assemblage theory. Central to the dispute  
26 were the often radically different justifications the protagonists drew upon and utilised throughout the  
27 campaign (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). These justifications are important for understanding the  
28 different ideas of public-ness that were at stake, and for how cooperation was eventually able to happen.  
29 Finally, we highlight the importance of accounting for affect in how public disputes unfold (Connolly,  
30 2008; c.f. Barnett, 2008). Affect has become prominent within certain areas of critical urban studies.  
31 Rather than framing what was going in terms such as 'affectual urbanism' here the focus is how affect  
32 operates in a more 'minor' key (Katz 1996; c.f. Anderson and Holden, 2008). This is an argument that  
33 recognises the role of affect in public reasoning, and in how people get pulled into different publics. In  
34 so doing we tell a story not only of disputation, but of how a small corner of London expanded its public-  
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## 49 **2. The possibilities of urban dispute**

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53 The events at the South Bank were ambiguous and multi-layered, with moments of both entrenched  
54 opposition, but also resolution and coalition building. At the time of research Jones (2014) and Mould  
55 (2013; 2015) had both offered accounts of the dispute in a way that underscored the oppositional nature  
56 of the conflict. Building on these accounts our task was to not only make sense of how and why the  
57 dispute happened, but also how it could reach a point where both sides are now working together to  
58 expand public-ness at the site. These events required a set of tools and concepts that were able to tell the  
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2 story in a way that highlighted the possibilities of urban dispute. Ahead of diving into the details of the  
3 dispute it is worth setting out some of the concepts with used to approach the story.  
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7 In their recent book *New Urban Worlds* Simone and Pieterse (2017) raised concerns about an overemphasis  
8 on critique in urban studies. They argue that alongside the work of critique, there was a need to practice  
9 research in more hopeful and imaginative registers (see also: Woodyer and Geoghegan, 2013). For them  
10 this has involved re-describing urban life in the Global South and foregrounding the capacities and  
11 resourcefulness of all sorts of everyday people and institutions. Another approach can be to focus on the  
12 critical capacities of ordinary people to make sense of problems and reach for justice.  
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19 That is the argument made by people like Barnett and Bridge who have argued the philosophy of  
20 pragmatism might be a resource that is useful for broadening and diversifying the tools used to make  
21 sense of democracy as it relates to urban environments (Barnett and Bridge, 2013; Barnett, 2014; Bridge,  
22 2014; see also: Lake, 2017). Dewey offers a number of insights for making sense of the productive  
23 dynamics of public disputes. In the *Public and its Problems* (1927) Dewey observes how problematic  
24 situations are made public by those who are affected by a situation so that it matters to broader audiences  
25 who are indirectly affected. Making a problem public can then lead to a political and institutional response  
26 to the problematic situation — ultimately leading to resolution. This is a productive dynamic to work  
27 with. It highlights public disputes as processes (Terzi and Tonnelat, 2017). It places disputes in relation  
28 to particular material issues (Latour, 2005; Marres, 2012). And is an approach that frames political change  
29 as an ongoing working-out of problems (Barnett, 2017; Hankins, 2017; Harney, et al. 2016); a working  
30 out that is nonetheless full of argumentation (Bernstein, 2010). Indeed we can connect it to authors like  
31 Zerilli (2009) and Young (1990) who talk about political argumentation as being grounded in ordinary  
32 experiences. As an argument for a more expansive, participatory approach to democracy, Dewey can be  
33 taken in a number of directions. Fariás (2011) has drawn on Dewey to argue that ‘actual urban situations  
34 define the space of intervention for an urban democratic public, not capitalism at large’ (p. 372). Whereas  
35 Purcell (2017) has suggested that Dewey may well be a useful addition to insights from critical theorists  
36 like Lefebvre, Rancière, and Foucault ‘into our study of a project for democracy’ (p. 500) — where  
37 democracy is understood in contradistinction to capitalism (Purcell, 2013). For our purposes it is the  
38 dynamic of disputation that Dewey describes which is useful — the formation of publics, the pursuit of  
39 their interests, and how communication and cooperation feed in to everyday political activity and the  
40 pursuit of the common good (Sennett, 2012; 2018).  
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57 One of the key areas of inquiry this opens up is how do publics form around issues of concern? And why  
58 are some publics efficacious and others not? These are questions which can be productively developed  
59 through more-than-human ontologies. The original translation of ‘assemblage’ came from the French  
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2 ‘agencement’ meaning ‘an arrangement that creates agency’ (Müller, 2015: 29). Here the question of  
3 formation, and a given formation’s potential capacity, proceed hand in hand. DeLanda’s (2006; 2016)  
4 ontology prioritises this sense of capability, where assemblages are partly defined by what they are able  
5 to do. Buser (2018), Lieto (2017), Metzger (2010), and Fariás and Blok (2016) have each in different ways  
6 worked with more-than-human ontologies to think about how public, democratic, practices develop in  
7 relation to the urban environment. Whilst Latour (2005) and Bennett (2009) have noted the resonances  
8 more-than-human ontologies have with Dewey’s pragmatism (see also, Koopman, 2008; Fariás, 2011).  
9 Our intention is to think of Dewey’s publics as assemblages; to think of publics as assemblages of human  
10 and non-human elements — including films, images, texts, tables, petitions, and skateboards — that  
11 develop the capability to act in the urban environment. One way of approaching assemblage thinking has  
12 been to see it as a coherent and distinct ontology to conventional ways of thinking. We want to do  
13 something more modest. Our intent is to use it as part of our conceptual apparatus of related concepts  
14 to guide and animate our inquiry.  
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25 The productiveness of working Dewey through assemblage theory is twofold. First, it contributes to  
26 debates over the critical utility of assemblage thinking (McFarlane, 2011). Assemblage as we use the term  
27 is not merely methodologically descriptive (cf. Brenner, et al. 2011), but rather alters our understanding  
28 of the key actors in a given public dispute. It can help to develop understanding of the way in which  
29 agency is distributed across and within networks (Sandover, et al. 2018), and highlight the capacity of  
30 non-human actors to facilitate new lines of argumentation and engagement within disputes (Campbell,  
31 2013). From this perspective publics not only form but also become effective when ‘they are ‘equipped’  
32 with the necessary sociotechnical devices’ (Fariás, 2017: 48). That is to say, they gain their capacities to  
33 act in part with and through the materials and communicative media they mobilise. Second, we aim to  
34 move away from reified generalities like ‘The Public’, towards an understanding of specific assemblages  
35 of publics concerned with specific material issues (DeLanda, 2016; Dewey, 1927). As people like Iveson  
36 (2007) and Watson (2006) have emphasised questions of public-ness are raised in relation to specific  
37 conflicts. Acknowledging this pushes us to attend to the times and spaces where moments of public-ness  
38 emerge and better understand their efficacy. It also helps address a lacunae within urban studies. To  
39 paraphrase Simone and Pieterse (2017) there is a pressing need for urban studies to develop more  
40 prospective registers of inquiry. More than just critique there is a need to be able to imagine, notice, and  
41 re-describe the potentialities that exist and can be developed in cities around the world. Their argument  
42 is that critique alone is not enough (see also: Ferguson, 2011). Developing Deweyan pragmatism in  
43 conversation with assemblage theory is one approach that can be effective in highlighting moments where  
44 humans and non-humans are pulled together as publics to facilitate democratic change.  
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A capability that publics develop is the ability to argue and to justify. As Barnett (2014: 1630) puts it: ‘to

