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Grappling with *The Glasgow Effect*: A critical artistic pedagogy to explode destructive success fantasies

ABSTRACT

The Glasgow Effect is the name given to a public health mystery: Why do people in Glasgow, Scotland, die younger than similar post-industrial UK cities such as Manchester and Liverpool? Ellie Harrison appropriated this name to title an artwork where she confined herself to Glasgow for 2016. During that year the only vehicle Harrison used was her bike and she actively engaged with a variety of communities where she lives. The artwork's invocation of Glasgow's poor health record in combination with the £15,000 of public funding awarded to Harrison hit a nerve with some Glaswegians that led to outrage on Facebook. Subsequently, Harrison and her artwork were demonized by a broader UK media. Why fund a middle-class English artist's 'poverty safari' in Glasgow when so many others never have the chance to leave? This article grapples with the educative potential of *The Glasgow Effect*. Harrison began the project because her teaching job in Dundee required her to 'write and submit a significant research grant application'. That application's success prohibited Harrison from travelling from her home in Glasgow to her job in Dundee; making her unable to teach. By enacting a complete dematerialization of markers of success – motorized travel and related carbon emissions – the artwork, and subsequent book, publicly challenge preconceived notions of 'good career progression', offering a critical artistic pedagogy that explodes success fantasies that hang on internationalization, excess travel and ultimately vast amounts of carbon emissions.

KEYWORDS

academic freedom
conceptual art
Paulo Freire
climate change
carbon emissions
public health
antagonistic artwork
autobiography

THE GLASGOW EFFECT: ANTAGONISTIC ARTWORK AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The Glasgow Effect is an artwork in which the artist and activist Ellie Harrison did not travel outside the city of Glasgow, Scotland, for the whole of 2016. This was 2016 – prior to confinements arising from COVID-19 in 2020–21 that will likely alter how people, you and me, practically understand this action. In this article, I grapple with the educative potential of *The Glasgow Effect* as an antagonistic artwork. My understanding of antagonism relates to Chantal Mouffe's (2007) theorization of 'the political'. Mouffe contends that a dominating liberalism 'characterized by a rationalist and individualist approach' (2007: 2) assumes harmony can found in (or imposed on) the plurality of voices that make up society (see also Fridrik in this Special Issue on Mouffe's theory of agonism). However, conflicts have no universally rational solution and thus human societies are marked by antagonism.

The Glasgow Effect acts to both reveal and boost the source of such antagonism through disrupting sedimented social practices that structure a variety of power relations; as a result, it explodes destructive success fantasies that guide and justify such social practices. The dominant fantasy here is that good career progression – being successful – requires internationalization, excess travel that (perhaps inadvertently) produces vast amounts of carbon and other climate changing emissions. The artwork draws attention to this and other success fantasies, 'pulls the rug' from underneath them and offers a destabilizing challenge for how we negotiate the structures constraining our day-to-day lives (see also Hewitt and Jordan in this Special Issue on the functions of art). My writing in this article activates the artwork, drawing out content that is likely relevant to readers of *Art & the Public Sphere*.

Success and its binary, failure, permeate *The Glasgow Effect* which borrows its title from

the name given to a [public health] mystery – 'Why [do] people die younger in Glasgow than in similar post-industrial cities in England, such as Liverpool and Manchester? Why [does] Glasgow and West Central Scotland have the lowest life expectancy in Western Europe?'.
(Harrison 2019: 16)

Although the Glasgow effect term was coined around 2008, the phenomenon, the failure, it labels traces back to the 1970s (Reid 2011). The latest explanation suggests Glasgow is somehow more vulnerable to the effects of deindustrialization, deprivation and poverty than other similar places (Walsh et al. 2016).

Harrison's artwork took form through a Facebook event sporting a prominent picture of greasy chips (Figure 1). On 28 October 2015, Ellie Harrison bought these chips from the Philadelphia Fish & Chicken Bar on Great Western Road, Glasgow, then photographed the chips and ate them.

Below the Facebook event's picture (still online at time of the time of writing) is the following information about the artwork:

The Glasgow Effect is [a] year long 'action research' project/durational performance, for which artist Ellie Harrison will not travel outside Greater Glasgow for a whole year (except in the event of the ill-health/death of close relative or friend).

By setting this one simple restriction to her current lifestyle, she intends to test the limits of a 'sustainable practice' and to challenge the demand-to-travel placed upon the 'successful' artist/academic. The experiment will enable her to cut her carbon footprint and increase her sense of belonging, by encouraging her to seek out and create 'local opportunities' – testing what becomes possible when she invests all her ideas, time and energy within the city where she lives.

