

Report

From Brooklyn Works to Brooklynism?

The Symposium

A day of provocations, debate and discussion. Join us to explore, challenge, contextualise and give perspective on the Kelham Island experience and 'Brooklynism' in general. Keynotes by Professor Vanessa Toulmin (University of Sheffield) and Amanda Wasielewski, American artist and researcher, author of *Made in Brooklyn: Artists, Hipsters, Makers, Gentrifiers*. Panel discussions: Art, artists and regeneration; Ingredients of the place - what we're given, what we bring; Culture, regeneration, destination; Making Place. Thursday 11th July 2019, 10am - 5pm. Upper Gallery, Kelham Island Museum. Free.



Brooklyn, New York City, USA; Kelham Island, Sheffield, UK

"From Brooklyn Works to Brooklynism. In Sheffield myth, Brooklyn Works is the place where the steel for the Brooklyn Bridge was manufactured. It was one of the first industrial buildings in Kelham Island to be redeveloped in an area that has been crowned the best neighbourhood in the UK (2019 Urbanism Awards). In the 2000s, the New York Borough of Brooklyn witnessed a renaissance as an avant garde destination for artists, hipsters, makers and gentrifiers. But is 'Brooklynism', as one commentator (Alec Hall) suggests, 'corporate interests masquerading as a so-called artisanal movement; the development of a fake culture of individual empowerment with concern for ecology and social development wrapped up in consumer choice'?"



See Appendix 1 for programme detail

Keynote address: Amanda Wasielewski – The ‘New’ Industrial Revolution? Creativity and Urban Space in the Web 2.0 Era

Points discussed

- Dr Wasielewski emphasized the role of the internet and social media. The artists and creatives she studied in Morgan’s Town, Brooklyn, had previously been displaced from other parts of the city and were familiar with the cycle of artists moving into cheap, undesirable areas, transforming them into ‘edgy’ and trendy places, and then being forced out by subsequent real estate increases.
- De-industrialization meant artists could access space very cheaply – often illegally – and have great freedom over their use of the space, for example for raves, workshops and squat-like living.
- Social media, digital marketplaces and manufacturing technology could allow them to publicize and monetize their work such that they could actually afford to remain in the area. Their use of Instagram and similar platforms helped cultivate a market for ‘craft’ and ‘artisanal’ food and product that combined an aesthetic appeal with a sense of pre-digital ‘authenticity’ that many felt was missing from the globalized world in the 21st century.

Questions raised

- Have social media, digital fabrication and startup culture exported the idea and aesthetic of ‘Brooklynism’?
- Do the economic effect of gentrification prevent new artists and makers from accessing creative spaces?
- Is ‘Brooklynism’ genuinely a return of manufacturing to post-industrial spaces, or more of a leisure activity for those who can afford it?
- Has the digital-nomad, maker-entrepreneur lifestyle sells a vision of democratized, self-determined work contributed to a precarious and exploitative gig economy where labour is less protected than ever?

Panel 1: Art and artists and regeneration

Points discussed

- Challenging the simple narrative of gentrification as a middle-class displacement of residents.
- Keeping studio spaces as affordable as possible becomes increasingly difficult as property values and development pressures increase.
- By attempting to create inclusive spaces for queer and marginalized artists, artists may be seen as part of the ‘hipster’ class appropriating and changing the area.

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- We want to see artistic and creative output, but this can easily become a conservative cycle of consumption by the wealthy, becoming exclusive and less open to experimental forms of creativity.

Questions raised

- Who profits in the role of street art in changing the identity of an area as 'creative' and 'edgy'?
- Should street artists be compensated, allowing them to make a living from their work, or does this further commodify the public realm and contradict the subversive non-commercial intent of the work?
- Kelham's original street art is increasingly supplanted and displaced by developer-commissioned work: is this still 'street art'? At what point does this become advertising?
- Should the city make it possible for anyone to access creative working space – not only those who can afford it?

Panel 2: Ingredients of the place – what we're given, what we bring

Points discussed

- Panel opened by challenging all to avoid simple narratives and instead look for a plurality of interwoven stories of a place. Kelham is a story of 'Speculators, Saints and Sandmartins': the narrative of development, the everyday stories of local churches and community groups, and the patterns of nature.
- Kelham Island is the story of people simply trying to make a living – from early farmers and factory workers, to sex workers, to the artists currently trying to survive the rising rents
- There is no simple story of 'before' and 'after' change. History, the way we tell the story of a place, shapes its meaning and significance.
- The construction of identity, the self, has similarities with the identity of a place. This identity is always being redefined, so we should not try to resist change; but we should consider what is driving this change, and what its ethical implications are.
- The importance of food and eating as a way to build this sense of community and address inequality

Questions raised

- Can solely developer-led housing create a vibrant, living neighbourhood?
- Does highlighting unseen stories in history change the way we see ourselves?
- What would a city look like if financial profit were subservient to social and ecological profit?



