

# Standing in the way of control: Superflex, tenantspin and Alan Dunn. An investigation into social media

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"In 1999, as part of an experimental internet TV station called Superchannel, Danish art collective Superflex initiated tenantspin for residents of a Liverpool tower block. The project was conceived to empower local communities to produce their own web-based television content."



Bold Street Project. Filmmakers Chris Bernard and Alex Cox dressed as priests. (2007).

The project was intended to enable residents living in Coronation Court, Liverpool's oldest high-rise dwelling, to have a means of making themselves heard in plans to redevelop Liverpool's social housing. Demolition was being proposed for their homes, to be replaced by low-rise build. The residents objected strongly and, by taking part in *tenantspin*, were able to focus their efforts to de-rail the process. Contrary to prevailing beliefs they made it clear they preferred the tower block to other housing systems, provided it was properly maintained. Under the influence of social artist Alan Dunn, and to help raise the profile of the channel, celebrities, renowned writers, artists, musicians and designers were invited to collaborate with the tenants and to take part in programmes. These included the author Will Self, the KLF's Bill Drummond, Auto-Destructive Art founder and political activist Gustav Metzger and the playwright Jeff Young — currently in the press for his adaptation of Pete Townsend's *Quadrophenia* for the stage — who imagined the destroyed tower blocks rebuilt as a futuristic Tower of Babel.

There is no doubt that the project has had an effect beyond its remit. Since its origins in Copenhagen, Superflex went on to establish nearly forty such Superchannels around the world, in the United States, Thailand, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and beyond, before it was retired by the artists in a group e-mail sent to all worldwide participants on 3rd December, 2007.

Yet the maverick *tenantspin*, the first outside Superflex's home ground, is still going strong after ten years of activity, offering a potent creative challenge to individuals and to any disenfranchised community.

The channel has a potential to empower tenants throughout the Alsop Super-City. Could it give voice to a widespread desire to live in high-rise — a prospect central to Alsop's vision of freeing-up congested city centres, reducing sprawl and creating leisure space? New Superchannels could be established anywhere there is a need for social empowerment, enabling residents to take control of their environment.

Marie-Anne McQuay's investigation into the *tenantspin* project asks the question: can socially situated art actually be effective? In doing this, she looks back to the ideas of 1960's UK art collective the Artist Placement Group, their relationship to Joseph Beuys — and at how best to keep alive a practice that sets out to affect institutional systems.

## Flexing muscle

Danish art group Superflex developed their radical internet-based Superchannel project in a period that saw extremes of both optimism and pessimism around new technology: in the late 1990's the global economy was still artificially inflated by the illusory dot.com boom, whilst unfounded fears about the impact of the Millennium Bug were yet to be fully allayed. The rapid expansion of the internet's decentralised communication systems that the project harnessed occurred in parallel to the rapid expansion of urban redevelopment in the North of England: the base of one the channel's longest running hubs. From an unlikely intersection between a technologically charged international art project and the UK regeneration industry came the remarkable citizen-led project *tenantspin*.

*tenantspin* was first commissioned through the media arts agency FACT (Foundation for Art & Creative Technology) at their Video Positive festival, and is developed and produced by social housing residents in partnership with FACT and a registered social landlord, Arena Housing. The starting point for Superflex's project was to provide the tenants of Coronation Court with a platform to raise concerns and seek to exert some influence over the threat of upheaval brought about by demolition proposals, part of the regeneration of social housing in Liverpool during the late 1990's. In addition, it provided all involved with an

opportunity to test out the potential of an emergent technology — the internet — as a medium for citizen-based transmissions that ran counter to the centralised control of television and radio broadcasting.

Can such politically charged, socially situated, art projects really intervene productively in social contexts? Do they merely act out representations of social interaction, aestheticising rather than empowering communities? My article explores the wider questions that emerge from the story of *tenantspin*, from the aspirations that motivated its founders to the later direction initiated by artist Alan Dunn who steered the project from 2001-7.

