

2097

WE MADE OURSELVES

O V E R

A A R H U S + H U L L 2 0 1 7

Introduction

Breathing in, you might think that the air is the same but it's not. The tide covers the eaves of the Old Town. Lights twinkle on the moon.

This city is on the cusp of a new century. Over the past 80 years, its map has been redrawn: the tidal arrays have been grown out to sea, the myriad canals and marine farms now encircle the city centre.

We grew. The city moved. The long grass was cut back and the Brabrand Lake became the new centre. Housing estates from the last century hummed with voices; their windows blinked with industry.

But that was a while ago. It is now 2097. That hum of traffic outside the window is just a recording. Now the streets are quiet and the houses stand empty once more. After nearly a century of growth and industry, the ground has fallen away and you're floating above the city.

Now it's up to you to decide on where we go next.

We Made Ourselves Over is a science fiction project that takes its audiences on a journey into an imagined future. Blast Theory will work in partnership with diverse communities from Aarhus and Hull to develop a speculative vision of the world in 2097; employing writing, photography, mobile gaming and film to construct a provocative and personal set of stories from each city.

We Made Ourselves Over springs from the respective histories and insights of communities in each city while drawing on the work of economists, futurologists, technologists, climate scientists and architects to frame their common challenges in the face of global migration, technical innovation and climate change.

We Made Ourselves Over reflects on the capacity of people to adapt within the inevitable cycles of decay and renewal of a city, postulating a lifetime of changes that will transform the city in the coming century. Delving through time zones past and future, Blast Theory will deliver and screen a series of extraordinary films, alongside a programme of public events in each city from September to December 2017 using phone boxes, an app for smartphones and intimate face to face encounters across the city.

Background

We Made Ourselves Over continues Blast Theory's concern with the social impact and opportunities of rapidly changing technology on the city and its people. We believe that new technology provides critical challenges and opportunities for cities in the future. And it allows us to create groundbreaking new forms of performance and interactive art to build rich conversations about the landscape of that city.

As with work such as our commission in Japan in 2013 - [The Thing I'll Be Doing For The Rest Of My Life](#) - the project builds on an inclusive research and creative development process, comprising interviews and workshops with local people and organisations to excavate the diverse economic, social and political experiences of the city and its history. Our experience in research projects working with partners in higher education and at research labs across the European Union will allow us to co-ordinate a unique collaboration between local communities and an interdisciplinary team of architects, urbanists and economists.

Among our previous work, [Rider Spoke](#) is one of several which interleaves new perspectives of the city with audiences' own experiences. First premiered at the Barbican in London in 2007 and subsequently shown in 20 cities around the world, *Rider Spoke* invites audiences to cycle through the city at night making recordings and listening to other people's. It uses technology to give new ways for audiences to have a meaningful voice within the work.

The Story of the City

Through this project, we will invite people to contribute to a new vision of the city, to unleash radical, poetic and playful ideas about what is possible and what the future might be. We want to invite people to think in new ways about the life they lead and where they want their communities to go. It will frame the present within a longer historical cycle of economic decay and renewal, reflecting on loss, our sense of history and purpose, and on our capacity of resilience in the face of the unknown.

The narrative and creative vision of *We Made Ourselves Over* is inspired by the psychological landscapes of J.G. Ballard; describing the future through the personal struggles of individuals who live there.

Incorporating contributions and voices from both Aarhus and Hull, we will create a diverse set of eye-level perspectives on the future, set against a common fate in a single imaginary city. The city will blend landmarks and historical references from the Aarhus and Hull into a single landscape, creating an simultaneous experience of otherness and familiarity. The rooftop paths on the warehouses of the West Dock on the Humber will spill down among the communities of containers in Godsbanen. The view from the tidal barrier on the Hull will take in Aarhus's now decayed Iceberg apartments on the harbour front in one direction and the estates of Gellerup in the other, now crowded with wealthy residents keen to shelter from the forbidding coastline.

The Development Process

Our approach will define opportunities of exchange between experts, innovators, cultural practitioners and audiences across the two cities during each phase of the project. Throughout, we will adopt a common digital strategy which shares the research, development and presentation of the project under a single identity, aiming to provoke conversations between the cities and beyond to the wider world.