Panel 3: Culture, regeneration, destination

Point discussed

- The cultural scene artists helped to cultivate and shape Hull's post-industrial identity as a cultural hub and ultimately laid the foundation for the city becoming the UK's Capital of Culture in 2017.
- The language of museums as 'catalysts for development' as this does not necessarily connect with the majority of people. They need to be public resources, inclusive and accessible
- The role of artists in smaller cities without universities. Bigger cities have an artistic infrastructure and ecosystem that facilitate this, and this is as necessary to artists as affordable spaces.
- The 'branding' of Sheffield as stemming from a discrepancy between insiders experience of the city and outsiders' perception.
- Encouraging people to experience Sheffield more holistically as part of visiting galleries and studios, and enhancing the city's creative image through reframing and publicizing.

Questions Raised

- Rather than being a collection of artefacts, can a museum connect the stories of the past to the present and future of the city?
- How does a museum become a 'good neighbour', engaged in the daily life of Kelham Island?
- Is art still seen as a social good worth funding and supporting?
- How does arts-driven regeneration happen in smaller post-industrial town?

Panel 4: Making Place

Points Discussed

- Kelham Island is primarily an apartment-based enclave, and the aim is to get people out of their apartments and participating in order to strengthen social inclusion.
- The importance of actively imagining what the future of an area might be, not only its heritage.
- Archaeology is often co-opted into the development process as a statutory requirement rather than an opportunity to celebrate local stories
- Heritage is also about rich social and working life and this should contribute to any future development.
- The role bureaucratic urban conservation, for example when an historic façade is retained that actually makes the pedestrian experience and urban connectivity worse.
- Holistic approaches to urban development, encouraging collaboration between designers, authorities and heritage experts in responsibly managing the way the existing city grows and changes.



Questions Raised

- Does failing to engage in the stories of the past create empty heritage marketing?
- How do we balance true heritage value with the economic realities and needs of developers?
- Should conservation value be decided by the residents who advocate for it?
- Are we working towards a way of 'doing politics *with* people rather than *to* people'?

Keynote address: Professor Vanessa Toulmin, Director of City & Culture, University of Sheffield

Professor Toulmin opened with the brief she was initially given for 'Vibrancy and Placemaking' to create a better place for students, staff and residents, which she described as being 'like asking for world peace'. Much of her work has been on identifying the specific outcomes and areas to focus the University's energy and resources on. While she acknowledged the value of people passionately advocating for the specific places and projects they were passionate, she saw the need for a broader, more strategic view and an infrastructure of support and engagement to make things happen.

Points discussed

- The perception of Sheffield from outside – many prospective students choose Manchester or Leeds over Sheffield based on the city, not the quality of the university.
- The city's value and vibrancy are not visible or accessible enough to outsiders.
- Music, art and beer: these aspects provide employment and a rich urban life, but had the potential to be more influential in Sheffield's external identity and appeal.
- Funding was secured for arts projects through qualitative study of what makes Sheffield a great place to live, work and study, including Arts Council Cultural Destination funding, the Making Ways programme and the Feature Walls project highlighting Sheffield street art.
- Gave artists creative freedom, trusting them to produce quality work that would 'put Sheffield on the map' rather than dictating what the outcomes should be, or what image of the city they were pushing
- This demonstrates the ability for the arts, when given the proper support, to have significant impact on the identity and economy of a city.



Closing remarks

Two postgraduate students concluded the day with their observations and questions

- Emphasized the need for social infrastructure (non-market development) to make the transition from a somewhat homogenous, privatized set of developments to a genuine community, and for physical and economic support to ensure that creativity and artistic practices can thrive in the area, rather than art merely being used to 'brand' the area.
- The importance of avoiding simplistic narratives around the social history and so-called 'essence' of the area, seeking a more nuanced and critical understanding.
- Highlighted the recurrent theme of the commodification of the public realm, calling for non-commercial spaces of encounter, leisure and expression.

Appendices

1. The Programme

Dr Amanda Crawley Jackson, Faculty Director of Impact and External Engagement, Arts and Humanities (University of Sheffield): Welcome to the Day

Morning: What have artists and artisans got to do with making a great neighbourhood? How creatives make new urban identities

Keynote: Amanda Wasielewski: The “New” Industrial Revolution? Creativity and Urban Space in the Web 2.0 Era

Amanda Wasielewski is an American artist and researcher based in Stockholm. She is the author of *Made in Brooklyn: Artists, Hipsters, Makers, Gentrifiers* and holds a doctorate in Art History from the Graduate Center at the City University of New York.