## Agendas and idealism

Since the pilot project began in 1999, there have been conflicts of interest over what a community-driven channel could and should do. These areas of tension highlight the differing levels of influence held by *tenantspin*'s many stakeholders, in particular the influence held by those who funded the project. Whilst most art invokes patronage to some extent, whether public or private, the patronage of a state funded housing association comes with its own agendas; in this case, a reluctance to alter the course of plans already set in place. Consequently, during the project's history, there have been clashes between this overly prescribed funding and commissioning scenario, and the practice of artists who seek to challenge established systems as an integral part of the collaborative process.

Superflex, a collective formed by Bjørnstjerne Reuter Christiansen, Jakob Fenger and Rasmus Nielsen in 1993, carries out a contemporary form of 'social sculpture', a term coined by (political) activist artist Joseph Beuys to describe art works that intervene in social systems, moulding the stuff of everyday life rather than conventional sculptural materials. Their interventions occur through art works or 'tools', which are created to be used independently by others, outside of art world contexts. Whilst their strap-line, "All humans are potential entrepreneurs", echoes Beuys's well known quotation, "Every human being is an artist", their choice of the word 'entrepreneur' over 'artist' indicates a crucial difference. They are pragmatists, as much as they are idealists, explicitly adopting the techniques of global capitalism to roll out their projects in the here and now, rather than seeking an alternative world in an indefinable future. Their proposal for a tenant-led, internet TV channel in Liverpool occurred through a convergence of trends in politically engaged international art practice and regeneration-led public art commissioning in the UK, with Superflex offering a service that would suit the agendas of all involved.

Coronation Court, the original site of what was to become the *tenantspin* channel, was one of more than sixty high-rise tower blocks whose management had passed in 1993 to a new government body charged with regenerating social housing in Liverpool: Liverpool Housing Action Trust (LHAT). LHAT was one of six other temporary national Housing Action Trusts set up by the Conservative government to run for a twelve-year period, with the tenants ultimately choosing a new permanent housing association landlord (Arena Housing) to manage their homes after this period. Whilst taking control of social housing away from local authority was politically divisive and indicative of wider schism between central government and Labour controlled councils, such a move was welcomed locally by the majority of tenants who were frustrated by the decades of neglect and subsequent deterioration of their tower blocks.

At the end of the 1990's the residents were facing an uncertain future with LHAT, namely the prospect of being re-housed. It should be noted that whilst the tower blocks were in poor condition, high-rise living was not itself unpopular, contrary to the negative national public image of the tower block ▶



as a failed utopian project. Most tenants had lived together for decades and were proud to be the earliest pioneers of high-rise living in Liverpool; they had developed a real sense of community in their 'streets in the sky'. Consequently they preferred plans that were based around renovation, rather than proposals for new low-rise housing which would potentially disperse them across sites and which many saw as a step backwards towards the terraced houses from which the majority had been moved in the 1960's.

Meanwhile, Liverpool arts institution FACT was preparing the new media festival Video Positive 2000. Many of the festival's art works were produced through FACT's Collaboration Programme, whose mission it was to affirm the organisation's commitment to new media art in participatory art commissions with specific communities. FACT had long been interested in the work of Superflex, and seized the opportunity to bring them into partnership with LHAT. The hope was that the project would be mutually beneficial to both parties: Superflex was looking for the opportunity to try out its new venture, Superchannel; Liverpool HAT, on the other hand, was keen to develop a public arts policy that would encourage community participation during this time of transition and avoid commissioning, in the words of Community Development Manager Paul Kelly, "an endless stream of murals and half-hearted community arts projects involving work of dubious merit and little local ownership." In addition to Kelly's enthusiasm for innovation, the bringing together of an ageing population (the majority of tenants were then aged between fifty and ninety) with new technology was a strategic venture for LHAT as the project fitted in with a wider government drive to deliver public services electronically and bridge the 'digital divide'.