The City and Capital of Culture teams will provide a key role in building relationships within each city, linking the project to independent researchers and development groups, establishing relationships with community and youth groups and assembling a production team of local film-makers, visual artists, performers and makers to involve in the delivery of the final work.

The project will begin in June 2016 and be live to the public in a ten week programme from September to early December 2017 to coincide with the City and Capital of Culture programmes' shared goals of looking towards the future.

Phase 1: Research

In the first six months of the project, Blast Theory will work with experts and researchers from Aarhus and Hull to reimagine the city across four key areas:

- The environment and climate change
- Global and local economies
- New technologies, city infrastructure and civic space
- Community, identity, family life and culture

Blast Theory will interview ten experts to give their insights on the challenges faced by each city – what they have in common and the impact of global changes in the coming century. These interviews will be videoed and shared online, providing an exchange of ideas and acting as a starting point and a provocation for workshops with communities from each city.

In co-ordination with the City and Capital of Culture Teams, we will undertake parallel sets of thought provoking workshops in each city, to present and discuss alternative scenarios for the future of the city. Taking a playful and personal approach, each group will be invited to think about their own lives in this future city; re-inventing their own communities, carrying forward what is important, writing stories of daily life, drawing up new city plans and designing a new horizon line for their neighbourhood.

- Group 1: Schools Workshops - We will work with the City and Capital of Culture Teams to draw twenty students from diverse locations in each city. Material produced during these workshops will be shared online between the schools and to the wider public through the project website.
- Group 2: Young People's Exchange - We will offer the opportunity for five young people from each city to travel to the other. During their visit the young people take part in a workshop with local young people. They will be invited to imagine their neighbourhoods side by side in the city of the future, to share insights about their own communities and discuss their common ambitions.
- Group 3: Over 60s Interviews - We will work with over 60s groups to delve into the recent past of each city, reflecting on how daily life and experiences of the city have changed and how they see the changes of the coming century might be met.

The research phase will also set out to explore potential relationships with creative collaborators for the project, including production designers, 3D artists, writers, storyboard artists, film crew, facilities houses and performers.

Phase 2: Film and Interactive Development

The research and workshops will lead to a phase of intensive creative development; interpreting and collating material from this process.

In collaboration with production designers, 3D artists, and a scriptwriter, Blast Theory will develop a set of interlinked stories and characters set in an imaginary city of 2097; each film introducing a new character from the city and setting up a dilemma that they face. Blast Theory will bring an imaginary future city to life using motion graphics and special effects to reimagine the city as never before; developing storyboards for five films, scripts for a series of interactive phone calls and for intimate face-to-face encounters across the city.

Participants from the workshop phase and a wider public from both cities will be invited to suggest and photograph potential locations for the films.

This phase will also include technical development for a smartphone app, an interactive phone platform and two site visits to each city to scout locations, cast and rehearse with key cast members, plan for camera tracking and effects compositing and to shoot test material.

Phase 3: Filming and Final Production

Blast Theory will recruit and cast a production team for the film shoot. Key cast members and crew will travel between the cities to film in both locations, with Blast Theory inviting participants from communities on location to watch and potentially take part in the production.

Shot in 4K, an experienced effects team with a track record of work in television and feature films will use 3D compositing and camera tracking to embed environments and characters into the world of the film, joining neighbourhoods and landmarks from the present day in both cities into a single imaginary city of the future.

The Public Event

We Made Ourselves Over will launch as an immersive citywide event beginning in September 2017 in both cities and lasting for ten weeks.

The Films

*The familiar wail of the air-raid siren echoes through the city from the harbour front to Gellerup.
In Hull, every phone box springs to life.
The future is here.*

Five films will be released over ten weeks - one each fortnight. The launch of each new film will be announced simultaneously in both Hull and Aarhus. In Aarhus, the air-raid siren will sound throughout the city. At precisely the same moment in Hull, every phone box in the city will ring.

In each city, a specially adapted truck will tour neighbourhoods to screen the films during the ten weeks. Acting as a projection platform, the truck will turn walls and billboards across the city into temporary screens. Neighbourhoods will be transformed as residents, visitors and passers by gather under the stars to watch as each new film premieres. In Aarhus, Blast Theory will liaise with the Capital of Culture team to use electronic displays in train stations and on buses to catch commuters on their journeys to work, while a special screening of all the films will be made for delegates at the Creativity World Forum in November. In Hull, Blast Theory will co-ordinate screenings with public events such as Hull City Fair and during football matches at the KC stadium.