The Glasgow Effect is funded by Creative Scotland through the Open Project Funding Programme.

(The Glasgow Effect 2016: n.pag.)

The title's invocation of Glasgow's poor health record, the £15,000 funding from the public body supporting the arts, Creative Scotland, and the unhealthy connotation of 'the chips', hit a nerve with some Glaswegians leading to Facebook outrage. The rapper and cultural commentator Darren McGarvey, also known as 'Loki', was 'at the head of this [online] angry mob' (2017: 201). Facebook's seemingly Glasgow-based commentary led *The Glasgow Effect* to trend projecting it into the UK press with newspapers amplifying the Facebook vitriol. For example, the Daily Record quotes Loki: 'it's horrendously crass to parachute someone [that is, Ellie Harrison] in on a poverty safari while local authorities are cutting finance to things like music tuition for Scotland's poorest kids' (cited in Kerr 2016: n.pag.).



Figure 1: Ellie Harrison's photograph of chips that became the main image of *The Glasgow Effect*'s Facebook page. Courtesy and © Ellie Harrison.

This quote from Loki lays bare the problem many people had with Harrison's artwork; Harrison's class background, occupation and Englishness [positions her as] an outsider in Glasgow and Scotland, despite having lived in the city for more than seven years at the point of announcing the project' (Morgan 2020: 43). Glaswegians felt it was not okay for this English outsider to draw attention to and profit from Glasgow's poor health and high mortality failings. The press coverage, as with much of the Facebook response, was preoccupied by the public money, the £15,000 (e.g. Kerr 2016; Walker 2016; Young 2016).

Harrison's 384-page book from 2019, *The Glasgow Effect: A Tale of Class, Capitalism & Carbon Footprint*, documents the escalating online and media reaction to her project, folded into a confessional autobiography and retrospective of her art career. The book is structured in three parts: (1) A Brief History of Neoliberalism; (2) The Glasgow Effect and (3) The Sustainable City of the Future. This structure has sustained criticism – partly because the book describes more than just the year-long project (e.g. Kelly 2019). As the book, and now Harrison's website, state: 'the book provides *complete context* for my thinking and action, which was lost in the whirlwind of the social media storm' (2019: 18, emphasis added). Via this book Harrison historicizes her artwork, positioning *The Glasgow Effect* in relation to the action of other artists and other works of art. In this article, I argue that *The Glasgow Effect*, the artwork that also encompasses the book, functions as critical artistic pedagogy.

CRITICAL ARTISTIC PEDAGOGY

To think through the educative potential of *The Glasgow Effect* requires some understanding of what education is and where it takes place. In this article, I claim that *The Glasgow Effect* could be regarded as critical *artistic* pedagogy. This designation draws from the work of Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire as set out in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1970] 2017). In that book Freire proposes that truly transformative education requires cooperative approaches where student and teacher both learn from one another. Such education entails a combination of action and serious reflection referred to as 'praxis'; praxis is also sometimes characterized as a union of practice and theory.

Through this approach teachers and students, rather than struggling for power to make change in future, constantly remake or 'transform' their own reality through their actions. People are no longer regarded as 'things', the reflection of critical pedagogy makes 'it possible for people to enter the historical process as responsible Subjects' (Freire [1970] 2017: 10). Freire uses an example of agrarian work, where workers are conceived of as oppressed, whilst (land)owners, or bosses who act on the owners' behalf, are the oppressors. Importantly, there can be adhesion with the oppressor and thus the worker comes to support their own and others' oppression:

Their [the worker's] vision of the new man or woman is individualistic; because of their identification with the oppressor, they have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class. It is not to become free that they want agrarian reform, but in order to acquire land and thus become landowners – or, more precisely,

bosses over other workers. It is a rare peasant who, once 'promoted' to overseer, does not become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself.

([1970] 2017: 20)

The Glasgow Effect, and where it was enacted, differs from this example. It takes place in a completely different economic context; operating through frameworks or institutional structures associated with contemporary art and academia together with their projection into a broader online world initially through the platform Facebook. Here, invoking 'oppressors' and 'the oppressed' may seem excessive. However, as Loki states in relation to the school curriculum 'your value is derived not only from your ability to think and reason but also from your willingness to submit to a process' (McGarvey 2017: 94). 'Tertiary' education in university – following the mandatory 'primary' and 'secondary' – channels and thus constrains both action and aspiration. Freire notes that the 'rigid relationship structure' ([1970] 2017: 128) of school leads to the internalizing of paternal authority that goes on to guide the life of professionals. For the teachers and researchers in an academic context there is still an expectation, a demand, that people continue to work their way 'up' a hierarchical system. Although, for many people employment in education is increasingly insecure meaning such promotion constitutes another fantasy.

