



# Playful Welcome!

## PLAYABLE CITY TOKYO 2016 Programme Report



## What TOKYO wants?

Parks where ball games are forbidden.  
Roads that can't be used for live music events.  
Beaches where fireworks aren't allowed.

Have the various restrictions created to supposedly protect  
conditioned us not to use or imagination  
beyond those boundaries and restrictions?

Playable City Tokyo is, I think, a brilliant opportunity  
to look at Tokyo from a different perspective.

Now is the time to start imagining.

Creative and Technical Director of Rhizomatiks  
Seiichi Saito  
8 September 2015



## 今の東京が求めているものは何？

## Preface

This report shares the findings of the Playable City Tokyo 2016 Creative Lab and Forum which took place on 4-11 December 2016.

Playable City®<sup>1</sup> was launched in 2012 by Watershed, a leading film culture and digital media centre based in Bristol, UK. It is a global innovation platform that explores the universal language of “play” as a tool to transform cities into places of unexpected interaction.

“More than half of the world’s population now lives in cities, and how our cities grow, adapt and thrive is becoming the key issue of our age. Yet the conversation on the future city is more focused on policy and technology than people and culture. And surely changing behaviours is as important as changing software platforms.” (Watershed, 2014)

Putting people and play at the heart of the future city, Playable City looks at re-using city infrastructure and re-appropriating smart city technologies to create artistic interventions that reuse the fabric of the city to generate shared experiences in public spaces – experiences that become conversation starters between citizens and their cities.

In 2015, Watershed in partnership with British Council, the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities, and joined by Seiichi Saito, Co-Founder and Creative and Technical Director of multi-award winning Japanese creative agency Rhizomatiks, launched Playable City Tokyo. A platform for UK-Japan exchange of knowledge, skills and ideas, it brings together everyone who has a stake in shaping the future city. The aim is to

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<sup>1</sup> Playable City is a registered trade mark of Watershed.

engage with the creative community of Tokyo, including artists, designers, technologists, architects and citizens, to develop imaginative new ideas that enrich the human experience of the city.

With the 2020 games in sight, Tokyo is in a phase of major change. Re-development works and the implementation of new technology is happening across the city. However, these infrastructure upgrades



alone will not provide the welcome Japan is hoping to provide to the 40 million<sup>2</sup> foreign visitors expected in 2020. To ensure visitors have a truly memorable experience of the cultural and creative richness of Japan, it is necessary to consider how they will experience the city. How they will connect with the place, its culture and its people. It is in this context that the Playable City Tokyo 2016

programme brought together 13 Japanese and UK artists and creative practitioners, to collaboratively research, explore and generate ideas for experiences that connect the culturally diverse visitors coming from multiple countries, to the city and its people.

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The Playable City Tokyo 2016 Creative Lab and Forum programme is part of the trial research project for the governmental “Basic Policy for Promoting Measures related to Preparations for and Management of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020”.

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<sup>2</sup> Japanese Government target figure for overseas visitors to Japan in 2020, as announced March 2016.

Playable City puts people and play  
at the heart of the future city.  
Re-using city infrastructure and re-appropriating  
smart city technologies to create connections  
– person to person and person to city.



Playable City は「人」と「遊び」を  
未来の都市ビジョンの中核に据える。  
都市インフラやスマートシティテクノロジーの  
ひねりを加えた活用で  
人と人、人と都市をつなぐ仕掛けを創出する。



## SECTION 1 Theme



### Playful Welcome!

The whole world will be watching Japan in the lead-up to and during the 2020 games. In addition to the expected 40 million foreign visitors visiting the country in person, an estimated 3.6 billion<sup>3</sup> people worldwide, approximately half of the entire world population, will see or hear news of Japan through media coverage of the

games. The challenge now is to use this opportunity to promote Japan, its rich and attractive culture and creativity. And to put measures in place that guarantees those who visit have a memorable experience of Japan, and form long-lasting connections with the country and its people.

The question is: How do we welcome visitors from all over the world who speak various languages and come from diverse cultural backgrounds? How do we ensure they connect with Japan, its culture and its people? Can “play” act as a connector between people?

The Playable City Tokyo 2016 programme brought together 13 Japanese and UK artists and creative practitioners for a week-long Creative Lab to collaboratively explore ideas for a playful welcome that initiates interaction between host and guest, creating shared experiences that connect person to person, person to city.