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2 further conceptualize the relationship between urbanization and democratic politics, it might be helpful  
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4 to take a lead from styles of social theory that focus on the irreducible role of normative practices in the  
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6 everyday coordination of human practices'. For our purposes this means paying attention to the values  
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8 and justifications drawn on in a dispute. As Fuller (2013), Holden and Scerri (2015), and Blok (2015) have  
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10 shown, paying attention to moments of practical dialogue and justification can provide insight into how  
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12 planning disputes unfold. They productively draw on the French pragmatic sociology of critique as  
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14 practiced by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) who have developed a theory about how groups and  
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16 individuals draw on particular normative values to argue. These normative values cover six categories  
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18 — domestic, market, industrial, fame, inspired, and civic — and conflicting values often lie at the heart  
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20 of disputes (as well as their resolution towards a common good). Holden, et al. (2013: 20) even go as far  
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22 to argue that the synergies between Deweyan American pragmatism, and French critical pragmatism,  
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24 helps add depth to our understanding of how the common good might be reached for through dispute  
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26 in 'a dauntingly complex, dynamic and uneven public sphere'. As Stark (2009) has demonstrated, it is not  
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28 necessary to adopt Boltanski and Thévenot's schema wholesale for it to be useful. What is distinctive  
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30 about this approach is its attention to the ordinary critical capacities mobilised in disputes.

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32 By looking to justifications for an understanding of public disputes, we do not want to singularly focus  
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34 on rational communication. Writers as diverse as Connolly (2008), Haidt (2013), Mercier and Sperber  
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36 (2017) have shown that the ways we construct and are convinced by arguments are entangled with affect  
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38 and emotion. As Amin (2015) has discussed the political potential of a public space is deeply entangled  
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40 with affective intensities. Moreover in this case, where so much energy was focused on the practice of  
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42 skateboarding, the production of films, and the aesthetics of the buildings, it was important to find a way  
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44 to discuss the centrality of affect in the dispute (Carter and McCormack, 2006; Bridge, 2004; Borden,  
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46 2001). This involved both how people came to be affected by the dispute and assembled into a public  
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48 (Barnett, 2017), but also how the reasoning of the dispute itself unfolded in an affectual register  
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50 (Connolly, 2008); not least because one of the things the assembled publics were able to do was  
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52 communicate affectively. The point is that affect is entangled with how assembled publics go about  
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54 participating in a dispute. Accounting for how people become entangled with the dispute goes a long way  
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56 towards elaborating on how and why the dispute unfolded in the way that it did.

### 57 58 **3. How we followed the story (our methodology)**

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60 Before moving onto the story a quick word on where the material for the narrative came from. In  
retrospective case studies such as this, the researcher's task is to undertake a political forensics of the case  
(Ragin and Becker, 1992). This involves trying to gather as much material as possible left in the dispute's

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2 wake. To this end, a systematic review of the media coverage (in print and online) was carried out. This  
3 extended to use of the *Wayback Machine* — an internet archive — to access deleted web material related  
4 to the dispute. Parallel to this a detailed analysis of the planning documents produced by the Southbank  
5 Centre, as well as the objections they generated, was completed. The social media communication that  
6 surrounded the dispute was also examined, this focused largely on Long Live Southbank's Facebook  
7 page. This documentary material was consolidated through ten in-depth interviews with key actors from  
8 the Southbank Centre, the skateboarders, and adjacent institutions [3]. These interviews informed and  
9 clarified our understanding of the events, as well as providing additional detail not available via secondary  
10 sources. Due to the task of tracing a dispute, the public, contemporaneous statements are more quoted  
11 than the reflections from the research participants conducted two years after the events. A timeline of  
12 key events is summarised in figure 1. With that out of the way let us get back to the very public dispute  
13 of the South Bank.  
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#### 25 **4. Assembling publics**

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29 Thursday 2 January 2014, thirteen days before Mayor Johnson's decision not to support the Southbank  
30 Centre's plans. Over 100 young people were gathered around the undercroft skateable space. It was cold,  
31 but spirits were high. Boxes had been stacked on top of the stairs in the space — creating a wall of boxes.  
32 One after another skaters came rushing at the boxes, leapt into the air with their skateboards, and  
33 performed tricks over them. Inside the boxes were 27,286 planning objections against the Southbank  
34 Centre's plans for extension. The boxes were then skated three miles to Lambeth Town Hall, to be  
35 delivered to Lambeth Council. This was the second time the skateboarders had undertaken this kind of  
36 action. Six months previous, on 4 July 2013, they delivered over 14,000 objections to Lambeth Town  
37 Hall. Each delivery broke the record for the number of planning objections levelled against a single  
38 project.  
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48 Such things do not just happen. The performance of delivering the objections had to be organised: days  
49 set, people invited to come along, boxes collected, stickers and posters designed and printed. The physical  
50 forms had to be 'filled in, signed, checked, scanned, packed up' (LLSB, 2014a). Moreover, 30,000 people  
51 had to be committed enough to the cause that they all fill out a planning objection. Then the day was  
52 documented, filmed, edited, uploaded to YouTube (LLSB, 2014b, 2013a), and a press release organised.  
53 All from a group of largely young people not necessarily thought of as being organised, politically  
54 motivated, or savvy about the English planning system. This is indicative of the capacity the skateboarders  
55 were able to realise as an assembled public.  
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2 Much of the organisational work coalesced around Long Live Southbank (LLSB) — a non-profit  
3 organisation set up to represent the skateboarders in response to the Southbank Centre’s plans. LLSB  
4 was run by individuals with experience of the professional skateboarding industry, as well as Paul  
5 Richards, a political activist who volunteered to help run the campaign. It strategised and organised the  
6 logistics of the skateboarders’ campaign, and drew on the skills and experience of the skateboard  
7 community. Aaron Gregory, a graphic designer and skateboarder, designed the logo for their campaign.  
8 This could be found on the t-shirts, beanies, hoodies, and stickers sold in support of the campaign. Henry  
9 Edwards-Woods, a filmmaker and skateboarder, produced campaign films for LLSB — crafting beautiful  
10 films that worked to codify the campaign’s message. Whilst those involved in the professional skateboard  
11 industry contributed in a range of ways, from designing a skateboard in collaboration with LLSB, to  
12 allowing LLSB to store its campaign materials at a local skate shop. LLSB worked hard to pull these  
13 individuals with diverse skill sets together so that they recognised themselves as being ‘intimately affected  
14 by an issue’ (Marres, 2012: 49).

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29 The result was that the public of the skateboarders was composed of a whole range of charismatic human  
30 and non-human elements, all of which could be directed towards persuading those that were indirectly  
31 affected by the issue. As Henry Edwards-Woods, Paul Richards, and Louis Woodhead (a LLSB  
32 volunteer) all discussed in separate interviews, a centre piece of the campaign was ‘the table’. The table  
33 was a couple of folding tables that stood at the front of the undercroft throughout the duration of LLSB’s  
34 campaign. The table was manned by volunteers seven days a week, year round. People walking along the  
35 River Thames, would wander up, watch the skateboarders at play in the undercroft, and talk to one of  
36 the volunteers about what was going on. They could buy stickers, t-shirts, beanies, or hoodies  
37 emblazoned with the LLSB logo. They could sign the petition against the Southbank Centre’s  
38 redevelopment, join the mailing list, and fill out a planning objection. It was a remarkable piece of  
39 campaigning. As a hastily assembled public of concerned skateboarders they were able to make the issue  
40 of redevelopment at the South Bank ‘a matter of concern’ (Latour, 2005), and able to — as Dewey would  
41 recognise — place a demand on institutions to respond to the problem they were facing. By the time  
42 Mayor Johnson intervened, the delivery of a record breaking number of planning objections can be seen  
43 as the fruition of an assembled public’s capacity.

