

## Temporary Contemporary

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#### Keywords

*place, live-action  
research, art, craft,  
music, food,  
community  
engagement*

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Head of Culture and Tourism, Kirklees Council

### Context

In 2018, the Creative and Cultural Development team at Kirklees Council met with the University of Huddersfield to discuss the use of meanwhile spaces in Huddersfield. This led to the formation of Temporary Contemporary with the design of the Market Gallery and stall units for showcasing creative and cultural practices. As a piece of live action research, the collaboration investigated and explored the conditions for creative and cultural activity on the high street.

Our preoccupation with the very idea of place-based making is embedded in the creative and artistic practices we have used to produce culture. Our approach seeks to better understand the communities of Kirklees and their needs. As a collaborative working partnership, both Kirklees Council and the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield have explored how the creative lens of all kinds of practices can produce new and exciting cultural forms in public spaces and for a diverse range of audiences. This is about cultural production at a local level, by those living, working, studying and investing in an area. As a result, Temporary Contemporary embraces a spectrum of different values (social, aesthetic, educational, ecological). In terms of partnership working and knowledge exchange between a local authority and a university, Temporary Contemporary has helped to mobilise new ways of working in collaboration with cultural production at the core.



*Market Gallery, Temporary Contemporary*

*Image © Rowan Bailey*

The expansion of the Temporary Contemporary network into The Piazza Shopping Centre (a semi-circular space of retail shops) in 2019 has enabled over 16 cultural organisations and groups to access meanwhile spaces to realise a range of projects. Collaborators in the Temporary Contemporary network include: ame (an experimental music and art hub), Parlour by Parley, Chol Theatre, the Children's Art School, Dark Horse, Evoke, HOOT, West Yorkshire Print Workshop, WOVEN in Kirklees, Collaborati, Colouricity, Lawrence Batley Theatre, Culture Declares Emergency, Huddersfield Repair Café and Wilson's Republic.

Temporary Contemporary has sought to cultivate a mixed cultural ecology for Huddersfield. Embracing a place-based approach means to reflect on a mixed ecology of practices and experiences, by combining research, art, craft, music, 'greening', public meeting spaces, food, drink and opportunities for young people, entrepreneurs, artisans and retailers. In this respect, the expansion out into the Piazza has allowed us to think about Huddersfield as a growing environment made up of different creative producers and consumers of culture.

In 2022, the School of Arts and Humanities extended its work with Temporary Contemporary to produce a festival entitled 'Cultures of Place'.

As a celebratory festival showcasing arts and humanities research engaging with the topic of 'place', and more concretely, with Huddersfield and Kirklees as places in the region of West Yorkshire, the School contributed workshops, exhibitions, installations, performances, music, talks and interviews. In total, there were 27 events held across 14 locations in 10 days. These projects worked with a range of arts and cultural organisations across meanwhile spaces in Huddersfield. The curatorial focus of the programme centred on place-based making in and through arts and humanities research and included projects which have actively engaged the public in ways of thinking about place from a variety of different subject specialisms.

*Made in Huddersfield, Cultures of Place*

*Image © Rowan Bailey*



All these projects and initiatives have been supported by research funding from the School of Arts and Humanities, contributions from Kirklees Council and in-kind support from collaborators.

## Process and outputs

The roles within this collaborative working relationship extend to conceptual and strategic actions by key stakeholders, which includes academic researchers in the School of Arts and Humanities and the creative and cultural development team at Kirklees Council. As a collaboration, key aims

and objectives were established in line with the cultural strategy, tourism strategy and heritage strategy of Kirklees Council. In addition, the university Knowledge Exchange Framework and public engagement strategy informed the School's approach to place-based making, creative and cultural production. The university is also part of the Civic University Network, which means that the projects align to some of the underlying drivers for university knowledge exchange with local partners and organisations. Regular communications and planning for research focused activity are co-ordinated through work with the council team and the School's Cultural Programme Manager. In this way, there is oversight and strategic thinking about the public engagement contributions that researchers may make in the locale, but also nationally and internationally in terms of approaches to place-based making in the arts and humanities.

The outputs generated through this collaborative work extend to exhibition projects, workshops and events, where research through public engagement is staged. In addition, the School has focused its attention on the post-production of this research engagement in journal articles, books, portfolios of research practice, photo and film documentation.



*Flood*

*Image © Richard Mulhearn*



The audiences involved in these place-based initiatives include members of the public, schools and colleges, other universities, council workers, retailers and arts and cultural organisations and practitioners.