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<sup>3</sup> Projection based on past figures for London 2012 and Rio 2016.



## SECTION 2 Creative Lab

### 【Overview】

Programme Dates : Sun 4 – Sun 11 December 2016  
 (online pre-session on Thu 24 November)  
 Programme Venue : WIRED Lab.  
 Organiser : Rhizomatiks Co. Ltd., British Council  
 Delivery Partner : Watershed  
 Media Cooperation : WIRED Japan

\*The Playable City Tokyo 2016 Creative Lab is part of the trial research project for the governmental “Basic Policy for Promoting Measures related to Preparations for and Management of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020”.



### 【Schedule】

Thu 24 Nov	Online Session: Introductions
Sun 4 Dec	Workshop: Getting to know one another
Mon 5 Dec	Fieldwork & Workshop: Exploring the city and its public spaces
Tue 6 Dec	Workshop: Shifting the psychogeography of the city
Wed 7 Dec	Ideation: Playful Welcome
Thu 8 Dec	Fieldwork: Exploring Tokyo
Fri 9 Dec	Workshop: Developing ideas for a Playful Welcome
Sat 10 Dec	Ideas Test: Testing ideas in public spaces
Sun 11 Dec	Workshop: Preparing idea presentations Forum: Presenting ideas for a Playful Welcome

## 【Participant Profiles】

The following 13 artists and creators from Japan and the UK participated in the Playable City Tokyo 2016 Creative Lab.



### **Shiho Ishikawa** Art Director and Artist, ADK

Alongside her work as Planner/Art Director for TV commercials and graphic design at advertisement agency ADK based in Tokyo, she also produces a mixed range of works as an artist. She is interested in the mixing of Japanese and western cultures and communication that doesn't rely on being able to speak the same language. Her educational picture book "Alphapet" Opens in a new tab or window. merges Japanese Origami culture and the western alphabet. It has been published in five languages and workshops have been delivered around the world. The "Tick tack studio" Opens in a new tab or window. clock collects numerals from around the world to display the time, and has an app currently in development. In the "The Other Me" children's workshops delivered in collaboration with museums, children are encouraged to stretch their imagination by tracing the outlines of their bodies to create another self. Working with digital content producers she is currently exploring how this might be developed into digital content.



### **Noritaka Ishibayashi** Architectural Designer

After gaining experience working on town planning, residential, office, commercial and public realm projects at an architectural office, he set up his own practice. "ICOME" is a creative unit which brings ideas to life by approaching design from multiple viewpoints not limited to architecture. He is fascinated by cities, drawn to their richness of character, and is involved in many creative pursuits that reveal or help the discovery of new city dimensions. He is involved in the setting up and running of the Shibuyagawa Film Festival, a festival created with the idea to make the city into a movie theatre, and also the Shibuya Zunchyaka! event set up with the notion to fill the city with sound.



### **Saaya Inoue** Mori Building Co., Ltd.

Working for Mori Building Co., Ltd., she started her career in the organising team for the Roppongi Art Night festival and Roppongi Hills 10th Anniversary campaign. Wanting to develop her foreign language skills, she later applied to the Company's training scheme and was posted in Singapore for 6 months and in Shanghai for 9 months. She currently works at a team running shared offices for foreign companies and developing schemes to attract more foreign culture to the Toranomon area of Tokyo. Her interests lie in all things relating to art and the city, and she designs stage sets for small theatres as a hobby.



**Yuta Inoue** General Manager, Startup Studio, \QUANTUM Inc.

Leading corporate accelerator programs and open innovation projects. By leveraging human-centered UX design approach, prototyping capabilities, and art of storytelling, we build IoT products and develop new businesses together with big corporations and startups. Ex-McKinsey consultant, Ex-WIRED Magazine correspondent.



**Yoshinari Kou** Founder and Director of Nestegg

Nestegg, founded in 2009, specialises in microcomputer circuit development for clients ranging from universities, start-ups and SMEs. In 2014 he obtained an international patent for "mille-feuille", an automated electronic schematic design tool that enables software engineers to design hardware with little or no previous experience. Prior to setting up his own company he worked for Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries Co., Ltd (present IHI Corporation) where he was involved in the development of new technologies for measuring instruments. His major at the Graduate School of the University of Electro-Communications was is in mechatronics which included the design of electronic circuits and mechanism design. His current interests are laser cutters, vacuum moulding, and using 3D printer generated mechanism design and robots.