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56 The assembled public of the skateboarders were one of the protagonists in this conflict, their counterparts  
57 were the groups that were going to benefit from the Southbank Centre’s plans. On 31 July 2013, four  
58 weeks after LLSB’s first delivery of planning objections, *The Guardian* published an article by musician  
59 and political activist Billy Bragg (Bragg, 2013). Bragg outlined the multiple groups of people who would  
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1  
2 have been helped by the expansion of the Southbank Centre: buskers, homeless people, local school  
3 children, poets, artists, and musicians. As he summarised in our interview: ‘The Southbank Centre has  
4 developed into a community resource — that works with almost 30 schools in Lambeth alone — it’s  
5 not just a fabulous concert hall but a bit of a community centre. In that sense it needs spaces where  
6 musicians can rehearse, and you can try out plays and stuff like that’. Similarly, the *Evening Standard* ran a  
7 story covering the ‘Tomorrow’s Warriors Youth Jazz Orchestra’ — a charity focused on creating  
8 opportunities for young Black and Minority Ethnic communities to develop music skills — who again,  
9 would have found a home in the new rehearsal space included in the plans (Gardner, 2013). Making these  
10 arguments was to amplify the Southbank Centre’s case for the expansion; that new facilities were needed  
11 to facilitate community access to the arts. However despite all this, these groups affected by the plans did  
12 not form an efficacious public. It was not that these groups did not act, but rather that they did so with  
13 much less energy and organisation compared to the skateboarders. This is evidenced by the absence of  
14 activity conducted in favour of the redevelopment plans. There was no 60,000 strong petition online  
15 (Pearce, 2013; Jones, 2014). No volunteer table of merchandise promoting the redevelopment plans. No  
16 group of volunteers conducting a campaign to make an argument for the development. In short, there  
17 was little public presence of those arguing for the plans. Certainly the Southbank Centre itself was gamely  
18 pushing its arguments, but it had surprisingly few committed allies helping make its case. This raises  
19 interesting questions about why sometimes publics do not assemble.  
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34 There are a number of possible reasons for this. One reason is that in comparison to the skateboarders  
35 the kinds of groups the Southbank Centre were attempting to assemble were less cohesive. Local  
36 schoolchildren did participate in activities at the Southbank Centre, but this was mediated by schools.  
37 Musicians did play in and around the Southbank Centre, but not in the dedicated rehearsal space that was  
38 yet to be built. People did participate in the community gardening, but on a less extensive area than the  
39 plans promised. The people affected by the plans were socially, culturally, and geographically diverse.  
40 Although Dewey is clear in arguing that all that matters for a public to assemble is whether or not they  
41 are (in)directly affected by a problematic situation — what we find here is that the sense of being affected  
42 is very different for each of the groups. Their disparate attachments and commitment to the different  
43 spaces of the Southbank Centre resulted in a failure to recognise a common concern. It is much easier to  
44 recognise a common concern in an already existing shared space (the undercroft), than to recognise a  
45 common concern in something that is yet to be built (the redevelopment).  
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56 A further reason relates to Dewey’s argument that publics emerge when a group of individuals need to  
57 engage with, or place a demand on, the state. For the groups that were going to benefit from the plans,  
58 the Southbank Centre was — in a sense — already taking up their concerns and communicating with  
59 them. In the course of preparing their planning application the Southbank Centre conducted significant  
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1  
2 amounts of consultation with: arts and cultural organisations (the BFI, National Archives and National  
3 Theatre), heritage organisations (English Heritage, Twentieth Century Society), political representatives  
4 (local councillors, local MPs, the Mayor of London, and Minister for the Arts), local residents (e.g. South  
5 Bank Forum), artists (their resident orchestras), and a whole range of others (New London Architecture,  
6 retail tenants, Southbank Centre volunteers) (SBC, 2013a). Indeed in February 2013 — right at the end  
7 of their initial consultation period — they engaged Central St Martins art school to liaise with the  
8 undercroft users (see: Willcocks, 2017) [4].  
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15 In a similar vein, in the Southbank Centre's (2013a) Statement of Community Involvement, the resident  
16 orchestras were 'extremely excited about the new rehearsal space to create and develop work' (p. 63). At  
17 consultation 87.7% of people surveyed supported the inclusion of new garden space (SBC, 2013a: 27).  
18 And a local residents group expressed the opinion that the 'project [was] warmly welcomed as was the  
19 continued success of the festival approach' (SBC, 2013a: 62). These groups may not have seen the need  
20 to assemble as a public pro-actively supporting the plans. In comparison, during the second phase of  
21 consultation, once the skateboarders campaign was in full swing, the approval ratings of the plans  
22 dropped from 86.9% to 36.6% (SBC, 2013a: 43). Efficacious publics are capable of many things, however  
23 it is by no means guaranteed that publics will assemble (Terzi and Tonnelat, 2017), unfortunately for the  
24 Southbank Centre arguably the highpoint of their campaign, was the article by Billy Bragg.  
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## 35 **5. Justifying publics**