## Evaluation

Over the course of this collaboration, a range of evaluation methods were deployed, including standard visitor feedback to exhibitions/events. Evaluation reports on successes of projects and areas for further development and future planning are continuous and part of regular meetings and debriefings. Interviews with stakeholders involved have also helped to generate insights and impacts, particularly about perceived changes to cultural experiences on the high street. As part of the festival Cultures of Place, researchers trialed an evaluation strategy and process aligned to place-based making, using standard creative sector evaluation tools (through Culture Counts). Place evaluation in this context has involved a range of online feedback mechanisms, designed for each public engagement activity and more broadly for the festival. These feedback evaluation tools were made accessible during the festival through QR code or Eventbrite follow ups with registered events.

The specific survey tools asked questions about the visitor, including demographics, whether they had accessed Temporary Contemporary events before, their experiences of the event and engagement with research, their experiences of the programme overall, their understanding and perception of belonging to place, their changing perceptions of Huddersfield and surrounding area, including willingness to engage with events like this in the future.

The perceived impacts of this collaboration are mainly to be found in the feedback given by the stakeholders involved and members of the public who have engaged in these activities.

The first impact, arising from the research, has been benefits to artists, creative people and cultural organisations based in Huddersfield. They have been offered the opportunity to temporarily occupy former retail spaces in the town centre at low or no cost, giving them increased visibility, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with a network of cultural or-

ganisations and individuals across a shared programme (under the title Temporary Contemporary).

The second impact, generated in the period 2018-2020, has been a change in the way that Kirklees Council envisions creative and cultural activity. As a result, the importance and visibility of collaborative working is embedded into the 'Huddersfield Blueprint' regeneration plan, and insights from the initiative have fed into consultation processes leading to the development of tourism, heritage and cultural strategies for the region.

The third impact has been on academic researchers themselves, and to understanding the importance of culture as an avenue through which the public may engage in research. This change in perception has expanded their understanding of the arts and humanities within the broader field of the creative and cultural industries, including the ways in which knowledge exchange between academic and non-academic participants can be a co-creative and co-productive process.



*Graphic Events Workshop*

*Image © Rowan Bailey*

The core value at the heart of this collaboration is cultural. This extends to the significance of place-based making in people's lives and to the values of lifelong learning on the high street, culture for creative health and wellbeing,

collaboration and participation as a driver for social cohesion and sense of belonging to a place. Within the context of the arts and humanities, the educational value of knowledge exchange is embraced through the concept of cultural ecology as that which facilitates the conditions for creativity, skills sharing, learning through doing, social dialogue and creative and cultural production.

## **Additional Information**

Temporary Contemporary webpage: <https://research.hud.ac.uk/art-design/temporarycontemporary/>

Kirklees - Meanwhile West Yorkshire ([meanwhilewy.co.uk](http://meanwhilewy.co.uk))

Article Cultural Ecology and Cultural Critique: <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0752/8/4/166>

Temporary Contemporary book: <https://unipress.hud.ac.uk/plugins/books/22/>

Cultures of Place: <https://research.hud.ac.uk/art-design/temporarycontemporary/cop/>

Woven in Kirklees: <https://woveninkirklees.co.uk/online/>

Kirklees Year of Music: <https://www.musicinkirklees.co.uk/>

Cultures of Place: <https://research.hud.ac.uk/art-design/temporarycontemporary/cop/>

### **Links to organisations/partners/collaborators involved:**

ame (an experimental music and art hub) - <https://amespace.uk/>

Parlour by Parley - <https://www.byparley.co.uk/>

Chol Theatre - <https://wearechol.co.uk/>

Children's Art School - <https://thechildrensartschool.co.uk/>

Dark Horse Theatre - <https://www.darkhorsetheatre.co.uk/>

Evoke - <https://www.evokekirklees.org/>

HOOT - <https://www.hootcreativearts.co.uk/>

West Yorkshire Print Workshop - <https://wypw.org/>

WOVEN in Kirklees - <https://woveninkirklees.co.uk/>

Collaborati, Colouricity - <http://collaborati.co.uk/>

Lawrence Batley Theatre - <https://www.thelbt.org/>

Culture Declares Emergency - <https://www.culturedeclares.org/cde-kirklees/>

Huddersfield Repair Café - <https://huddsrepaircafe.com/>

Wilson's Republic - <https://www.wilsonsrepublic.com/>