**Daichi Sato** Masters student, Graduate School of Tokyo Institute of Technology

After graduating from the department of architecture at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, he spent a year studying abroad at the school of architecture, KTH Sweden Royal Institute of Technology. On his return to Japan he joined Rhizomatiks as an intern and has participated in various projects of Rhizomatiks Architecture. He has been participating in Playable City Tokyo since 2015. His interests are in designing human experience and imagining what might happen in the near future.



**Hisami Takezawa** Designer, Art Director

After studying product design and universal design at art college, she started her career as a TV commercial planner and graphic designer in an advertising company. She now works freelance, signing resident contracts with clients of the projects she takes on. She advises on the application of new technologies and products under development, proposing various problem solving methods that utilise new technologies that connect society with services, UIUX design, and the production of videos to convey those services. Through this work she comes into contact with more conceptual future focused projects as well as more outcome based projects.



**Yoshihisa Yabuuchi** NEC Corporation

Working for NEC Corporation, he started his career in business systems marketing. He joined the Headquarters for Promotion of New Business Development in 2014, where his role is to propose new projects that utilise the company's new technologies. Involved in research and new business development for the company's Smart City and CSV (Creating Shared Value) projects, he works on schemes that cross industry boundaries and connect with local governmental bodies. In 2016, he transferred to the City of Yokohama local authority on placement to the Policy Bureau, Co-governance and Creation Division. He is involved in developing the city's co-creation policies and frameworks, and creating PoC (Proof of Concept) with various private sector companies. He participated in the Playable City Tokyo 2015 programme, drawn to the Playable City call to explore the creative use of technology and the universal language of "play" as a tool to transform cities into places of unexpected interaction. He is a member of the PCT team whose Mischievous Footprints idea was shortlisted for the 2016 Playable City International Award.



**Junki Yoshioka** Digital Hospital Artist and Fab Nurse

After gaining experience working as a ward nurse at an emergency medical center, he now works as a visiting nurse delivering at-home care. Wanting to change the negative images people have of hospital environments, he started delivering "Digital Hospital Art" to draw patients' dreams to life by bringing the magic of digital art into hospitals. He has developed sensing based systems that match the body mobility of individual patients, and has created interactive digital art for hospitals in collaboration with medical staff. Current work includes research on "Fab Nurse", looking into applications of digital fabrication technologies in nursing. He is interested in technologies that can be tailored to support patients and families by responding to their individual conditions and environment, and communities where collaboration occurs across fields, such as medical, art, design, engineering etc. His wish is to realise a world in which everyone has the freedom of choice and expression.



**Fred Deakin** Musician, Designer, Artist, Educator

Fred Deakin runs the creative studio Fred & Company which specialises in collaborative, social and interactive projects. As half of the band Lemon Jelly Fred has been Mercury and Brit nominated, sold over half a million albums and headlined stages at Glastonbury and Bestival. Fred was previously co-founder and director of ground breaking London digital design agency Airside which won and was nominated for two BAFTAs, nine D&ADs and a Webby among many others. He is currently Professor of Interactive Digital Arts at University of the Arts London.



**Nikki Pugh** Artist, Designer, Educator

My practice explores how we perceive, move through and interact with our surroundings. To do this I harness techniques adopted from walking-based practices, guided tours, physical computing, locative media, pervasive gaming, installation and collaboration. Often I use participatory events as spaces in which people can engage in conversation - to this end I see the objects I make as being tools to help us explore different potentials together.



**Vahakn Matossian** Designer

Founder of Vahakn Art & Design studio. The studio creates interactive and real-world public projects. Based in London, a city full of activities and rules, the studio takes pride twisting reality to show the world in a different light. Play, discovery and imagination are the imperative. He started Human Instruments in 2013, a company dedicated to creating accessible music technologies. I.e. Musical Instrument devices for people with varying physical disabilities.