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39 Ultimately the Southbank Centre's public failed to materialise. Or rather it failed to materialise with  
40 sufficient force and pressure. Central to all of this was an inability of the Southbank Centre to assemble  
41 an effective public, but it was also a failure of the Southbank Centre to justify its plans with sufficient  
42 persuasive force. This debate was not only about assembling publics. It was also about the arguments  
43 that were made. It was about the different sets of justifications that were drawn on in the debate. And it  
44 was about which of these justifications gained traction, and which did not.  
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50 As discussed above, the French pragmatist sociologists Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) can help us think  
51 about how justifications function in political forums. The dynamic they describe — of groups and  
52 individuals developing convincing reasonings for how and why they are aggrieved in a dispute — is  
53 productive. It focuses attention on the conflicting normative values that lie at the heart of dispute. It  
54 highlights that these values are developed in situ, in relation to people's own understanding of the issue  
55 at hand. Moreover, these disagreements take place within the constraints of particular institutional  
56 configurations and material situations. Paying attention to these justifications can help delineate the  
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1 contours of the dispute, but also what the space for compromise might be.  
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5 The Southbank Centre were making some quite distinct arguments and justifications for their  
6 development. The plans would have created additional rehearsal and performance space in the shape of  
7 the new 'Glass Pavilion', whilst the new 'Liner Building' would have created space for artists, cafes and  
8 restaurants (see fig. 2). A complete re-landscaping and extension of the terraces was designed to add to  
9 the public realm, whilst creating the 'largest collection of roof gardens in London for the public to enjoy'  
10 (SBC, 2013b: 25). As Jude Kelly, Artistic Director at the Southbank Centre put it: 'We see this new  
11 development as a major part of our ambition to give away as much free culture as possible' (SBC, 2013b).  
12 Or as Mike McCart, Director at the Southbank Centre viewed it: 'We have a duty to provide for as wide  
13 an audience as possible. To achieve that, the project includes a new national literature centre, education  
14 centre, children's space and orchestral rehearsal space' (Building Design, 2013). In our interview with  
15 Lemn Sissay, a poet in residence at the Southbank Centre, the redevelopment was described as clearly  
16 building on previous refurbishments of the site to 'make it for the people by the people ... to have artists  
17 not just on the walls or on the stage, but in the DNA of the Southbank Centre'. And for Nihal  
18 Arthanayake, DJ and Southbank Centre board member, what was at stake in these plans was 'access ...  
19 I want the young people who live in the vicinity of the South Bank to understand it could be a place for  
20 them to realise what they want to be in life' (Dawson, 2013). What these voices indicate is an ambition  
21 to expand the *provision* at the Southbank Centre site.  
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39 One of the orders of worth that Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) outline is that of the civic. This refers to  
40 a set of values that appeal to collective attachment, where what is valued is not individual persons but  
41 collective interest and communal association — the public will. The Southbank Centre's arguments can  
42 be read as a particular interpretation of the civic order of worth. Their plans were about providing for  
43 the multiple groups that had a shared interest in the Southbank Centre site. As summarised in one of the  
44 very first press releases unveiling the plans: 'more art for more people in better spaces' (SBC, 2013c).  
45 More precisely, the Southbank Centre's plans can be interpreted as a utilitarian civic imaginary. This is  
46 most clearly evidenced in their plans for the skateboarders. As this article opened with, the skateboarders'  
47 space was to be filled with commercial units in order to secure finance for the rest of the project.  
48 However, in return the Southbank Centre had plans to create a new skateable space for use by  
49 skateboarders, BMX-ers, and graffiti artists beneath the Hungerford Bridge, right next to the Royal  
50 Festival Hall, and 120 meters upriver from the undercroft (see fig. 2, E). The new skateable space was  
51 designed in consultation with undercroft users, a professional skateboarder, and skate architects —  
52 including Rich Holland a designer who installed some of the concrete obstacles that are so well used by  
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2 the skateboarders in the undercroft. £1 million was set aside for this project, in some ways a generous  
3 offer and opportunity — as recognised by a number of skateboarders (Neeson, 2013). From the  
4 Southbank Centre’s perspective this was a logical approach that allowed them to expand their arts and  
5 cultural provision, whilst retaining the skateboarders on site, albeit displaced from the undercroft.  
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10 On the face of it this seemed a reasonable proposal. However LLSB disagreed. They did not want to  
11 participate in the consultation (LLSB, 2013b), and did not agree that the new skateable space was a fair  
12 compromise (LLSB, 2013c). To understand this it is helpful to understand the arguments and  
13 justifications the skateboarders were making for the undercroft. LLSB pursued a whole range of strategies  
14 to defend their space. In May 2013 with legal representation from King & Wood Mallesons SJ Berwin  
15 — a prominent international law firm — LLSB submitted applications for the undercroft to be  
16 recognised as an ‘Asset of Community Value’ and a ‘Village Green’. These are planning designations  
17 designed to afford a community a range of protections over space by virtue of long term use, or the value  
18 it represents to the local community. Making the case for the undercroft as a Village Green and Asset of  
19 Community Value immediately framed their argument as less about the subversive countercultural value  
20 of skateboarding in that location per se, and more about the kinds of values associated with village greens  
21 — heritage, community life and so forth (Madgin, et al., 2017). The application also gained positive  
22 coverage from across the political spectrum; in the left-leaning *Guardian* (Editorial, 2013) and the right-  
23 leaning *Times* (Purves, 2013). And importantly, it established a justification for the disagreement being  
24 about the civic value of the undercroft as a public space [5].  
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37 This position was elaborated on and matured over the course of their campaign. LLSB sent their petition  
38 to Kate Hoey the local Member of Parliament, who presented to the House of Commons in June 2013  
39 on their behalf (HC, 2013). In October 2013 LLSB presented their case to the London Assembly on the  
40 importance of planning designations like ‘Assets of Community Value’ (London Assembly, 2013). And  
41 their blog frequently referred to the idea of ‘140,000 people’s democratic opinion’ (LLSB, 2014c) — a  
42 way of articulating the idea that the general public, the common interest, was on their side of the  
43 argument. This was an argument about the heritage of skateboarding at the site: ‘40 years of our history  
44 and how much passion that lays within it, to talk to someone else about making a skatepark on there, it  
45 just makes you feel [trails off, shakes head] y’know’ (LLSB, 2013d). It was also an argument about the  
46 artistic value of skateboarding: ‘when we’re talking about South Bank, we’re talking about a major space,  
47 where not just people have fun and enjoy a space, but things have been invented there, and thousands of  
48 people have woven their individual lines in there, it’s pretty irreplaceable’ (LLSB, 2014d). And finally it  
49 was an argument that community could be found within a practice like skateboarding: ‘my best friends  
50 now are all from South Bank ... watching everyone else skate, meeting all these people, learning to skate,  
51 and knowing what’s good, and watching people film there’ (LLSB, 2013e).  
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4 What underscores all of these strategies is an idea of civic value rooted in the specificity of the  
5 skateboarders as a distinct community of users on the South Bank — something that should not be swept  
6 aside in pursuit of utilitarian values. This idea is well captured by LLSB's slogan 'you can't move history'.  
7 Drawing on the work of Young (1990) this argument can be understood as the skateboarders seeking  
8 *recognition* of their contribution to the communal and civic value of the South Bank, and in turn the need  
9 to protect their space. This helps us understand the terrain of the dispute. What is at stake are two very  
10 different interpretations of civic value, two very different ideas of what was best for the public at the  
11 South Bank. Nonetheless, in establishing that both sides care about civic value — even as LLSB  
12 emphatically refused the Southbank Centre's framing of the problem — we can recognise the potential  
13 space for cooperation. As Thévenot (2007) notes, communication is a verb meaning 'taking part in  
14 common matter' (p. 411). And as Ingold (2017) drawing on Dewey (1966) argues, the shared etymology  
15 of 'com' meaning together, is a clue to the relationship between communication, community, and  
16 common — talking together, being together, practicing together. 'Communication is *the way in which they*  
17 *come to possess things in common*' (Dewey, 1966: 4, cited in Ingold, 2017, emphasis in original). Attending to  
18 these different ideas of the civic helps us to make sense of why this disagreement was a disagreement,  
19 but also to appreciate where communication, compromise, and collaboration would eventually come  
20 from.  
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## 36 6. Affectual Publics