Freire's example of agrarian reform, and the latter part of his book, concerns groups of workers. However, Freire conceives critical pedagogy as 'a pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or people) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity' ([1970] 2017: 22, original emphasis). In this article, I insert 'artistic' into critical pedagogy. Certainly, Freire's work has guided some education in the arts, particularly theatre and movement (notably by Boal [1979] 2008: 2002). The use of artistic here is to draw attention to the approach, the use of an artwork as a vehicle of pedagogy, but perhaps more potently to signal that this project is embedded in structures, sedimented social practices, that govern contemporary art research and teaching. This is the formative discursive site, the 'where' of *The Glasgow Effect*, a where that draws in many publics implying different teacher–student, or student–teacher, relations (for in-depth discussion of site as discourse refer to Kwon [1997, 2002]).

Receipt of funding from Creative Scotland, and the associated dialogue with that organization, makes *The Glasgow Effect* demonstrably public – as in of relevance to the citizenry of Scotland; its reliance on public funding is pivotal to its conceptual basis. This 'publicness' was an irritant to the Facebook 'community' that came together to criticize (and sometimes defend) the project and Harrison. There are other publics, other people, that Harrison interacted with in 2016, including through the ongoing projects and campaigns she initiated during that year such as *Get Glasgow Moving* (n.d.) and *Glasgow Community Energy* (2021).

The presence of this article in this Special Issue of *Art & the Public Sphere* provides another discursive activation of this artwork. Such pedagogic acts were foreseen in Harrison's funding application to Creative Scotland (Harrison 2015). A point of note, *The Glasgow Effect*, in homage to the polymathic planner Patrick Geddes (refer to Stephen 2004), had the working title 'Think Global, Act Local!'

1. University education in the United Kingdom has radically changed in the past 30 years. Students' numbers have doubled, boosted by Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair's 1999 bid to have 50 per cent of young people going into higher education (Coughlan 2019). Students, once given grants to support living costs, are now offered loans, nominal tuition fees introduced in 1998 were uplifted to full fees in England in 2006 (Hubble and Bolton 2018). Scottish students studying in Scotland do not pay the fees for their first degree (Hubble and Bolton 2018), but Scottish Universities are still subject to ongoing related marketization.

Firstly, *Think Global, Act Local!* is an artwork in its own right – a durational performance in the tradition of great works by Lee Lozano (*General Strike Piece*, 1969) and Tehching Hsieh (*One Year Performance*, 1981). It offers significant long-term benefits to national and international audiences who experience it second-hand, through lectures and writing in the future. Contributing to critical contemporary art discourse, it will develop our understanding of what 'sustainable practice' actually means and challenge preconceived notions what makes good 'career progression'. All the while reflecting positively on the original site of its making: Glasgow, Scotland, as a centre for cultural activity.

(Harrison 2015: n.pag.)

The key site of critical artistic pedagogy is Harrison's negotiations with those administrating the academic art and design college (referred to as 'art school' in this article) in which she works. Those negotiations drew in people over-seeing research in the broader University (of which the art school is part) in their association with the bodies that measure the quality of UK research. An ideology of success as global infuses those bodies and thus work in academia.

PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS AS 'GLOBAL'

Harrison works part-time teaching, and doing research into, contemporary art practice for the art school that is affiliated with the University of Dundee. As a condition of the probation associated with her job, Harrison was required to 'write and submit a significant research grant application' (CASE cited in Harrison 2019: 112, 129). That application took form as *The Glasgow Effect* (as discussed at 'A critical intervention into the academy' below). Her original plan for the project was to highlight the absurdity of her own commuter lifestyle (similar to many academics): living in one Scottish city (Glasgow) and working in another (Dundee) necessitating a train journey lasting roughly 90 minutes each way.

Commuting, often transnational, is just one aspect of an internationalized art or academic career. Success in arts comes to be measured in exhibitions – particularly those in other countries. Success in academia, if not survival, requires an international if not global reach, publishing internationally and attendance at conferences in other countries (see Chapter 6 of Kwon 2002). None of this is new: David Lodge's (2011), *The Campus Trilogy*, documents this phenomenon through an extended satire of academia set in the 1960s into the 1970s. However, in the past 30 years traditional academic disciplines have splintered into numerous specialisms and there has been radical expansion of universities in the United Kingdom and internationally: more students, more staff, more teaching, more research¹ (see also I KNOW I CARE Collective in this Special Issue on precarious work).