**Becca Rose** Artist, Designer, Educator

My background is in puppetry and education. In 2012 I started to experiment with soft circuits and the Arduino to animate paper, and add new dimensions or interactivity into my puppetry work. These experiments took my practice in a new direction, and since then I have taught creative-coding and worked on design projects with Ideo, Intel, Makerversity, NuVu, Lost my Name, Make Media, and Interactive Scientific. I have been exploring how people learn through creative participation and through connecting with other people. My current practice is interdisciplinary and encompasses craft, folk-art, storytelling, education, and creative technologies. I work with smart materials such as conductive paints and threads, animation, participatory events, and other interactive methods to bring stories to life.

**【Facilitator】**



**Clare Reddington** Creative Director, Watershed

Clare joined Watershed in 2004 and as Creative Director leads the Pervasive Media Studio, Playable City, engagement and cinema teams, working with industry, academic and creative partners from around the world to support talent and champion new ideas. Clare is a Visiting Professor at University of the West of England and sits on the advisory boards of RCUK's Digital Economy Theme, AHRC's Digital Transformations Theme and Theatre Bristol.



**Hilary O' Shaughnessy** Playable City Producer, Watershed

Hilary is the Producer for Playable City. She is from Cork In Ireland. Her background spans theatre, game and interaction design both as an artist and producer. Most recently, she created Prototype Festival of Play and Interaction in Dublin.

#### **【Research and Evaluation】**



**Jo Landsdowne** Creative Programmes Manager, Watershed

Jo is Watershed's Creative Programme Manager, working across the Studio, Cinema and Engagement teams to develop the organisation's creative capacity. Jo joined Watershed as a Producer on REACT, a four year project based in the Pervasive Media Studio which connected creative companies and academic researchers. In that role she led the design and delivery of Sandbox, an R&D programme that supports people to experiment and produce new prototypes.

#### **【Organisers】**

<b>Seiichi Saito</b>	Creative and Technical Director, Rhizomatiks Co. Ltd.
<b>Manami Yuasa</b>	Head of Arts, British Council Japan
<b>Nanami Akimoto</b>	Projects Manager (Arts), British Council Japan



### **【Aim】**

The Playable City Tokyo 2016 Creative Lab challenged participants to develop playful ideas at the intersection of art and technology which connect visitors and local people to each other and to the city in new ways in response to the “Playful Welcome!” theme. The week-long programme supported participants to generate ideas for experiences that engage people from outside of Japan with the city and each other in a meaningful way.

### **【Programme】**



#### **Day 1**

Workshop to get to know each other better, to build trust between participants, facilitators, interpreters and organisers, in order to form a solid foundation for collaboration.



#### **Day 2**

Fieldwork and workshop studying the human experience of public spaces in cities. Mixing the perspectives of foreign visitors and residents to gain new insights into the essential characteristics of spaces, and how it affects people.



#### **Day 3**

Workshop to explore potential new ways of experiencing the city. Participants were encouraged to look at spaces not for what they are, but instead create new meaning for them.



## SECTION 3 Forum: Playful Welcome! – Creating connections through art and technology

### 【Overview】

Date & Time : Sun 11 December 2016, 15:00-17:30  
Venue : Ark Hills Cafe  
Organiser : Rhizomatiks Co. Ltd, British Council  
Partner : Watershed  
Media : WIRED Japan  
Cooperation  
Speakers : Shoichi Arisaka (President & Representative  
Director, TechShop Japan)  
Seiichi Saito  
(Creative and Technical Director, Rhizomatiks)  
Clare Reddington (Creative Director, Watershed)  
Kei Wakabayashi (Editor in Chief, WIRED Japan)



### 【Programme】

- Introduction
- Playful Welcome Icebreak
- Introducing Playable City
- Introducing Playable City Tokyo
- Introducing the Playable City Tokyo 2016 Creative Lab
- Presentations: Playful Welcome ideas developed in the Creative Lab
- Panel Discussion



## SECTION 4 Findings



The Playable City Tokyo 2016 programme explored the process of generating ideas for playful interventions that can be implemented in Tokyo's public spaces to enrich a visitor's experience of the city. In this section, we share the findings from the week-long international creative collaboration.

### **【Key Factors to Consider in the Generation of Ideas】**

#### ✧ **Looking at Japan from a foreign perspective**

- Foreign visitors are interested in the culture or traditions, customs that make up “Japanese-ness”, so Japanese people need to deepen their understanding of Japanese history, culture and traditions before they can properly promote and communicate it to the world.