Thus it was, through the mingling of artistic and social agendas, that Superflex were invited to recruit a group of tenants from Coronation Court and help them set up a dedicated web TV station for the block. Initially, bringing the tenants who volunteered to take part together with new technology, was a challenge in itself, since most had never been on-line before, and therefore needed to be introduced to the potential uses of the internet before launching into producing their own programming. Subjects began to emerge: father and son team, Jimmy and John Jones, created a weekly sports programme; Elaine O'Hare and others presented themselves as oral history subjects; Olga Bayley, one of the project's most passionate champions, urged other tenants to use the channel as a part of a campaign to save the block; Superflex themselves took their cameras to a HAT board meeting where redevelopment plans were discussed, making the with lobbying intent from this period include webcast interviews with the original architect of Coronation Court, Rex Brown, then aged in his eighties, and Dutch architects Big Architecten who had won a European award with their proposal to refurbish Coronation Court but who were still no closer to being commissioned.

The broadcasts were a high profile feature of the Video Positive Festival, gathering regional, national and international publicity around the tower block, whereas previously the issue of redevelopment versus demolition had been very much a localised issue even within Liverpool itself. Yet despite the project's profile, the activity it generated still did not force a decision in the resident's favour, and development plans remained stalled after the six-month pilot had run its course. Although Superflex originally stated that Superchannel would present the residents of Coronation Court with "a set of new media tools... to influence decision-making processes about their future", their influence in reality was always destined to be limited by the agendas of the government-sponsored agency that funded the project. Whilst the art world may be regarded as one of the last refuges of left-wing utopian discourse, it is not without its own constricting obligations to funders and state bodies that affect in turn how much intervention is possible. Whilst artists may consult with communities as part of collaborative commissions, such feedback will be ignored if it does not match the objectives of the project's patrons.

When writers such as Barbara Steiner describe Superflex's practice as "radical democracy" they are investing a lot of faith in processes which highlight social inequalities but stop short of the real choice that a 'radical democracy' presupposes. However, if the project lacked the autonomy necessary to effect change in the short term, Superflex did more than stage symbolic debates within the art world; most of the labour of the project took place outside of the art world in the form of real rather than aestheticised interactions between the residents and their housing officers and the residents and a wider global audience which had started to engage with their programmes. As well as providing a new social setting for the tenants to engage with each other, it could also be said that Superflex's activist agendas changed how some of the tenants viewed themselves, from people to whom policy was done, to potential agents of change with access to a public sphere beyond their immediate local context.

Superflex's commitment to handing over the tools of production, the channel itself, after the six month pilot, rather than defining this as the end to the project, set up the possibility of a series of interactions that could span months and years, rather than the more conventional days and weeks of most art commissions. This in turn allowed the tenants to self-determine a use for the channel over time as a platform for debate that, through its sustained profile and diverse audiences now exerts greater influence over its funders than was possible in the early days when it was more of a niche art world project. This was, in many



ways, the most 'radical' aspect of this project, the harnessing of a new technology that enabled local concerns to reach a worldwide audience.

#### Technological commitment

As facilitator of user-generated content, Superchannel pre-dated mainstream video hosting platform YouTube by six years, and had a more radical intent. Whilst YouTube's pithy slogan "Broadcast Yourself" exhorts the global visibility of individuals as an end in itself, Superchannel's comparable mission statement, "Make sure that you are seen and heard in the 21st century", was a call to the citizen to participate in the internet as a new public realm. Yet how did this technological idealism manifest in a pre-broadband era?

Originally, Superflex intended for the Coronation Court channel to become the communications model for "every tower block in the city", so that each high-rise would have its own webcasting studio. Superflex's aspirations bring to mind the image of illuminated tower blocks, beacons transmitting to the world in a physical manifestation of the decentralised nature of the internet. The channel had also been designed with the innovative capacity for live interactivity, enabling an on-line audience to join in the webcast and interrupt proceedings by posing questions in real time.