Harrison's own unsustainable academic 'lifestyle' is demonstrated through her book's central illustration, a graph '[t]onnes of carbon produced by the personal transportation of a "professional artist" (2019)' (2019: 138–39) (Figure 2). Emissions steadily rise from the inception of Harrison's art career in 2004, with spikes in years with international air travel. Such success intertwines across Harrison's dual professional role – artist and academic. Recent research into 705 travellers associated with the University of British Columbia, Canada, finds no relationship between academic *productivity* and comparatively greater air travel; although academics that travel more have higher salaries (Wynes

et al. 2019). ‘Green’ academics, those in jobs related to climate and sustainability, produce as much emissions as the ‘Not-green’ (Wynes et al. 2019). Importantly, Harrison has been highly conscious of climate change and her overall carbon emissions are likely far less than most academics.

In 2016, the year of *The Glasgow Effect*, Harrison’s carbon emissions from motorized transportation plummet to zero. They dematerialize. Transport, in the United Kingdom at least, is the economic sector that officially makes the largest contributions to climate change, a staggering quarter of all emissions (National Statistics 2021). By being unable to leave Glasgow, by having to live in that city consistently for one year, Harrison enacts ‘the opposite of the artworld and academia’s obsession with “internationalisation”’ (2019: 129), challenging the accepted basis of ‘good career progression’ (2015: n.pag.). Stopping use of motorized transportation ‘flips’ accepted understandings of success; while recognizing ‘there’s clearly a *very fine line* [...] between the need to localise our economies and the need to preserve human rights and not veer into nationalism and fascism’ (2019: 200, original emphasis).

Harrison has quantified her activities, her ‘self’, rationalizing her experience into numbers (Figure 2) – an approach she previously found both laborious and compelling, as demonstrated in a 2009 publication *Confessions of a Recovering Data Collector* (Harrison and Jones 2009). Such quantification enables, or at least raises the possibility of, comparison between what

Tonnes of carbon produced by the personal transportation of a ‘professional artist’ (2019)

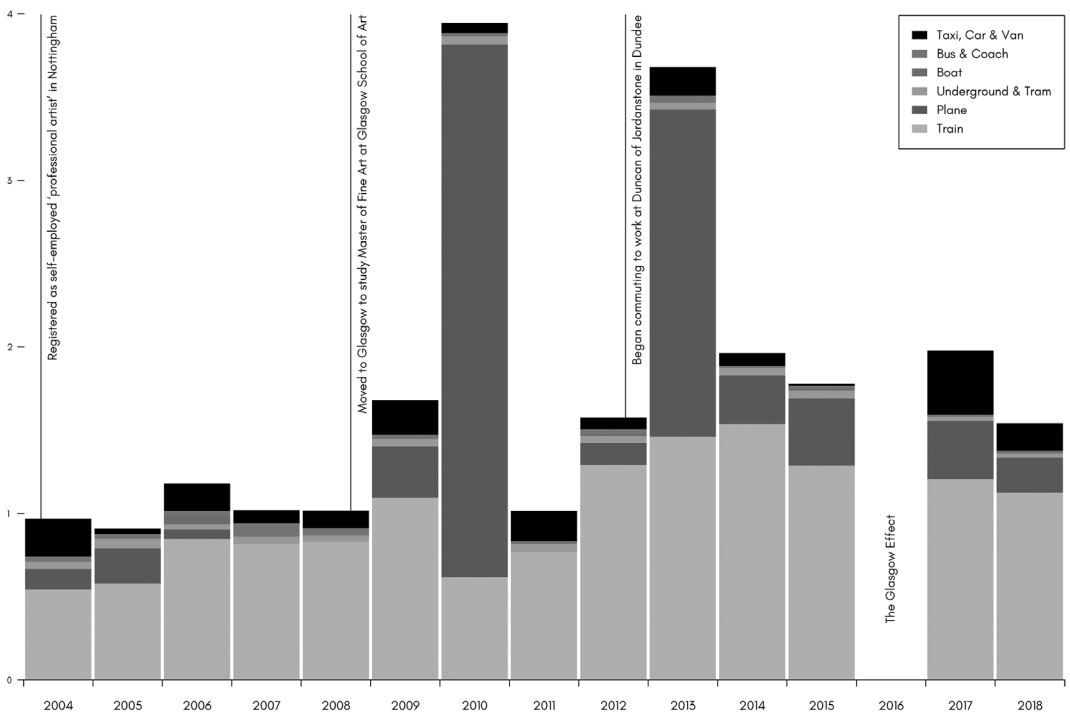


Figure 2: Tonnes of carbon produced by the personal transportation of a ‘professional artist’ (Harrison 2019: 138–39). Emissions steadily rise from the inception of Harrison’s art career in 2004, spiking in years with international air travel. Courtesy and © Ellie Harrison.

