



Figure 1 V300ZEFIRO electric multiple unit (EMU), Italy. Landscape is entirely subservient to technology in this image from Bombardier Inc.

In *Revisiting Upstream Engagement from a Habermasian Perspective* (Wang, 2016) Wang concludes that although upstream engagement promises much in terms of democratising processes of scientific innovation, this is in practice hampered by three things: “the pro-technology belief system, the inertia of administrative power, the intense industry lobbying” (Wang, 2016: 72). Unfortunately, these problems could equally apply to the context of high speed rail and landscape. Firstly, the pro-technology lobby certainly exists in relation to rail engineering, for example as seen in the promotional use of images of glossy rolling stock, frequently with surrounding landscape expunged to give the impression of great speed (Figure 1 is typical). Neglect of the landscape context is such that in this image the overhead wires are shining and dominant, symbolic of the designer’s power, and magically suspended from invisible sky-hooks. Such images are emblematic of a desire for engineering at its most sleek, ordered and modern, superseding untidy and chaotic nature, which becomes a mere insignificant blur. It is worth noting that there is a long tradition in the UK of both the fetishisation of rolling stock and its illustration in the three-quarter view with landscape denuded, as in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The Mallard (artist Barry Price, 1938) set the world speed record for a steam railway locomotive of 125.88 miles per hour (202.58 km/h), on the East Coast Line on the third of July 1938. Here, again, the presence of the landscape is minimised by the artist

To take Wang's second point, the lack of flexibility and responsiveness in the workings of Westminster and the parliamentary petitioning system is indeed a seemingly immovable blockage to reformulating public engagement, as discussed above. Thirdly, industry lobbying is doubtless intense given the values of HS2 Ltd's contracts with both global construction companies. *The Independent* newspaper reported in 2013 that the Department for Transport (DfT) itself had employed a lobbying firm, Westbourne Communications, to promote HS2 to the public (Leftly, 24.08.2013), thereby using the taxpayer's own money to market the project back at them. This use of public money is repeated at the regional level, with local authorities allocating budgets to persuade the DfT to make decisions which are favourable to the economy of their region (Reed, 2015).

The three considerations that Wang brings to our attention may seem to render the aspiration of truly reciprocal engagement hopelessly optimistic. A fourth problem may be the almost inevitable fragmentation of 'the public' or community groups. In the face of this, it is important to remember, however, that there are two powerful forces 'on the ground' and at the heart of the process: on the one hand the intelligence, good intentions and determination of members of the public, and on the other the professionalism and goodwill of the designers in this field. These two groups are at the core of high-quality emergent citizen participation in landscape

and this thesis argues that they have, between them, the potential to make it succeed. Demos say that “we need to bring out the public within the scientist – by enabling scientists to reflect on the social and ethical dimensions of their work” (Wilsdon et al., 2005: 35). This is a highly critical view of a body of people who are assumed to have left their humanity and code of ethics at the laboratory door. In the landscape context, landscape architects, civil engineers, planners and architects all work in fields which can or should be very much based in the outside world of physical sites, places and landscapes. It should not be unreasonable to expect them to see themselves as members of the public within their professional roles. They could certainly fruitfully participate in eliciting valuable local knowledge, and to varying extents do so already. The pressing question is how to reliably and consistently bring these two groups, the publics (who include professional elements) and the professionals (who include a public element), together in a process that works and is grounded in a sound theoretical basis.

Emergent citizen participation could avoid some of the problems with upstream engagement. Demos acknowledge that “the social intelligence generated by [upstream] engagement might become outdated or irrelevant as technologies twist their way through the choices and commitments that make up the innovation process.” (Wilsdon and Willis, 2004: 33). Not so with an emergent process that would not only set the initial agenda but also progressively re-set it. It would be sustained throughout the life of the project and flex, grow and pass through phases of increasing and decreasing complexity. The problem of linearity is highly relevant to landscape proposals. In the construction industry, it is acknowledged that unexpected circumstances are likely to arise when breaking the ground, for example. Even in an age of excellent multilayered data provided through Geographic Information Systems (GIS), conditions below the surface can yield hydrological or archaeological surprises and unforeseen issues of soil contamination. Above ground, anything from political upheaval and public protest to extreme weather conditions can delay a project, or send it in a new direction. Any linear public engagement process is clearly unsuited to the landscape context (see Chapter One) and can be improved upon.