The political implications of decentralised distribution and the potentiality of interruption were very important to a project which sought to enable a form of peer-to-peer communication, in direct opposition to the centralised and passive communications model of television. The project was innovative, therefore, not just because it took place before webcam culture turned the sharing of everyday life with strangers into a social norm, but because of its total commitment to active participation in this new digital realm.

Its innovations also meant that people needed to be convinced that the effort needed to engage with the project were worth it. The relatively complicated technology needed to be heavily facilitated, as did the generation of content,



and after the success in terms of attracting participants in one block, LHAT agreed to provide funding for a channel that would be open to residents from all LHAT sites, rather than just Coronation Court. FACT, seeing the potential to test out a process-led, technologically focused artwork, then appointed a new project manager in artist Alan Dunn.

Dunn was a graduate of the Environmental Art Department at Glasgow School of Art, an influential cross-disciplinary course founded in 1985 that encouraged its students, who include Simon Starling and Douglas Gordon, to make work out of the "context of the world, with or through people." Dunn, reflecting back, states that, "We were asked to find our own relationships with different social situations, and I took this to understand that as 'social artists' we needn't always be in the centre of it all... it seemed important to me to step back from situations and quietly observe." Dunn therefore spent ten years working in the 'field', with the world outside the gallery as his primary context, commissioning billboard projects that interrupted the flow of consumerism with aesthetic interventions, alongside other public-realm works, and working within community projects that had the sharing of authorship at their heart.

Shortly after he took over, however, the whole purpose of the project seemed in jeopardy when it was announced that Coronation Court had been scheduled for demolition rather than redevelopment. The idea that the channel could have any influence during this period swiftly became redundant since decisions were ultimately to be made centrally on a cost basis. Activist artistic agendas lost out to a state body with pragmatic intentions, namely to efficiently replace problematic high-rise buildings with easy-to-maintain low-rise developments. Therefore, despite the support of local LHAT Community Development Officers who shared the resident's belief that redevelopment over demolition was the best course of action to maintain a community, what happened to Coronation Court became a pattern which ultimately left only twelve out of the original sixty-seven blocks standing by the time the HAT sites were handed over to new landlords in 2005.

Rehabilitating the Modernist social housing project with 21st Century technology was suddenly one more unrealised ideal, and the idea of the public actually influencing the course of regeneration seemed dead in the water. However, the *tenantspin* channel remained. Centralised in one studio, rather than embedded across the low-rise developments that were to follow, the tenants and the project endured and thrived. For the project to maintain and grow after the Video Positive Festival and to continue to produce content that was also compelling enough to attract a regular audience, some of the ideals of decentralisation had to be abandoned and production become more centralised. Alan Dunn quickly found, therefore, that the model of analogue television provided many solutions to a potentially alienating platform.

Thus a core team were trained-up like a TV crew to iron out technical glitches, and the tenants who programmed content met regularly so that webcasts could be researched rather than improvised. Webcasts were scheduled on a regular basis with a programme listing sent out by e-mail so that audiences knew when they could watch a programme live or catch up with it via the archive. To create an atmosphere, audiences were bused-in like a TV chat show. Content was collaboratively made but distributed through this one on-line channel, rather than independently by individuals, in order to maintain quality of output and maximise audiences.

Even so, Dunn was aware that only a small proportion of tenants would ever be convinced to watch *tenantspin* on the clunky PCs situated in the community flat. Innovative experiments were put in place with digital signals and CCTV systems so that programmes could be picked up on a terrestrial television channel. Although transmitting locally rather than globally, these programmes crucially allowed people to watch in the comfort of their living room. Dunn also created projects within *tenantspin* that were based on communality rather than technology, producing CD projects with tenants contributing songs alongside established musicians such as electro-band Ladytron in addition to other projects that could first be encountered outside the context of the internet. These included a party that was also a live performance by art collective Foreign Investment, which was primarily for tenants but also filmed and later webcast, and a series of audio commissions by Chris Watson, former member of Cabaret Voltaire, that were embedded in a tower block and featured on BBC Radio 3 before being transmitted.