2. The latest edition of the book contains an updated graph illustrating the reduction in carbon emissions resulting from the COVID-19 lockdowns (refer to Harrison 2021).

Harrison did and the actions of others. A universalist drive for comparison is also evident in her book's use of official statistics, particularly those related to deprivation and poverty. This, perhaps inadvertently, converts people to representations, and transforms them into comparable 'things'. As Freire ([1964] 2002), channelling Marcuse as inspiration, notes:

More and more, the oppressors are using science and technology as unquestionably powerful for their purpose: the maintenance of the oppressive order through manipulation and repression. The repressed, as objects, as 'things', have no purposes except those that their oppressors prescribe for them.

([1970] 2017: 34)

Harrison notes that the pressure of undertaking *The Glasgow Effect* was 'intensely stressful and exhausting' (2019: 251). Acknowledging that she had been aware of transforming herself into an object, a 'thing', in advance of this action:

It really all came back to my original fear in undertaking the project before it began – that 'any artist using their own body or life experiences as "art" is essentially making themselves into an "object" to be criticised for aesthetic and/or other value'. It was the dual 'objectification' that I put myself through – firstly as that two-dimensional object of ridicule on social media (to be 'looked down upon') and secondly as the model citizen boldly pioneering a new sustainable lifestyle for us all (an object to be 'looked up to'), which created the pressure.

(Harrison 2019: 251)

Harrison's work is firmly within the realms of immanent critique – where immanence reveals the contradictions in the measures employed by government and policy communities to assess their own value (as further analysed by Harrison 2016). Importantly, Harrison compiled the graph in 2019 when writing the book.² Therefore, the dematerialization of emissions, marking a success of *her* project, was only fully realized through its materialization in the bar chart. For success to be recognized it must be documented; in this case in a book. By providing an example that can be shared the book enhances the positioning of this artwork as immanent critique – a positioning amplified by an updated second edition being published to coincide with COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021 (Harrison 2021). Questioning the basis of professional success enables *The Glasgow Effect* to act as a reflexive critical intervention into the academy (or academia).

A CRITICAL INTERVENTION INTO THE ACADEMY

An enigmatic 'academic freedom' infuses work in the academy. This is understood to apply to the constitutional self-determination of Higher Education institutions, alongside autonomy for communities of scholars and a philosophy of intellectual freedom for academics (see the early article by Fuchs 1963). *The Glasgow Effect* poses a pedagogic problem: what is this freedom in the face of an increasing marketization of education? A marketization that channels through competitive ranking of subjects in higher education that, in turn, informs league tables of institutions (refer to the explication of 'The university death machine' in Dannreuther 2021: 250–53).

The comparative ‘quality’, and thus value, of research and teaching in the United Kingdom are currently determined through the Research Excellence Framework and newer Teaching Excellence Framework for undergraduate teaching (see Collini 2016 for a critical introduction). These govern the amount of public funding awarded to institutions. These frameworks are tailored to the subject but also have a broader normalizing function – the greater the amount of money brought in, the greater the success.

Art and design in its current form often comes off badly when judged in relation to other subjects: materials for practical arts can be costly and the salaries of graduates are modest in comparison to other ‘useful’ disciplines such as engineering. This impacts on funding – money from the recent 50 per cent funding cut to art and design subjects in England is to be used to fund STEM subjects, science, technology, maths and engineering (Harris 2021; for a broader discussion arts, policy and value refer to Belfiore 2015).

To make Harrison eligible for the Research Excellence Framework, or ‘REFable’, as a condition of her probation she was required to ‘write and submit a significant research grant application’ (CASE 2012 cited in Harrison 2019: 112, 129). As Harrison notes, the criteria applied to her:

were the same as those issued to scientists and mathematicians across the university. It might have made sense to apply for lots of money if I was trying to collaborate across the globe, in order to, say, cure cancer, but did it really make sense for me to do that to fund my art?