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39 This story has a lot going on. It is worth reviewing what has been covered empirically and conceptually  
40 to make sense of the conflict so far. We have met two groups that have faced a problematic situation.  
41 The skateboarders were able to assemble as an efficacious public and place a demand on political  
42 institutions to respond to their situation. On the other side, the Southbank Centre's public — the groups  
43 that would have benefitted from the proposal — did not assemble as a coherent and forceful public. At  
44 stake in this dispute has been two different interpretations of civic value, two different interpretations of  
45 how best to configure the public spaces of the South Bank. The Southbank Centre can be seen as  
46 practicing a utilitarian civic imaginary — 'more art for more people in better spaces' (SBC, 2013c), even  
47 if that meant adding additional commercial units in the undercroft to make it feasible. The skateboarders  
48 on the other hand had been deploying a range of strategies to make their case for why the undercroft as  
49 it currently exists is valuable — 'you can't move history'. Their vision of the civic is rooted in recognition  
50 for the contribution skateboarding makes to the public-ness of the South Bank. However, these  
51 arguments were not made in a flat, rational, abstract way. The justifications that each side of the dispute  
52 drew on, especially in the case of LLSB, also operated in an explicitly *affectual* register. And it is this  
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2 affectual register that can add to an understanding of how the dispute unfolded, how people got drawn  
3 in to the assembling of publics, and why some justifications gained traction, whilst others did not.  
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7 Much has been made of the ways in which contemporary patterns of urban inhabitation are influenced  
8 by, but also actively shaped and curtailed by, affectual intensities (Thrift, 2004; Anderson and Holden,  
9 2008; Pettit, 2018). This has involved exploring how the intentional engineering of affectual atmospheres  
10 becomes a terrain of political importance (Thrift, 2008; c.f. Barnett, 2008). We want to focus on affect as  
11 an ordinary dimension of life in cities (Bissell, 2010). In this case as an ordinary part of how people get  
12 drawn into political assemblages (Butler, 2015; Duff, 2017). As Ernwein and Matthey (2018) have already  
13 highlighted in relation to planning, affect can play an important role in whether a given project is deemed  
14 acceptable or not. Here we will look at the comparable success of LLSB and the Southbank Centre in  
15 developing their arguments in an overtly affectual register.  
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24 On 6 March 2013, nine months prior to the skateboarders' second delivery of objections and almost a  
25 year before Mayor Johnson's decisive statement on their plans, the Southbank Centre released their initial  
26 plans to the public. In the press release, details were listed of what the plans would involve, including the  
27 line: 'New undercroft venues — *under-used space* from the undercrofts will be reclaimed for artistic and  
28 cultural uses' (SBC, 2013c: 4, emphasis added). This was certainly a revelation to the skateboarders, as  
29 Henry Edwards-Woods described it in our interview: 'we found out it was happening through the *Evening*  
30 *Standard* newspaper, once it had been launched and presented as this is what's happening' [6]. Moreover  
31 their long and intense use of the space was largely overlooked. There was a rapid realisation that those  
32 who used this space needed to organise and make their case. The amateur and professional skate  
33 community in London was mobilised. With live DJs, photography, films and a professional skate demo  
34 LLSB kicked off their campaign in an affectively engaging style with the 'May Jam' over the weekend of  
35 4-6 May 2013. With t-shirts emblazoned with the LLSB logo it was clear that LLSB was making a strong  
36 claim that there existed a vibrant and engaging set of practices in the undercroft, and that this had a  
37 central place in the history of skateboarding; not just in London but the whole of the UK. And more  
38 than that, the undercroft was a home for skateboarders — a diffuse and diverse community.  
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51 The most explicitly affectual dimension to the skateboarders' campaign were the videos they produced.  
52 Drawing on his long experience as a skate filmmaker, Henry Edwards-Woods, put together a series of  
53 beautiful videos for the campaign. The videos often included slow-mo tracking shots of skateboarders in  
54 the undercroft performing aerial gymnastics on the concrete banks, along with interviews with those  
55 affected by the Southbank Centre's plans (see fig. 3). One of the films *The Bigger Picture* received 4,500  
56 views in its first 24 hours online [7]. This film pulled together an array of images to create a cohesive  
57 argument that asked audiences to see the campaign from the skateboarders' perspective (Carter and  
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2 Dodds, 2011). Watching the film, the sense of injustice at losing the undercroft, and the aesthetic value  
3 of skateboarding there, is palpable. The film is in effect constructing a moral argument. This is not an  
4 argument of the form political philosophy would easily recognise. It is a deeply affecting train of  
5 associational reasoning built through a montage of image, spoken word, and music, that operates as much  
6 through juxtaposition as through logic and grounded reasoning. Evidence for the effectiveness of *The*  
7 *Bigger Picture* can be captured through the contemporaneous comments left on the video: ‘Great movie.  
8 Will be sharing it. Keep fighting! LONG LIVE SOUTHBANK!!!’, ‘I’ve never skated in my life but I’d  
9 never want to see this icon of South Bank disappear. What can I do to help?’, ‘It would be horrible to  
10 put an end to this treasure of a place’. Comments like these are indicative of how effective LLSB’s films  
11 were in constructing their argument, and giving their story an affective force that meant the audience  
12 intuitively understood their position. In a more-than-cognitive register the audience understood the need  
13 to assemble as a public to protect the undercroft.  
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24 In direct comparison the campaign material produced by the Southbank Centre was less affectively  
25 compelling. One of their promotional films, *The Festival Wing*, is striking in its contrast (see fig. 3)[8]. The  
26 film is a sequence of ‘talking heads’ discussing the plans, static shots of the Southbank Centre’s  
27 architecture, intercut with clips of the general public using the site. It was well made and functional, but  
28 little more than that. These kinds of videos were capably countered by LLSB. Any statements made that  
29 challenged the skateboarders’ campaign (i.e. Neeson, 2013 and Kelly, 2013) were critiqued with video  
30 rebuttals that drew on the multi-decade history of skateboarding and filmmaking in the undercroft. Even  
31 the title ‘*The Bigger Picture*’ is a quotation from Jude Kelly — who was attempting to articulate a utilitarian  
32 civic concept of justice for why the redevelopment was important. Turning that quotation into an  
33 affective campaign video is a compelling counter-argument. For LLSB this was necessary to force the  
34 Southbank Centre to recognise their presence, but it was also necessary in order to make the issue public,  
35 and attempt to convince the general public of their right to remain.  
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49 Whilst LLSB were busily preparing for the affectively engaging ‘May Jam’, between 7 March to 18 April  
50 2013 the Southbank Centre held a public exhibition to inform the general public about their  
51 redevelopment plans. The affectual experience of each event would have been quite different. The  
52 material configuration of the exhibition was about communicating to the public what the plans were  
53 about. Architectural models suggested a degree of fixity to what was going to happen. Computer  
54 renderings suggested a building about to be realised. Although in certain contexts these can be persuasive  
55 mediums (Ernwein and Matthey, 2018), when set against a weekend of playful, artistic, and celebratory  
56 use of the undercroft by the skateboarders they appear rather less compelling. Similar points could be  
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2 made about the community consultation weekend that the Southbank Centre ran on 14-15 September  
3 2013, or the desk that they set up outside the Royal Festival Hall explaining the redevelopment plans  
4 (manned by Southbank Centre staff), or their invitation to invite the skateboarders to engage with the  
5 design process of the Hungerford Bridge skateable space. In each of these situations the Southbank  
6 Centre was attempting to discuss — rationally and deliberatively — what was going to happen. In  
7 contrast, central to the LLSB campaign was an understanding that they needed to persuade, to inspire,  
8 and to attract members of the general public; using emotion as much as rational argument. There was an  
9 understanding that by developing a self-consciously affective campaign with films, demos, and  
10 merchandise, they might stand a chance of making this situation a matter of concern, assemble a public  
11 around them, and protect their space.  
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## 22 **7. Public space, public disputes: how public-ness is made and remade**

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25 So far we have stuck tightly to examining this very public urban dispute. Our reasons for doing so are  
26 not just because it is a compelling and charismatic case. It is also because it is through disputes like this  
27 that the public life of cities emerges. This is to connect with a series of debates about how we might best  
28 understand both urban public space and urban public-ness. Within much of urban studies public space  
29 is understood through either of three lenses — as spaces of exclusion, of contestation, or of claim making  
30 (Koch and Latham 2012). As scholars such as Amin (2012), Barnett (2014; 2017) and Valverde (2012)  
31 have shown, these lenses offer a restricted view of what public spaces — and disputes about them —  
32 involve and why they matter. Valverde in particular argues that if we wish to understand how spaces are  
33 realised as public, we need to trace out the debates and conflicts through which communities understand  
34 spaces to be so. And we need to understand the materialities and practices — as well as the ‘communities’  
35 — that are enfolded into public discussion about these sites or spaces. Further to that, and now following  
36 Amin, we also need to acknowledge that much of the concern about public-ness and public space is not  
37 about questions of encounter and direct recognition, it is about the appropriate ways of using and  
38 inhabiting environments. Concerns about public-ness often focus on profoundly pragmatic questions  
39 around things like material configuration, responsibility, and maintenance. Lastly, Barnett argues public  
40 space, and how urban life should be configured, is bound up with explicit questions of moral value, or  
41 perhaps more accurately normative judgements. It is also concerned with the right ways of arguing about  
42 and coming to agreement about these values. This means that we as urban researchers need to be paying  
43 attention to how different actors in disputes around public space construct and justify their arguments.  
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59 This is especially pertinent in the case of the South Bank. As mentioned in the introduction, one way of  
60 telling this story has been to focus on how LLSB was successful in holding the existing relations of the