- “Japanese-ness” can be an aesthetic, but it can also manifest as a philosophy, manner or mood which cannot be easily explained verbally, but better communicated through experiences that connect Japanese people and foreign visitors.
- There are many subtleties to Japanese culture that people who live in Japan do not realise are based on shared understanding of social conventions unique to Japan. It is necessary to be aware of these unspoken Japanese conventions when generating ideas for experiences intended to engage foreign visitors.
- Communication that facilitates shared understanding across languages requires care. Perception of words and expressions can differ person to person depending on background, so the choice of words and expressions is important.

#### ✧ **Thinking about the role of public space in cities**

- Artists and creative practitioners have unique ways of seeing the world. Exploring public spaces through their creative perspective opens new possibilities for how spaces can be experienced.
- Many public spaces in Japan are privately owned so the space and/or its uses are often designed with more consideration towards the interests of the land owner than the experience of the user. This is evident in the numerous restrictions on using public spaces. To experiment with creative ideas in public spaces, it is important to start building a relationship of trust with land owners and stakeholders.



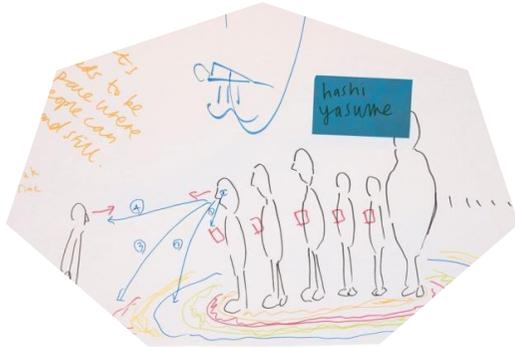
- Having a flexible space which can be used continuously through the period of collaboration helps the creative process. Outputs from the creative process can be accumulated on the walls for ease of reference, and having everything in view stimulates the cross-pollination of ideas.

#### ✧ **Environments that accelerate the generation of ideas**

- Collaboration between people with diverse backgrounds stimulates new thinking and produces more ideas, than working individually.
- Building trust is the most important aspect of a successful creative collaboration. It is what enables the open and creative exchange of thoughts and ideas.
- Not specifying a form of outcome at the beginning promotes free thinking, resulting in more creative ideas being generated compared to when there is a concrete brief from the beginning.
- Multi-language collaboration between artists and creative practitioners helps to inspire new ideas, as the need to carefully explain their ideas and concepts facilitates self-reflection.
- Cross-cultural collaboration promotes the generation of new and radical ideas by allowing each other to question the limitations we unconsciously place on ideas, stemming from our cultural or social conventions.



## Ideas Generated



## Team ① Gokoro

Queues of people can be seen all over Tokyo. In front of restaurants, at bus stops, at train stations, everywhere people queue in an orderly fashion, waiting patiently for their turn without talking with the other people in the queue.

The regularity of the queues and the way people move can appear to foreign eyes as a kind of choreographed performance. As well as being part of the city's aesthetic character, queuing is part of the Japanese cultural experience.

## Idea for new experience

Team Gokoro explored how the time people share waiting in a queue can be used to share an experience and create connections. Combining the concept of the Japanese culinary tradition of *hashiyasume*, a small dish served between courses to cleanse the palate, they redefined time spent in a queue as time to take a moment out of daily routines. They conducted experiments to see whether introducing playful *hashiyasume* interventions to queues, would encourage people to interact with each other and create connections, person to person and person to city.



## Team ② Big Flush Little Flush Cactus Square

Despite being one of the most populated cities in the world, people in Tokyo do not often connect with other people as they travel through the city. Even at the Shibuya crossing where over a thousand people cross in one green light, people can avoid bumping into each other, and on the morning commuter trains people focus their energy on creating their own bubble to deal with the stress of being packed like sardines. It is a skill acquired out of necessity, but an attitude that inhibits conversation to start naturally.

## Ideas for new experience

The team explored ways to change the unconscious behaviour of people, to initiate interaction with others. Using the third-element theory in which a common third element acts as a connector between two strangers, the team experimented with playful prompts or interventions that could act as a third element in the city. With the aim to connect foreign visitors with Japanese locals and other visitors, the team run tests to understand the kind of prompts that can be recognised by everyone, regardless of language or cultural background.



