“**Social Practice Spectrums / Scales”- Dan, Commissioned by Heart of Glass, May 2020**

At the Social Art Summit in November 2018 I contributed to a session all about the rules of engagement in social practice, led by Rebecca Davies and Anna Francis. Based on things I’d been mulling over (especially learning from projects I worked on with Lou Hargreaves) and supplemented by conversations from those two days in Sheffield I cobbled together a few sliding scales of considerations for working with people.

More recently, alongside Kitt, we have been doing a lot of thinking and talking around the ins and outs of social practice and have refined these spectrums somewhat, and added new categories.

They are meant to act as prompts for thinking about engaging with people, and compile various sticking points, cruxes, tensions and dichotomies that have been thrown up by our work over the years. What’s presented here is an incomplete set of checks and balances for commencing art projects with people and we invite you to suggest the stuff we haven’t yet included.

There’s some points that can be read in multiple ways, and that’s fine. *Work—Non-Work* could mean the difference between a paid artist and a voluntary participant. It might refer to doing work that feels more like fun than a job. It might be the spectrum where your hobby becomes your job.

Most of these are reasonably straightforward, but some things might need more explanation - just get in touch for clarification. For example, *Gatekeeper As Conduit — Gatekeeper As Blockage* refers to those people who you meet when you first set foot in new territory, when you are desperately scratching around for people to strike up conversation and a rapport with as you try and find ‘ways in’ to a locale. Gatekeepers are those who immediately open doors to you, and you inevitably say “oh goody, they can be my guide!”. However, because of their position, history and relationships in a community they may also put other people off going through those doors. *Social Aesthetic —Object Aesthetic*is about the difference between the main aim being fostering good relationships or making nice things. Not saying you can’t have both! *Art As Part Of Life — Art As Surrogate For Civic Life*is a comment on the expanded idea of art and how everything could possibly be art. On the one hand, this could be positive, but on the other - especially in cuts, cuts, cuts Britain - art projects are often expected to replace eroded services (improve everyone’s mental health now the drop-in centre has closed, for example). *Artist As Lightning Rod — Artist In The Background*refers to the difference between positioning yourself as the catalyst for ideas, or stepping back and being one of many contributors.

Included are 24 considerations, and we haven’t yet through how to pithily encapsulate problems such as: the scales of operation that exist between extractive and mutual practices (people as ‘raw material’ versus people as equal contributors); the difference between artists leading and artists showing others how to lead; and the extent to which you share the funder/commissioner’s evaluation demands (depending on whether they are integral and interesting reflective aid to getting the most out of the project, or a dull add-on or tick-box exercise that no participants are going to want to delve into). In a related subject area are the differences between projects that have stipulated aims at the beginning, and those where the aims are mutually decided on by all involved. There’s also something about quality of experience versus quality of documentation (or perhaps quality of taking part as opposed to quality of being in the audience) that needs more thought.

The white cards are the bigger boundaries that often influence which end of the spectrum the more nuanced considerations (on yellow cards) have to be.