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2 undercroft in place. LLSB energetically defended the space from external intrusion, and will need to  
3 remain vigilant or the Southbank Centre will try and encroach on the use of the undercroft in the future  
4 (Mould, 2015: 146-147). Yet it is clear that the public-ness at the site continues to unfold and evolve in  
5 all sorts of interesting ways. At the time of writing (March 2019) LLSB in *cooperation* with the Southbank  
6 Centre are working to *extend* the undercroft skateable space. LLSB have raised over £850,000 to undertake  
7 the project; and in seeking donations LLSB's slogan is now 'you can make history'. In the context of the  
8 dispute, this is a remarkable thing — the Southbank Centre and LLSB working together. It now seems  
9 the undercroft and skateboarding will become a larger, more central, feature of the Southbank Centre  
10 site. This is a development worth commending, but should also prompt reflection for why this expansion  
11 of public-ness did not seem like a possibility.  
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20 Mould (2015; 2013) frames the conflict over the undercroft as an unambiguous battle between the  
21 skateboarders 'inherently democratic' (p. 145) use of the space and the elitism of the Southbank Centre  
22 administrators. Likewise, Jones (2014) in his in-depth study of the South Bank, argues that the past decade  
23 has seen an erosion of the public qualities of the area. Part of Jones' argument focuses on the extension  
24 of a range of commercial spaces around the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, but it is also about  
25 the loss of the ludic. Drawing on Lefebvre (1991; 1996) he suggests that a defining feature of public space  
26 is its open-ness for playful appropriation; appropriations that are by their definition unscripted. Mould,  
27 also drawing on Lefebvre, similarly stresses the radically open nature of 'proper' public space. Compelling  
28 though these accounts are, they underestimate the Southbank Centre's interest in the public-ness of their  
29 site — and as seen in the account presented here — their interest in a civic imaginary. If the Southbank  
30 Centre did not have this inclination towards a civic imaginary, it is highly unlikely that they would  
31 countenance working with LLSB to extend the undercroft skateable space and double down on an aspect  
32 of their site that is demonstrably a lively and creative public space. For us, this underscores the importance  
33 of examining the justifications drawn on by the protagonists in a dispute, and engaging with the normative  
34 ideas that undergird them. There is no doubt that LLSB and the Southbank Centre vehemently disagreed  
35 during the dispute. However, by appreciating the overlap in their justifications it is possible to appreciate  
36 the space that existed for compromise (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006), communication (Ingold, 2017)  
37 and productive dissonance (Stark, 2009). A space that was not always apparent or obvious in the heat of  
38 the dispute.  
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54 In focusing on the arguments and justifications made by each side attention is also drawn to the  
55 assemblages of humans and non-humans that make these arguments. Drawing on Dewey we had an  
56 appreciation for the dynamic of how a problematic situation can lead to publics forming to place a  
57 demand on states and institutions. An important and lasting effect of this dispute has been the formation  
58 of LLSB as a public. They drew on the breadth and depth of skills available in the skate community, and  
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1 developed an impressive capacity to act. During the dispute their ability to pull together bodies, films,  
2 merchandise, and images was powerful. And what has been notable has been the durability of this  
3 assemblage. LLSB has asserted itself as a legitimate stakeholder on the South Bank, gained *recognition* for  
4 the skateboarders long use of the undercroft, and is now able to pursue an agenda as part of the wider  
5 community of institutions at the South Bank. Out of the dispute has also come a reconfiguration of  
6 public space. The sense of what the public spaces of the area involves, of who and how they may be  
7 legitimately used and inhabited has been redefined — it makes a difference if communities like those of  
8 the skateboarders, BMX-ers, and graffiti artists are formally recognised as opposed to merely tolerated.  
9 The public spaces of the South Bank have been permanently and quite profoundly altered through this  
10 dispute.  
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20 This future may seem quite surprising, but by tracing out the argument between the Southbank Centre  
21 and LLSB, we have seen how disputes have an essential prospective register. This is to return to Simone  
22 and Peiterson (2017). They highlight the importance of recognising the ways that urban actors are involved  
23 in imaginatively and pragmatically experimenting with what urban space might become. They argue that  
24 for social scientists the challenge is to not only go about stating what we are against, but undertaking the  
25 difficult work of figuring out ‘what we want, or what the city desires’ (p. 56). One strategy they highlight,  
26 which aligns with our approach, is that ‘forging a new political imagination requires a generous  
27 engagement with the molecular *details* of urban life’ (p. 59, emphasis in original). This for us is why the  
28 concept of assemblage is so useful. It is a tool for helping us think about and with this detail. It is through  
29 engagement with the details of the situation at the South Bank, that we found people being pulled into  
30 new public situations, but also imaginatively — and affectively — articulating how spaces might be better  
31 configured. It is through the details of this dispute that it is possible to appreciate how the assembled  
32 public of LLSB found common cause with the Southbank Centre to extend their space. And it is through  
33 the details of this dispute that the public-ness at the South Bank has been made and remade.  
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## 48 **8. Conclusion**

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50 The future of the space now seems more interesting. More interesting even than before the Southbank  
51 Centre’s planned redevelopment was announced. New spaces for dialogue have been opened. New forms  
52 of cooperation have emerged. And the two protagonists of this case are now working together to  
53 reconfigure and reimagine the public spaces of the undercroft and South Bank to make it a more vibrant,  
54 engaging, and inclusive place to inhabit. One of the aims of this article has been to tell the dispute in a  
55 way that is also able to account for the resolution that followed. Drawing on the dynamics described by  
56 Deweyan pragmatism, and Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) work on justifications (see also: Stark, 2009),  
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1 facilitated an engagement with the situated and ‘ordinary’ critical capacities of people participating in city  
2 life as they encounter problematic situations (Barnett, 2017). This helped to outline the terrain of the  
3 dispute — a deep disagreement about whether the Southbank Centre’s plans, or LLSB’s protests, best  
4 aligned with the civic values to be found at the South Bank — but also the space that existed for  
5 compromise and common concern. It was evident that much of this deliberation was being conducted  
6 through affective registers, and it was precisely the skill of the skateboarders in constructing an affectually  
7 compelling argument that drew people into their coalition. Attending to the assemblages of humans and  
8 non-humans that were pulled together with the capacity to make these arguments provided evidence for  
9 how LLSB came to be recognised as legitimate stakeholders and contributors to the South Bank. Taken  
10 together, this is a terrain of public-ness that is about the ongoing discussions, contestations, and  
11 negotiations over how urban environments are configured. Writers like Dewey (1927), Marres (2012),  
12 Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), along with others like Iveson (2007), Watson (2006), Barnett (2014;  
13 2017), and Valverde (2012) help us attend to the ways urban publics emerge through the fine grained  
14 textures of urban life.