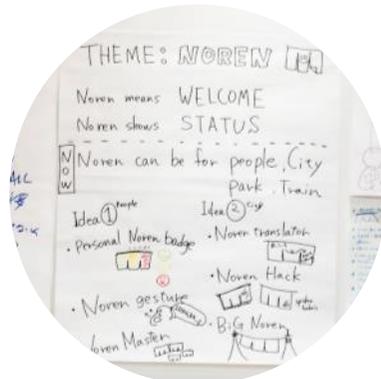
### Team ③ Machi-Machi Tankentai



People accustomed with Japanese traditions will know that hanging a *noren* across a shop entrance signals the shop is open, and that even the type of business can be identified by the colour of its fabric. However, this tradition is unique to Japan so to a foreign visitor, the *noren* does not translate as a symbol for welcome. The team looked at how to welcome visitors from all over the world who will not necessarily have knowledge of Japan, its traditions and cultural subtleties.

### Idea for new experience

Making the *noren* into a recognised symbol for welcome, use real and virtual, big and small *noren* symbols across the city as a visual welcome. The act of going through a *noren* creates a physical connection between the person and the city, and to Japanese culture which could start a deeper interaction. *Noren* badges would signal to visitors that individuals wearing them are willing to support them. The team generated ideas for welcoming symbols and actions to facilitate communication between people, and which can be easily understood regardless of their language or cultural background.



## SECTION 5 Conclusion



The Playable City Tokyo 2016 programme aimed to research how to promote the generation of new ideas for experiences that connect people with the city and others to create meaningful exchange. The programme has shown that international collaboration of artists and creative practitioners inspires new perspectives and creative thinking that stimulates creative activity.

### ✧ Participation and collaboration of artists and creative practitioners

Engaging artists and creative practitioners in the city development conversation presented new and imaginative ways of looking at and experiencing a city. Their creative perspective added new layers to the character of spaces, expanding the possibilities of engagement and enriching the experience of public spaces.

### ✧ International collaboration

The international aspect of the programme enabled deeper reflections on Japanese culture and customs. Participants learnt to question things accepted as culturally and socially “normal” amongst Japanese people, and recognised that working within a group of people who share the same cultural background can restrict creative thinking to within invisible boundaries created by social customs. Working within a shared culture also obscures cultural uniqueness, while working across cultures emphasises cultural features that should be celebrated.

Participants gained skills and confidence for collaborating with others using different languages and coming from diverse cultural backgrounds. Collaboration between Japanese and foreign artists and creative practitioners also created an opportunity for the international community to get to know the Japanese context better, raising awareness of and increasing interest in Japan as a future partner for creative collaboration.

### ✧ Next steps for Playable City Tokyo

Playable City Tokyo will continue to grow the scale and diversity of the network in Japan, developing ideas for playful experiences that bring the cultural layer of a city to life through the creative use of technology. Sharing ideas from Japan with the international Playable City community, it will promote the creative richness of Japan and support opportunities for international collaboration.



## Organisers

### ■ Rhizomatiks

Founded in 2006, Rhizomatiks consists of an eclectic mix of creators, ranging from media artists, designers, engineers, architects, and musicians. Harnessing our passion and expertise in technical matters we are able to set free our imagination across the disciplinary boundaries of design, art and entertainment. As we challenge existing formats from interactive designs to spatial design, the results have led to the creations of new formats, which have been recognized through numerous awards received over the years. Some of these awards include: Prix Ars Electronica, Japan Media Arts Festival, Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, and more.

Website: <https://rhizomatiks.com/en/>

### ■ British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

Website: <https://www.britishcouncil.jp/en>

### ■ Watershed

Watershed is a leading film culture and digital media centre based in Bristol, a city recognised as one of the most creative cities in the UK. The Watershed seeks to produce open collaborations and create opportunities which bridge expertise, imaginations and boundaries to promote new ideas and enjoyable experiences. Attached to the Watershed is the Pervasive Media Studio, a city-centre research space, which brings together a network of over 120 artists, technologists and academics to explore the future of mobile and wireless media.

Website: <http://www.watershed.co.uk/>

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## Let's Play!

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