(2019: 112)

The relatively recent integration of art and design into the institution of the University is bringing it bureaucratically into line,³ transforming how teaching is conducted and valued. For example, a Ph.D. (normally by practice) is becoming an entry requirement for those teaching in an art school.⁴ Mel Jordan (cited in Bruff and Jordan 2021) identifies that the western tradition of teaching in fine art draws from a combination of a beaux arts and a modernist approach. Students are no longer necessarily split into painters, print makers, sculptors, etc., but there is still training in methods to develop technical ability. This focus on expertise may jar with the understanding that art is ‘a social practice in which techniques and methods are part of wider artistic relations of production’ (Jordan cited in Bruff and Jordan 2021: 150). The former privileges ‘individual self-expression’, an approach evident in public (that is state sponsored) support for arts and creativity (see also Byrne and Saviotti in this Special Issue for more on this topic).

Grants relevant to art practice tend to be comparatively small and directed towards individuals. Artists with academic affiliations can apply to the larger UK research councils, such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) or indeed, as the editors of this Special Issue of *Art & the Public Sphere* did, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) (Bruff and Jordan 2021). However, those funds tend to be for collaborative research that produces written outputs and demonstrably contributes to academic impact – for example, in the production of reports or journal articles.

To fund *The Glasgow Effect*, Harrison, as an individual artist, applied to Creative Scotland’s Open Project Fund but found out that the grant, if received, would not be listed as a ‘success’ in terms of the Research Excellence Framework because it had not gone through the University process. The University agreed that the required project registration form (or PRF) could

3. For example, the art school where Harrison teaches had its beginnings in the 1880s as a technical college that later became an art school, only becoming a faculty within the University of Dundee in 1994 (University of Dundee 2017).
4. Art schools have adopted academic practices. Teachers in art schools are increasingly required to have Ph.D.s, informing the creation of the ‘Ph.D. by practice’. The heterogeneity of art meant that initially candidates had freedom to determine what was ‘practice’. This has been standardized so there is now normally a significant amount of interpretative writing, 30,000 words. This, perhaps inadvertently, means that knowledge that takes form in words is prized more highly than other forms.

be completed afterwards so that the funds would 'count' (Harrison n.d.). As Harrison recognizes:

Then if the grant was awarded, it would put the university in a 'catch 22' which would highlight the absurdity of their value systems [...] either they could have the money (a £15,000 grant to list on a spreadsheet somewhere showing how 'successful' they had been), or they could have me there actually teaching the students. Then, if I continued to travel to Dundee for work, I would be breaching the terms of the grant.

(2019: 129–30)

As her sister noted whilst Harrison was writing the grant application, this would be 'a brilliant challenge to the unnecessary pressures on staff to fund-raise; a great practical joke' (2019: 130). Harrison's application to Creative Scotland was successful on the second attempt – this led to an extensive dialogue between Harrison (lecturer in contemporary art practice) and a large number of university staff about how it would be administered, constituting a formative site of critical artistic pedagogy (documented in Harrison n.d.). Harrison, summoning Freire ([1970] 2017), was transforming her own reality through her actions.

Those directly engaged in this dialogue include: research administrator, associate dean of research, programme director contemporary art practice, school manager, dean, management office, associate dean for Quality and Academic Standards, secretary of the university, associate dean, acting dean, pensions officer and secretary to the trustees of [the institution], together with an HR officer, a marketing officer and a union representative. The funding manager and business affairs manager at Creative Scotland were also drawn into these discussions. The (social) media uproar was a metaphorical hit of adrenalin to this wrangle. Harrison makes an analogy between her own transformative action and the tactics used by Futurists who over-sold theatre tickets: '[a]t what point did it dawn on them that there was no show? That maybe they [the theatre goers or in this case the administrators, the contributors to social media] were it?' (2019: 185). Harrison's (2019) serious action is now accompanied by extensive reflection in the form of her book. This writing, the article you are now reading, reinigorates the debate through the format of the journal article.

When the social media and press attention blew up the University e-mailed Harrison expressing concern for her well-being – including her personal safety as a result of 'threatening and offensive material on social media' (6 January 2016, Harrison n.d.: n.pag.). However, in correspondence the following week (12 January 2016) the Secretary to the University stated:

Given the fundamental changes that have developed since the New Year, we are now in the position where the University cannot support the project other than to offer you the opportunity to apply for special leave (without pay) for the duration of your project.

(Harrison n.d.: n.pag.)