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26  
27 To conclude we would like to come back to Simone and Pieterse (2017) one last time. In particular, their  
28 disquiet with the excessive emphasis on critique within urban studies, and its difficulty in imagining  
29 effective, prospective, alternative interventions into urban environments. This case study has aimed to  
30 add to the critical repertoires available to urban studies. This is an approach where conceptual tools  
31 should be as much trained on the maintenance, repair, and reconfiguration of urban life as on its break  
32 down (Amin and Thrift, 2002). Just as there is an ever present need for urban studies to be critical, it is  
33 necessary for the critical to be able to move beyond itself — a *more-than-critical* urban studies. An urban  
34 studies that certainly does social, economic, and political critique, but which also understands its  
35 objectives as involving a need to understand the situations where urban life is made better. Focusing on  
36 the details through which public spaces and their publics are assembled is one way to do this. A pragmatist  
37 sensibility guides attention to the concrete situations out of which new configurations of people,  
38 materials, and activities are pulled together, as well as appreciating the ordinary critical capacities to be  
39 found when people make arguments about public life in cities. The story of the South Bank and the  
40 undercroft is not just one of resistance. It is also a story about new-ness and addition. New assemblages  
41 of public-ness and public space. New relationships between the Southbank Centre and the skateboarders.  
42 New ways of thinking the public. Long Live the South Bank!

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## Footnotes

[1] 'South Bank' is a geographical location in central London, the 'Southbank Centre' is the cultural institution that manages a series of buildings and open spaces in that geographical location. (See: Jones, 2014: 3-4).

[2] If LLSB are able to raise £1.1 million then much of this original space will be re-opened for use by the skateboarders, graffiti artists, and others. At the time of writing (March 2019) LLSB are in the process of engaging contractors to take on the work. See: [www.llsbdonate.com](http://www.llsbdonate.com).

[3] The people interviewed were: Billy Bragg, Henry Edwards-Woods, Rich Holland, John Langley, Mike McCart, Paul Richards, Lemn Sissay, Peter Truesdale, Winstan Whitter, and Louis Woodhead.

[4] The extent to which the skateboarders were consulted is ambiguous. They were not listed as stakeholders in the planning statement (SBC, 2013b: 119-121), but they were listed in the statement of community involvement (SBC, 2013a: 58-67). What is clear is that LLSB did not feel the skateboarders interests were adequately represented by the Central St Martins process (Willcocks, 2017).

[5] LLSB's application for the undercroft to be recognised as a Village Green was ultimately unsuccessful, however they did manage to get the undercroft listed as an Asset of Community Value.

[6] This is despite the consultation conducted via Central St Martins, as mentioned in Section 4.

[7] It's worth watching the film here: Long Live Southbank, *The Bigger Picture*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFaKN98Xg3E>.

[8] You can find the Southbank Centre's film here: <https://vimeo.com/61349758>, it has been posted by a third party, the original is no longer available on YouTube.

## Figures

Figure 2:

- A. Based on the architect design study in: SBC (2013a) Festival wing statement of community involvement, planning application no. 13/02014/FUL. Lambeth Council [planning application]. URL: [https://planning.lambeth.gov.uk/online-applications/files/A0CE61353D784AC9DC357668E376C486/pdf/13\\_02014\\_FUL-Statement\\_of\\_Community\\_Involvement-798512.pdf](https://planning.lambeth.gov.uk/online-applications/files/A0CE61353D784AC9DC357668E376C486/pdf/13_02014_FUL-Statement_of_Community_Involvement-798512.pdf) (accessed on 29 November 2018).
- B. National Poetry Library at Southbank Centre, Pete Woodhead. Courtesy of Southbank Centre.
- C. Royal Festival Hall Riverside Terrace, India Roper-Evans. Courtesy of Southbank Centre.
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Figure 3:

Stills taken from:

*The Bigger Picture*

- A. LLSB (2013e) The bigger picture. *Long Live Southbank* [film]. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFaKN98Xg3E&t=1s> (accessed on 3 January 2018).

*The Festival Wing*

- B. Spurr, M. (2013) The festival wing. *Southbank Centre* [film]. URL: <https://vimeo.com/61349758> (accessed on 29 November 2018).

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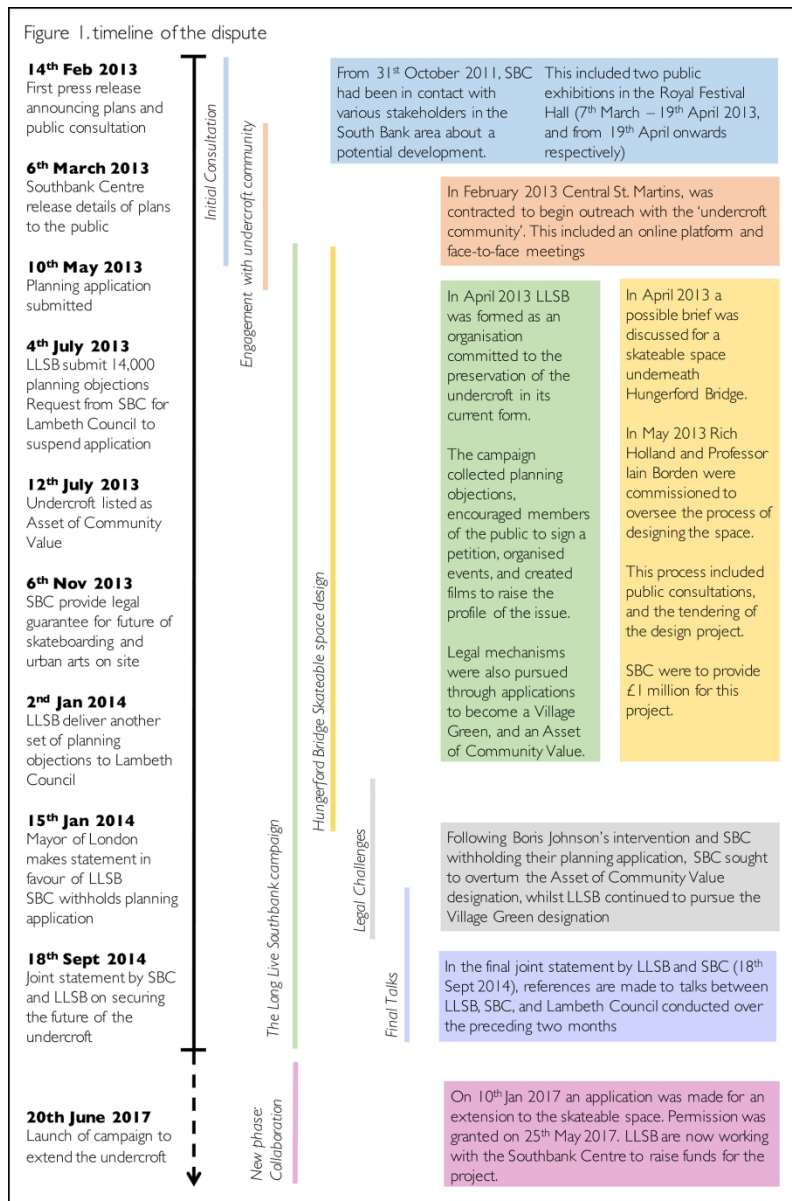


Figure 1: Timeline of the dispute.