The films will be short, shareable and provocative; distributed online as well as within the city. Remapping familiar locations and landmarks from diverse neighbourhoods in both cities, each film will reveal a new aspect of the imaginary city and its story. Each film will be told as fact from the point of view of 2097 - sometimes voiced as personal reportage, at other times, in the guise of advertising or public information films.

On its own, each film will encapsulate an idea of how people might live in the future, providing a visually rich re-imagining of the city for sharing and discussion across social media. But it will also be a call to action; setting up a character and a dilemma as a prompt to engage with the story world further via interactive phone calls and a smartphone app.

At the end of each fortnight, participants will have the chance to be drawn further into the project – being carried away by one of a fleet of electric cars roaming the city; taking them on a remarkable and unforgettable journey of reflection into the future.

Interactive Phone Calls

*The clock counts down. The siren echoes. My phone rings. At the end of the line, a crackling voice asks me who I am.
In Hull, over three hundred phone boxes jangle to life inviting passers by to answer.*

As each new film is launched, so is an interactive phone call with the character from that film. Each film will be a call to action to enter the world of the film. Viewers in each city will be invited to call a phone number. At the end of the line is a character from 2097, pleading for your help. As you interact with them, you become a protagonist in their life. Help them with the dilemma they face – give them advice, record your thoughts and help them to reach a decision about the future.

Audiences who've called the number will receive a call when each subsequent film is launched. Phone lines will be open 24 hours a day and seven days a week during the ten weeks of the event, allowing the public to explore the world of the project at anytime by calling in. In Hull, participants will also be able to call in from any one of the city's white phone boxes.

The Smartphone App

Available globally, the smartphone app will present the films released each fortnight and allow participants to make an interactive video call into the future.

One interactive video call is released to accompany each film. Framed FaceTime style, each video will feature a character from one of the films, allowing you to interact with them, giving an intimate first person window into their world and their view of the city and inviting you to help decide their future.

The app for smartphones will draw on Blast Theory's recent award winning Karen app; building on the team's experience in scripting compelling interactive video, and leveraging technology for delivering interactive full-screen video to mobile devices.

Face To Face Encounters

*A voice on the phone asks you to turn around.
A black vehicle sits humming with the door open.
The voice asks you to get in.*

Each weekend, a small fleet of anonymous blacked out electric cars will appear gliding back and forth across Aarhus and Hull, alternating between the cities from one weekend to the next. These cars become the mobile setting for the public to reflect on the story and share their visions of the future of Hull.

A lucky few from audiences in either city will be picked up by one of this fleet of mysterious vehicles roaming the city and meet a character from the films face to face. Within each vehicle a performer will guide an interview with the participant to talk about their vision of the future. Video recordings of these encounters will be shared between cities across social platforms as part to the project's digital strategy to provoke and grow conversations online.

As the interview ends the participant will be dropped off where they began.

From Aarhus and Hull to the World

We Made Ourselves Over will set both cities buzzing. *We Made Ourselves Over* is a science fiction project that aims to foster debate and conversation, sharing videos and material with the public and with the press throughout the creative process. As the public programme launches, *We Made Ourselves Over* will co-ordinate a conversation between the two cities online and through social media. Whether deeply engaged through the workshops and the making of the films, thrilled by an interaction with an actor or drawn in by the projection of an eye catching film in their neighbourhood residents and visitors will feel the new sense of possibilities in the air.

And the project will go further still: to reach beyond Aarhus and Hull to the world. A digital strategy will develop wider conversations there that respond to the global questions raised by the project. As the ten weeks of the event unfold, the films will be complimented by the voices of participants from audiences in each city. Recordings from phone calls and face to face encounters will be compiled and published, inspiring the design of a new city map and a striking new skyline for the future.

Finale

The ten weeks concludes with a celebratory finale in each city. An outdoor screening of all five films will be complemented with contributions from participants in the workshop process and videos from both cities.

Bringing together communities and contributors from all stages of the project, these will also provide a landmark public event for each city to reflect on their potential future.