

The social invisibility of mental health facilities: Raising awareness on social exclusion in urban environments through artwork

Held at The Bartlett School of Architecture on 9 May 2017 as part of Mental Health Awareness Week

Initiated by The Bartlett School of Architecture and the Division of Psychiatry (both part of UCL), this multi-interdisciplinary project used photographs of the exteriors of health and mental health facilities in specific catchment areas and mapped the proximity of these facilities to public transportation. Its aim was to raise awareness of the social exclusion of mentally ill people.

Dr Evangelia Chryssikou (Marie Curie Fellow at UCL and Primary Investigator of the Grand Challenge project) opened the exhibition while Professor Andrew Edkins (Director of The Bartlett Real Estate Institute) gave the welcome speech. Professor Edkins discussed the importance of the Built Environment on the whole chain of provision, focusing on how inadequate health facilities could worsen the service user's condition.

Dr Ian Scott (Director of UCL Grand Challenges and Cross-Disciplinary Development) and Jane Willis (Director of Willis Newson) were also among the speakers, discussing some of the key issues surrounding the subject.

Lynis Lewis (Service Director of the NHS NoClor Research Support Service) expressed her desire for further partnerships between the Bartlett and the NHS in the future, in addition to the two ongoing collaborations.

Juliette Burton (award-winning performer, writer, presenter and broadcast journalist) closed the event with her unique approach and presentation of the subject. Juliette explained how art in healthy spaces can help service users find their own identity and improve their condition.

Project partners, students from The Bartlett, academics, clinicians, representatives of the NHS and participants from the industry were among those who attended the exhibition.

One of the main elements of the event was the projection of photographs juxtaposing the facades of healthcare and mental health facilities in the selected catchment area with a map showing their exact locations and their proximity to underground stations.

The final outcome of the project was the production of a book – presented at the event – that showed these comparisons, alongside key messages from the project partners. The book can be downloaded here: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/grand-challenges/justice-and-equality/news/item/Invisibility-mental-health-facilities>

The project identified factors that contribute to the isolation of mental health facilities, in terms of both space and place, and set the basis for further research in future projects.

In addition to the project outcomes, the exhibition also showcased the work of the social anthropologist Professor Florence Weber and photographer/ethnographer Jean-Robert Dantou, authors of the book 'The Walls don't speak' about French psychiatric facilities. Published in 2016, 'The Walls don't speak' is a *tour de force* that challenges clichéd representations of mental illness in academia and photography.