There had been no 'fundamental changes', but the working title 'Think Local, Act Local!' had been replaced with *The Glasgow Effect*. The University later cited this as problematic together with a partial shifting of the remit of the project as suggested by Harrison's Facebook post that the University claimed was dated 19 January (actually 5 January):

The fact that this University, like most others in the UK now requires its Lecturing staff to be fundraisers and is willing to pay them to be absent from teaching as a result, should be the focus of this debate.

(Harrison n.d.: n.pag.)

The questioning of academic structures and strictures was always part of the broader project – as is clear from the original funding application’s intent to ‘develop our understanding of what “sustainable practice” actually means and challenge preconceived notions what makes good “career progression”’ (2015: n.pag.). Indeed, Harrison spent the first part of 2016 writing a submission concerned with teaching in contemporary art practice entitled ‘Practising what we preach’ with the ambition it would be considered as part of an overall art school programme review (Harrison 2016).

In its own terms, the fractious correspondence between Harrison and, in particular, the secretary of the university, drawing in union representation, is a success of Harrison’s pedagogic project. By questioning the basis of academic success, she was challenging the art school. Would the art school sack her? That is what happened to critically engaged artists John Latham and Joseph Beuys when they similarly chose not to ‘compromise their personal principles’ (Harrison 2019: 130). The overwhelming social media and broader press reaction to the project, although personally uncomfortable, inadvertently provides Harrison with protection.

The high level of media attention also brought greater scrutiny to Creative Scotland’s processes and practices. Funding conditions would be breached if the grant was paid to the University, highlighting a bureaucratic hurdle for individual artists affiliated to academic institutions. In the end, Harrison lived off the grant from Creative Scotland rather than being paid by the University but did manage, with the assistance of her union, to maintain pension contributions and continuity of employment through her year of ‘special leave (without pay)’ (Harrison n.d.: n.pag.).

The discussions surrounding *The Glasgow Effect* demonstrates the intense bracketing of academic freedom. Academics are not readily free to criticize their day-to-day immanent conditions, particularly where they seek to challenge institutional structures or working practices. The work of academics has drawn attention to the climate crisis. However, tackling carbon and other emissions requires serious questioning of the growing business of academia. In particular because ‘[t]he UK universities’ internationalisation agenda necessitates research, teaching and student recruitment from outside the United Kingdom, notably China. All this makes for more travel, more disconnection, and more greenhouse gas emissions’ (McLauchlan 2020: 573–74).

Many academics thrive through this activity. Sadly, a vast amount of seemingly ‘essential’ research appears to tackle, or be concerned about, climate change, while reinforcing systems that bring it into being. In a context when academics are required to ‘sell’ themselves and their work, candid appraisals of their own detrimental environmental impact is unlikely. Institutional oversight of ‘ethics’ concerns the detail of research projects rather than seriously questioning research practices and outcomes.

The changing relationship between the art school and the university informs a reconsideration of arts practice and research being individual or collective. Academics in arts or social sciences working in consort as multiple authors replicates the approach taken in the sciences. Multiple authors can write many research outputs for a single project, each participant authoring

a paper and the others putting their name on it. This ‘ticks the boxes’ of institutional overseers. Collaborative awards give scope for misrepresentation where individual academics quote (and thus claim) the total award rather than the percentage of their individual input. Arguably, here, the machinations of collaboration are in the service of individual interests. Further thought is needed about the business of collaboration and what it does in any given context.

Harrison chose not to include *The Glasgow Effect* in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework. The University had an ambiguous role in facilitating her project – she took unpaid leave to undertake it, living off the grant instead. She was explicitly directed to remove the art school’s logo from the Tumblr blog where she published her original funding application and the art school’s name from the Facebook event. The book of *The Glasgow Effect* functions like an annotated retrospective of her art career; practically omitting this from her academic career history provides another thought-provoking dematerialization. Clearly Harrison was playing with the day-to-day contradictions facing people working in contemporary art and academia – *The Glasgow Effect* also foments questions about the constitution of conceptual art.

CONCEPTUAL ART: A CHALLENGE TO ‘ART-AS-COMMODITY?’