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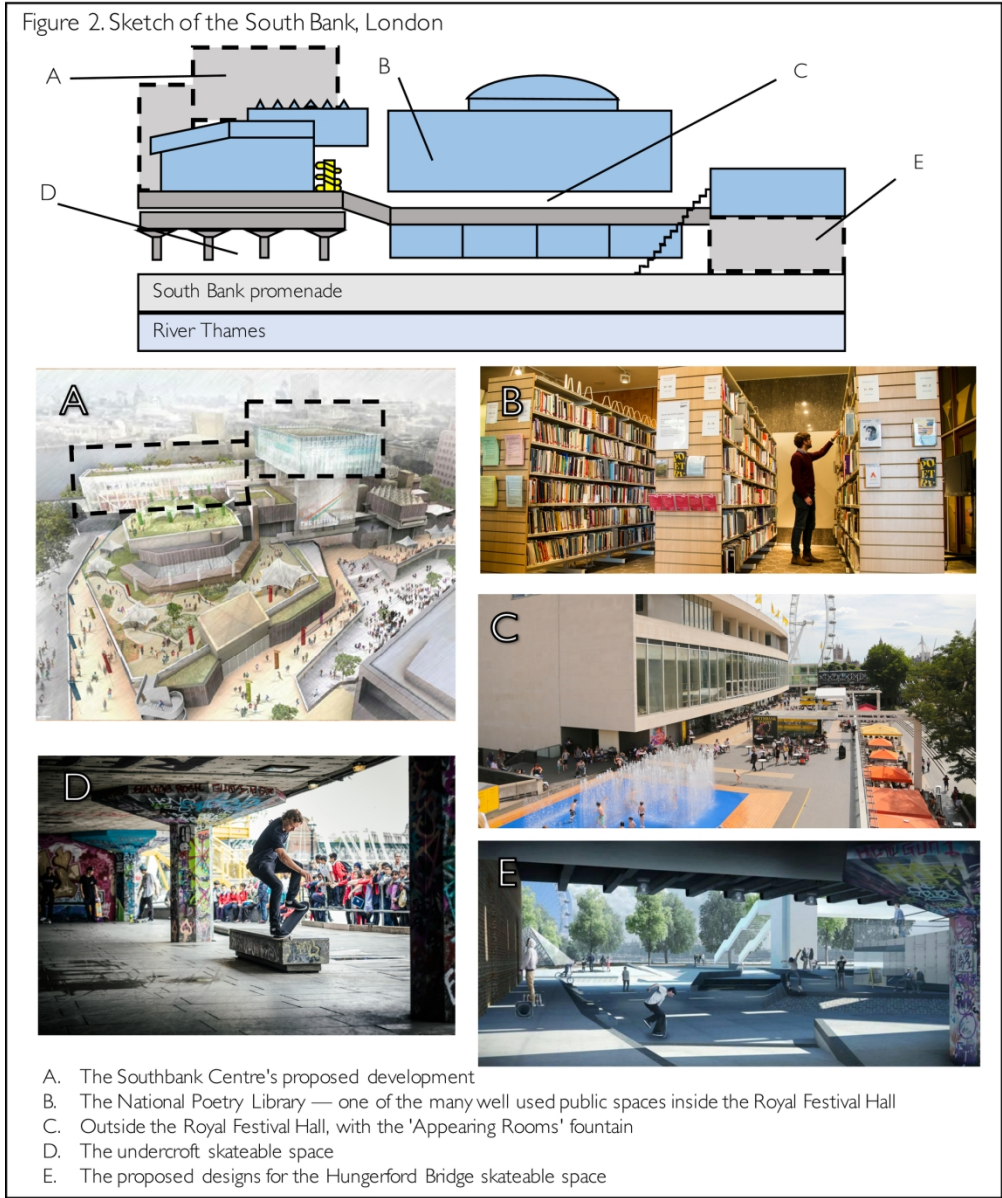


Figure 2: Sketch of the South Bank, London.

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Figure 3. Campaign films and affect

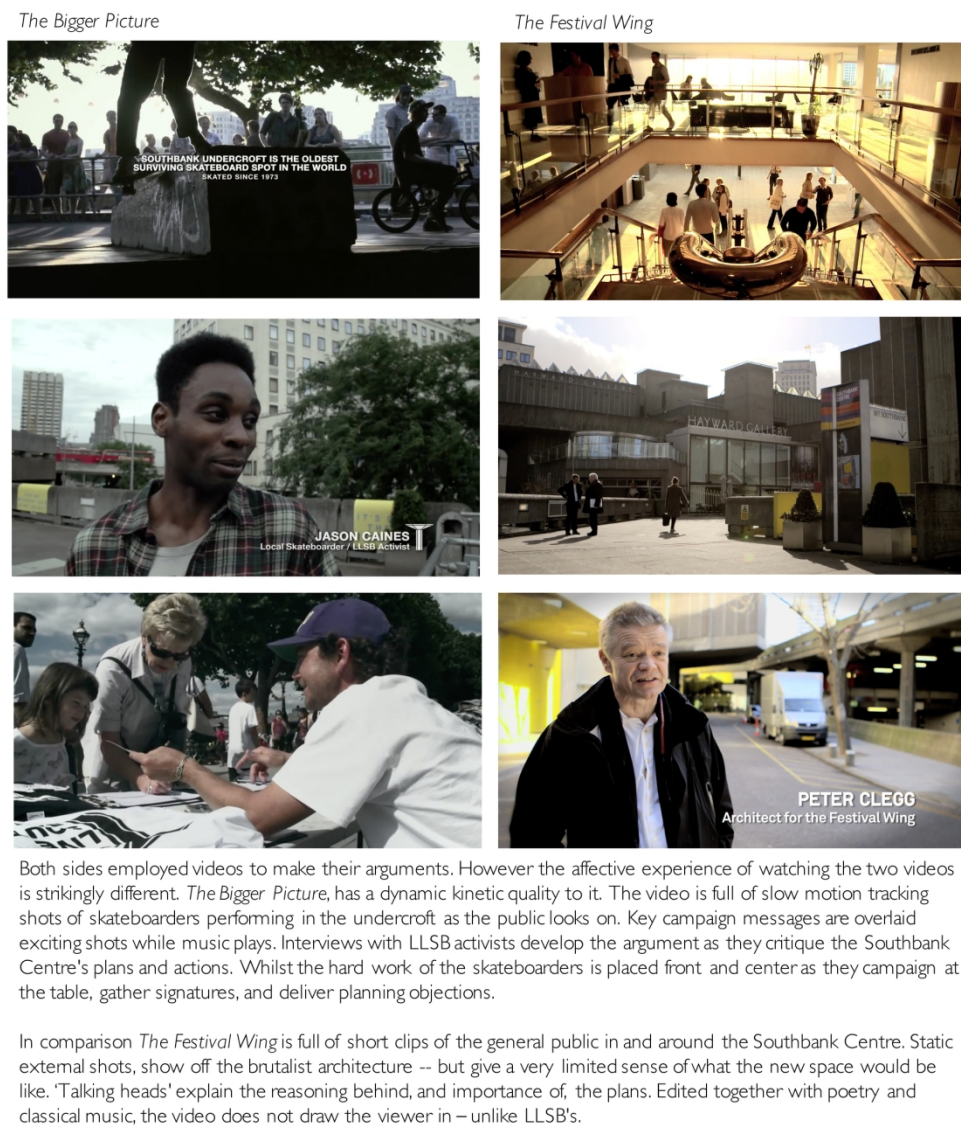


Figure 3: Campaign films and affect.

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