Reflecting back, Dunn knew that some of these alternative approaches came too late and that *tenantspin* was destined to remain for the period of his involvement a niche project within a wider context, involving twenty to thirty tenants working intensely at any one time but incapable of embedding itself in a decentralised form. He knew that a community radio station or cable TV channel would have involved a wider group of tenants in production and yet, he also acknowledges that Superchannel was important for what it represented and how that affected what was produced: there is a difference in how one mediates oneself when the world may potentially be watching. The possibility that the project therefore was held to be both seen and heard on the world stage made it different from more traditional community arts projects that often reinforce marginal identities at a local level. Technology has also now caught up the

project, with the widespread advent of broadband and wireless networks, and *tenantspin* is now also fully integrated with mainstream social networking platforms; whilst this in many ways makes the project less 'alternative', such mergings have allowed *tenantspin* to gather an even wider regional, national and international following whilst maintaining its singular socially engaged focus.

#### Art during a housing crisis

The demolition of Coronation Court starkly revealed the limitations of socially situated artworks. Whilst *tenantspin* had been able to enhance relationships between tenants and local housing officers, it was, as demonstrated, ultimately powerless to influence broader trends in planning. At the moment that Dunn inherited the project from Superflex, he therefore also inherited a disenfranchised community and direct criticism from some tenants that the pilot project might have diverted attention from lobbying mechanisms that already existed, such as the High Rise Tenants Group which had formed by residents in 1991 to champion tenants rights. Many of the tenants across the different sites were ex-service men and women, or ex-union members adept at self-organisation, and if they had previously lacked the external audience that the internet provided, they were nevertheless already an 'empowered' community, capable of negotiating with housing authorities without the mediation of artists or facilitators.

Reactivating the project therefore also involved re-articulating what *tenantspin* could realistically achieve for its participants. Dunn, anticipating much future upheaval for tenants, believed that there was still a need for a project that could create a public forum for debate. The channel would be a means by which to raise important issues, but the project needed to be more realistic about its aims: accepting the patronage of HAT meant acknowledging that, despite Superflex's activist intentions, *tenantspin* was not being funded to initiate a full scale tenant-led revolt. Dunn understood that the project played an important social role, as a forum for interactions between the residents themselves, and that the studio could provide a context in which they could be playful as well as highlight the serious issues. The motives for resident involvement in the channel were diverse, and he needed to satisfy those who wanted to escape from the day-to-day concerns of the housing crisis as well as the lobbyists; he therefore initiated a formal split in programme content between social issues and artists' commissions. As he saw it, "There were grievances to air, life stories to share, songs to sing, spoons to play and a new approach to saying it all. What was needed, was someone quiet to make all the noise happen." Dunn thus worked with the legacy created by Superflex, testing out the real life, rather than symbolic, potential of a globally networked project.

Tenants continued to produce material on the very present issues raised by the housing debate, interviewing senior HAT officials, city council planners and local politicians, but they were also encouraged to research and present programmes on other social issues of interest beyond their own immediate community. A key example was an interview between resident Brenda Tilsley and the vicar of a local church, which had become the focus of national media attention after the kidnap of Kenneth Bigley in Iraq, in 2004. In the course of the interview the vicar recounts how reactions to the kidnapping were misrepresented by the press, who even brought their own mourners to light candles and pose for photographs in order to portray the church as a local shrine. At moments like this, the potential in webcasting for presenting local perspectives more accurately, and resisting the stereotypes of mainstream media, becomes clear. Other key programmes from the period include webcasts on health, money and politics, all researched and delivered by the residents.