Panel Discussion: Art and artists and regeneration. This panel discussion explored issues and perspectives around the relationships between art, artists and regeneration. Panel chaired by John Wilkinson, KIAC (Kelham Island Arts Collective). Panelists include: Simon Wigglesworth-Baker (KIAC), Dr Andy Carter (Street Art Sheffield), Annie Thirlwell-Hicks (University of Sheffield), Hannah Lamb (WOMP)

Panel Discussion: Ingredients of the place - what we're given, what we bring. This panel discussion explored the multi-modal characteristics that create distinctiveness of place in respect of a developing neighbourhood such as Kelham Island. Panel chaired by: Dr Lucy Brown (University of Sheffield). Panelists include: Dr Megan Blake (University of Sheffield), Andy Cook (Yellow Arch Studios), Dr Karine Zbinden (University of Sheffield), Dr Julian Dobson (University of Sheffield), Professor Adrian Bingham (University of Sheffield), Mark Hutchinson (Journey to Justice)

Lunch / networking

Afternoon: What role for heritage, culture and creativity in city place-making stories?

Panel Discussion: Culture, regeneration, destination. This panel discussion explored the ways museums and galleries can be catalysts and anchors for regeneration and development as well as city identity, profile and brand? Panel chaired by: Adrian Friedli (Creative Consultant). Panelists include: Chris Keady (Kelham Island Museum); Kirstie Hamilton (Museums Sheffield); Claire Thornley (Our Favourite Places); Charlotte Morgan (The Hepworth Wakefield)

Panel Discussion: Making Place. This panel discussion explored the drivers for successful place-making and includes consideration of planning policy, development agendas and conservation. In particular it considers the distinctiveness and value that culture and heritage bring to the mix. Panel chaired by Jonathan Bradley (University of Sheffield). Panelists include: Councillor Bob Johnson (Cabinet Member for Transport and Development), Charles Dunn (Urbana, Sheffield Property Association), John Stonard (Head of Environmental and Urban Design, Sheffield City Council), Dr Lizzie Craig-Atkins (University of Sheffield), Ben McGarry (KINCA)

Keynote: Professor Vanessa Toulmin (The University of Sheffield, Director of City & Culture)

2. Event Aims

The Symposium was part of a programme of Knowledge Exchange events that took place at Kelham Island Museum 18th June - 24th July 2019. The event aimed to bring together practitioners and leaders working in place-making, arts, culture, heritage and community settings as well as those with general interests in these fields. Over 70 people participated in the day.

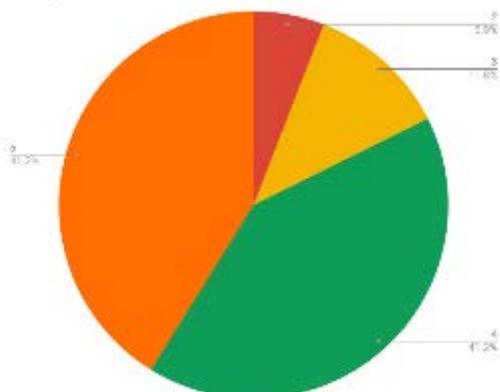
By attending and participating in the Brooklyn Works to Brooklynism programme Arts and Humanities hoped participants would:

1. Enjoy **artistic experiences** inspired by the programme themes
2. Enjoy **thinking** creatively about the programme themes
3. Gain deeper understanding of the **critical and structural issues** relating to 21st Century urban development (with Brooklyn and Kelham Island experiences as focus)
4. Gain deeper understanding of the contribution **arts and humanities** can make to successful place-making
5. Make links and relationships, through discussion and experience, of how arts, cultural, heritage and place-making organisations and initiatives, can engage with critical issues as well as **create positive outcomes** for neighbourhood, community and city development
6. Be part of group dialogue exploring the programme themes and how organisations and initiatives can **respond to city place-making / development and local community / neighbourhood needs**
7. Be inspired to **apply ideas and thinking** from the programme to their own work or field of interest

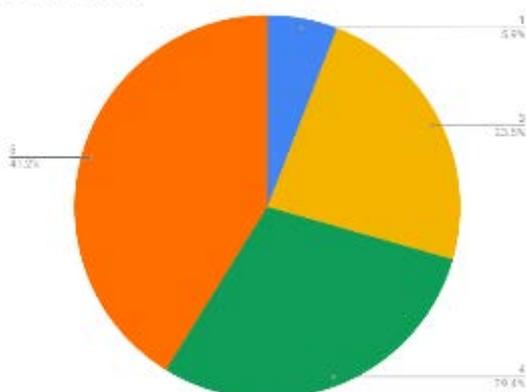
A feedback questionnaire asked participants about their reason for attending; about their understanding of the contribution arts & humanities (heritage, culture & creativity) can make to successful place-making; about whether they got to know more about Brooklynism and the Kelham Island experience of urban development; whether they explored how individuals, organisations and communities can work together to respond to place-making opportunities; and if they had been inspired to apply ideas & thinking from the Symposium to their own work or field of interest. Also, what had been the best thing about the day; what could have been done better; and anything else they'd like to tell us.