The Glasgow Effect draws from a conceptual art lineage as is evident from the instructional form of the statement of intent: A ‘year long “action research” project/durational performance, for which artist Ellie Harrison will not travel outside Greater Glasgow’ (The Glasgow Effect 2016: n.pag.). This limit to her travel area was coupled by another to travel mode, a refusal to use any vehicle except a bike. Importantly, Harrison’s instruction is a vow that limits her own movement. But, publicness, being online, the act of demonstrating this vow, intends to make other people reflect on, and change, their own behaviour. Incredibly, only four years later, a large part of the world began following more draconian instruction as a result of the management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Glasgow Effect as a “action research” project/durational performance’ follows Lucy Lippard’s (1973) definition of conceptual art in her self-confessed ‘biased history’, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972*. Lippard conceived conceptual art 1966–72 as ‘an independent or alternative art that could not be bought or sold’ (1973: xiv), subverting the understanding of art-as-commodity. Ironically, as Lippard (1973) notes, many conceptual artists quickly came to have commercial representation and success. However, this subversive direction for conceptual (or ideas based) art is still evident 40 years later in *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop’s writing concerning ‘an artistic orientation towards the social’ (2012: 2) since the 1990s. Bishop posits the art she surveys is driven by ‘a shared set of desires to overturn the traditional relationship between the art object, the artist and the audience’ (2012: 2).

This continuity from Lippard into Bishop, together with their relevance to *The Glasgow Effect*, is palpable in Bishop’s statement that the overview she presents contains work with an ‘aim to place pressure on conventional modes of artistic production and consumption under capitalism’ (2012: 2). A lot has happened since Lippard’s designation of ‘conceptual art’, but importantly Lippard (1973) discusses the artist and communication and tacitly expresses another nascent now enduring feature of art in this lineage: a projected

audience for (or consumption of) art that is internationalized, if not global. This is evident in Lippard's use of a quote from challenger of an institutionalized art world of museums and galleries, Seth Siegelau:

Communication relates to art in three ways: (1) Artists knowing what other artists are doing. (2) The art community knowing what artists are doing. (3) The world knowing what artists are doing.... It is my concern to make it known to multitudes. [The most suitable means are] books and catalogues.

(cited in Lippard 1973: xvii)

Siegelau's championing and empowering of artists had the effect of taking them out of the institutions and making those people relevant for a projected global audience – expressing the possibility that there is (in human terms) a universal relevance to the work. Arguably, this is the state of art (and many other things) now, that it is made in response to an imagined globality or universalism: a projection shared (although understood in a variety of ways) by both producers and audiences. This points to tensions in any ambition to 'place pressure on conventional modes of artistic production and consumption under capitalism' (Bishop 2012: 2) because the assumed globality or international relevance of the work is part of what makes it marketable. Makes it (commercially) successful.

Harrison's book provides an intense and situated understanding of her year-long project embedded within autobiography. The availability and coherence of books, or indeed journal articles, rely on sedimented social practices governing their construction, dissemination and reception. Does the content of the book, or journal article, really matter if its form (whether hard copy or digital) perpetuates structures we might deem counterproductive?

CONCLUSION: THE FAILINGS OF SUCCESS

My writing in this article activates *The Glasgow Effect*, drawing out content that is likely relevant to readers of *Art & the Public Sphere*. Clearly, for professionals working in contemporary art and academia, success revolves around having an international, if not global, reach. This is often accompanied, perhaps inadvertently, by travel to talks, conferences or other events but also travel to and from a regular place of work – many academics live in one place, or indeed one country, and work in another. Certainly, 'success' for most people in this context is accompanied by the production of lots of carbon and other climate changing emissions. Art in a conceptual lineage has been positioned as a challenge to 'art-as-commodity' but there is a tension between this and its underpinning projection of globality, of flexibility, that justifies carbon intensive lifestyles. A global inability to stem or control such emissions is rhetorically, if not yet practically, one of humanity's greatest failings..

The Glasgow Effect appears as an uncomfortable enactment of a dilemma, or Harrison's allergic reaction to a common situation where people must live and work in and with such contradiction. Harrison's artwork, her instigation of critical artistic pedagogy, draws attention to a variety of sedimented social practices and explodes them. That explosion took place through the orchestration of Facebook outrage and its reverberation into what arguably became (for many) an administrative nightmare in the art school and by extension university in which she works. Harrison's action and serious

reflection continue to transform her reality. How, or in what way, this action resonates with students, colleagues, administrative structures, readers, etc. is up for grabs.

I end by paraphrasing the text of Harrison's (2015: n.pag.) funding application to Creative Scotland; by doing this I am directing you to consider how you negotiate the structures constraining your day-to-day life, while prompting you to evaluate the success of *The Glasgow Effect* in its own terms:

As a national and international audience, you are currently experiencing Ellie Harrison's artwork *The Glasgow Effect* second-hand through a journal article. This is a contribution to critical contemporary art discourse. Is it developing your understanding of what 'sustainable practice' actually means? Does it challenge your preconceived notions what makes 'good career progression'?

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