Exploring the channel as a new commissioning context for artists, Dunn invited local and international figures to respond to the project, with the central brief of collaborating with the residents. As well as tenant-led interviews with writer Will Self and anarchistic artist and creator of the KLF Bill Drummond, a live, multiple location performance work by Manchester-based artist Graham Parker was created which involved an A-Z, several taxis and the integral participation of an on-line audience. Dunn's aim was always to diverge as much as possible from the traditional model of reminiscence so often used with elderly communities, where the subjects presents their story but always defines themselves in relation to the past. Two key commissions that demonstrate this commitment include *tenantspin*'s participation in the EAST International 05 exhibition, Norwich Art Gallery, when the project was selected by artist Gustav Metzger, the originator of Auto-Destructive Art as an example of an artwork that operated as time and process-based in line with his own practice. Interviews were transmitted with Metzger, then in his eighties, alongside a debate on cryogenics with an enthusiast who had signed up for the procedure and who was interviewed by tenants Jean Niblock and John McGuirk. The second high profile commission was a collaboratively created BBC Radio 3 play, *SuperBlock*, developed with tenants by writer Jeff Young. This latter project imagined a distant future, which saw all of the demolished tower blocks, rebuilt one on top of the other like a post-modern Tower of Babel.

A ban on looking back meant that programming avoided the trap of nostalgia, encouraging the tenants to explore sometimes surreal ideas or comment on social issues as they occurred in the moment, rather than constantly repeat the same stories from their own past: this also created a space in which they could be something other than an elderly person defined by a community ▶

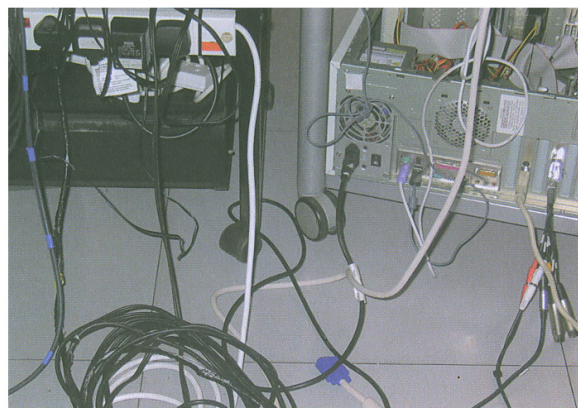


**Top Left**  
Demolition film stills by  
Kath Healy (1999).

**Top Middle**  
Short range AV transmitter,  
roof of Brompton House,  
Sefton Park (2005).

**Far Right**  
*tenantspin* cables.

**Right**  
*Superflex*: Rasmus Nielsen,  
Bjørnstjerne Christiansen  
and Jakob Fenger. Image  
courtesy of the artists.



housing crisis. Being in the moment also meant that the participants who took part over months and years had the opportunity to define that moment; Dunn felt there was an urgency for grass-roots projects to be active and visible in the run-up to the forthcoming Capital of Culture in 2008, a superstructure which imposed an idea of culture on the city, as much as it responded to what local artists and communities actually generated.

#### Artistic legacies

The project's social legacies, rather than changing the course of regeneration, can be identified as the public channel of communication that was opened up between tenants and their landlords; the interactions between the tenants and their wider global audience; and the relationships generated between the tenants themselves, many of whom met for the first time through *tenantspin* as the project broadened its reach across multiple sites. The artistic legacies of the project emerge out of a complex set of relationships between the tenants, Alan Dunn, the artists he invited to participate, and the process-based practice of Superflex, which frames the whole project.

At one level, Alan Dunn was, like the tenants and the project's patrons, one element within Superflex's 'social sculpture'. Yet, he was also far more than a locally based artist charged with facilitating community interactions whilst international artists travelled between other commitments. That particular role, so familiar to the commissioning structures of biennials, has its own implicit hierarchies with the local always subordinate to the international. Since Superflex had always intended to hand over the Liverpool branch of Superchannel, theirs was a planned absence and a deliberate letting go; it was in a large part down to Dunn's vision that *tenantspin* developed from faltering pilot to long-running project.