3. Evaluation and Feedback

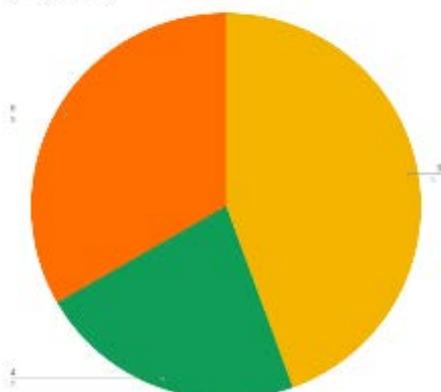
I understand the contribution arts & humanities (heritage, culture & creativity) can make to successful place-making
0 = Disagree a lot
5 = Agree a lot



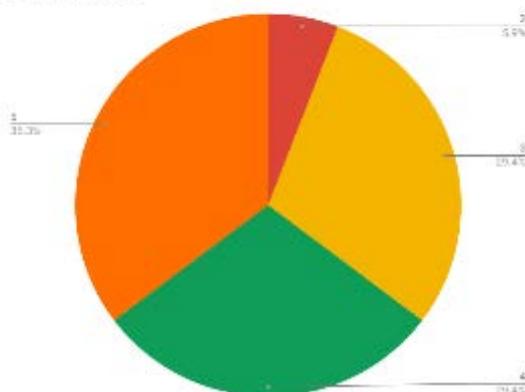
I know more about Brooklynism and the Kelham Island experience of urban development
0 = Disagree a lot
5 = Agree a lot



I have explored how individuals, organisations and communities can work together to respond to place-making opportunities
0 = Disagree a lot
5 = Agree a lot



I have been inspired to apply ideas & thinking from the Symposium to my own work or field of interest.
0 = Disagree a lot
5 = Agree a lot



This was a valuable and innovative event which was embraced by a very diverse range of people. The conversations were novel, deep and significant. Great things will follow!

It's informing a piece of research I'm developing

I met someone I will follow up with and have ideas about projects and partnerships relevant to my organisation

The task of getting all these different people and viewpoints in one room was huge! There is clearly great appetite for these voices.

The breadth of interest and enthusiasm for these issues across a diverse sector of the Sheffield family was made very apparent today

I would have liked more tangible actions going forward - what could we do together next?

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I really enjoyed the day and found the discussion very stimulating. I came away with a deeper understanding of the complexities of 'Brooklynism' and 'gentrification', and lots to think about in terms of my own research. It also gave me some ideas for potentially incorporating more local Sheffield history (and places) into my teaching, and for future public engagement activities. The discussions were also very informative in terms of thinking about the University's role in the city. I think the event really benefited from the broad range of speakers, and I overheard some audience members commenting on how nice it was that it wasn't just academics! Perhaps next time it would be great to have time for more audience participation, as so many of the Q&A sessions could have carried on for longer. It was a huge success. Dr Lucy Brown, University of Sheffield

Can I thank you and your team again for the fabulous staging and presentation of the symposium 'From Brooklyn Works to Brooklynism'. It was a great chance to hear and share with others a vision of how things are, and might be, in the life of our city Sheffield. It was particularly useful as a means of networking with other interested parties and individuals. I also enjoyed seeing the bigger picture as presented by the four panel discussions. In future it would have been great to have a few tables showing examples of work produced by those involved e.g. a couple of photographs or a 'book / paper wall'. Not for people to launch into long talks with visual aids but to see some examples of what was verbally mentioned. And perhaps from each panel discussion to see if we could come up with one agreed 'plan of action' or a 'sentence of common vision'. Mark Hutchinson, High Storrs School/Journey to Justice

What did you get from contributing: A strong appreciation that numerous interest groups do prioritise the value of heritage in urban places. Diversity in opinion and need (and therefore a reiteration of the complexity of the subject and the need for academic input). A sense that academia is perhaps talking in ways that are speaking to the public interest, but that corporate and political interests may well be harder to engage as their agendas are very defined, perhaps rather inflexible, and financially driven. There was a sense in my panel for example, that our conversation was all well and good, but without the money, or a route to money, it was largely moot. This was hardly a surprise, but it was heartening that these individuals did attend - quite what we can do next is a challenge though. Dr Elizabeth Craig-Atkins, University of Sheffield

4. Social Media



Further Information

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