Whilst his creative input was integral to the project maintaining momentum, his was very much a behind-the-scenes practice, in contrast to the artists he invited to collaborate with the tenants who were visible through short projects that culminated publicly. He sought to engineer collaborations that were experimental contexts for artists to test out ideas but that were, at the same time, respectful of those who participated. He was wary of certain art world tendencies that fetishise amateur practices, re-framing hobbies as curiosities and non-art world professionals as naïve outsiders. It should also be noted that, through Superflex's patronage, *tenantspin* has been featured in several international museum shows and, to some extent, the project can never escape the fact that part of its appeal is the sight of 'ordinary' people performing within an art project. However, just as these contexts frame the participants, they in turn provide a framework for the artists and cultural specialists with whom they collaborate; never more so when the residents are hosting interviews, pursuing their own line of questioning with little regard for art-world status, in control of the situation which mediates them.

His was a role sometimes at odds with the institution that employed him: perhaps one of most contentious forms of institutional resistance instigated by Dunn was drawing back from multiple funders keen to attach themselves to the project. He successfully lobbied for Arena, the new housing association landlord that took over sites from LHAT, to take on the project as a core funder and to allow the project space to develop over time. He also turned down a bid from a major satellite channel that would have asked *tenantspin* to produce hours of rolling content; whilst visibility was important it was also equally important for the participants to have time away from the project and not to be constantly called upon to perform.

Alan Dunn's role within a bureaucratic system is reminiscent in many ways of the UK art collective and Beuys collaborators, the Artist Placement Group (APG). Formed in 1966, they situated artists inside corporations and government bodies in order to affect institutional systems. Always working with an open brief and an equivalent managerial salary, rather than a fee, artists were not compelled to make concrete art works but rather de-familiarise the normality

of bureaucracy by their presence as a non-professional or 'incidental person'. According to one of the founders of APG, Barbara Steveni, the artist was charged with 'repositioning art in the decision-making processes of society', with the context deciding half of the work. Whilst Dunn's brief was far from open, his position as an artist operating in an institutional context has parallels with the practices of the APG, through his challenging decision making processes and fighting for an autonomous space in which to make art which has repercussions in the world outside the gallery.

*tenantspin* is now managed by Arena Housing and FACT project managers Patrick Fox, Laura Yates and Ed Pink, and whilst no longer artist-led, the channel still commissions artists to collaborate on innovative projects for live transmission and the sharing of technological skills. A change in the demographic of participants has brought a renewed commitment to highlighting social issues. The project now involves tenants of all ages from across the 14,000 properties that Arena manage in the North West, a significant proportion of which have recently moved to the UK, in contrast to the original participants who were predominantly aged between fifty and ninety and were born and raised in Liverpool. New issues have arisen that are no longer focused around the urgency of social housing, but of citizenship. For example, in 2008, *tenantspin* participant Christian Ntirandekura, a Burundian national who had first sought asylum in the UK in 2004, was detained when he left a *tenantspin* workshop and eventually deported to Burundi, where he faced great danger both for past political actions and for the ethnic group to which he belongs. *tenantspin* provided an important lobbying group to bring his case to regional and national media attention, although ultimately this could no more stop his enforced repatriation than the pilot project could stop the demolition of the tower blocks. The sense in which the project now represents a wide community of interest without any other access to the mainstream media has however galvanised energies once more, and continued its relevance in an era where access to web presence is commonplace rather than exceptional.

In conclusion, whilst activist-style art practices such as Superflex's can no more affect social systems than agenda-laden institutional commissions, since neither have the power to alter economic conditions or deep-seated social inequalities, the *tenantspin* project ultimately had, and still has, more than a symbolic value. The project provides a platform for residents to ask challenging questions of contemporary social and cultural agendas, produce their own visions of the future and raise issues of pressing concern that might otherwise fall out of the range of the authorities' radar.

*tenantspin* is ultimately as much an example of community activism as it is an example of 21st Century 'social sculpture'. Whilst DIY aesthetics come in and out of fashion in the art world, the communities of interest grouped around the project will continue to participate as long as there is still a purpose in their being seen and heard in this century.

[www.tenantspin.org](http://www.tenantspin.org)

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