

# Temporary spaces for artists: Community and individual impact

**WROCAH funded Collaborative Doctoral Award between Management School at the University of Sheffield and East Street Arts**

## Lead Academic and Partner Organisation Supervisors

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## Project summary

Artists' use of temporary spaces is rapidly growing. Temporary spaces for artists arguably catalyse positive impact, but they also present tensions and potential negative outcomes for both individual artists and communities. This collaborative doctoral studentship aims to explore the impact of artists' use of temporary spaces across levels of analysis to consider how such initiatives can contribute to the sustainable wellbeing of both communities and artists. The project will enhance the student's employability, East Street Arts' practices, and our understanding of the lived experiences in and impact of the cultural and creative industries.

## Research description

Artists have always used empty spaces for exhibitions and community projects. This activity is growing in importance with the active support of organisations such as East Street Arts (ESA).

Artists' use of temporary spaces is arguably beneficial for both artists and communities. It lowers the financial stressors artists experience and allows them to develop their practice and entrepreneurial skills in a community setting, thus limiting loneliness. Artists are also drivers of economic development, innovation, inclusion, and social change (Florida, 2012; Lena & Cornfield, 2008; Lingo & Tepper, 2013; Simonds, 2013; Thomson, 2013). As the use of temporary spaces places artists at the heart of local communities, the use of temporary spaces can enhance the wellbeing of artists and of communities by contributing to community cohesion, social capital development, innovation, learning, and resilience.

However, the use of temporary spaces by artists also presents challenges and potential negative consequences for both artists and communities. The influx of artists into local communities can initiate culture-led regeneration, thus increasing living costs and displacing artists and local residents (Colomb, 2012). Indeed, the use of temporary spaces by artists can replicate systems of marginalisation and instrumentalisation of artists and their work. While placing artists into the heart of communities enables residents to become co-producers, instead of just consumers, such co-production places various demands on artists in terms of time, skills, and economic motivations that might be challenging in negotiating authentically and sustaining artistic identities and wellbeing. These identity tensions also relate to temporality and the challenges of developing a sense of belonging to and a collective identity with the community when artists are only temporary members of the community.

Yet, how and under what conditions the use of temporary spaces by artists influences positive and/or negative individual and community outcomes has not been examined. Thus, this timely collaborative doctoral studentship

aims to explore the impact of artists' use of temporary spaces across levels of analysis to consider how such initiatives can contribute to the sustainable wellbeing of both communities and artists. This research aim can be pursued with diverse qualitative and quantitative methodologies that capture the lived experiences of artists and community members, compare insightful cases of different communities or organisational approaches of providing temporary spaces, or measure consequences across levels of analysis with primary data collected through fieldwork in multiple communities across the United Kingdom. Such methodological diversity and opportunities for the doctoral student to develop their own emphasis within the overall project will enable the student to develop a range of valuable skills and significantly enhance their employability.

This project has been co-developed with ESA to address questions that are both theoretically meaningful and practically relevant. This project aims to contribute to theory in relation to arts-based work and community change, which are both highly relevant in today's socio-economic context, by investigating a prominent phenomenon (i.e. artists' use of temporary spaces) whereby multiple theoretical lenses can be applied (e.g. identity, temporality, social change).

ESA is a contemporary arts organisation that supports artists by providing temporary spaces, amongst other services. Its expertise, values, diverse approaches to temporary spaces, commitment to co-production of this research, and opportunities for impact and future collaboration make ESA the ideal non-academic collaborator for this project. The insights from this project can be used not only to inform the work of ESA and strengthen the organisation's pioneering reputation, but also to support artists through workshops and toolkits.

### **About East Street Arts**

East Street Arts' mission is to sustain the alternative and challenge the norm through innovative, pioneering and influential artistic practice. The way we approach the development of our activities and services to fulfil our mission is to ensure that we identify and respond to the changes and needs for support for artists' practice. We are specifically concerned with how artists see their work relating to their peers, participants and audiences.

We see this collaborative PhD responding to our goal to empower people through art to take control, challenge and change their lives making the places we live and work vibrant, unique and accessible.

Over the last 7 years we have operated a Temporary Space Programme that at any one time secures 100 buildings across the United Kingdom making them accessible on a temporary basis for artists. The Temporary Spaces scheme is developed within the context of our understanding that artists need space and resources. Thus, with support including mentoring, training, and resources, the artists develop their work, organisations, activities, infrastructure and their position in their locality. However, the scheme is also a subject that creates a lot of external interest from government, colleagues, property developers and the media through policies and propaganda that are linked to regeneration agendas.

This collaborative PhD offers the student an opportunity to research, analyse and present impartial data on the real impact of using temporary spaces for both artists and local communities. This is an area of our work that has not been explored in depth yet of relevance for our organisation and more broadly for the cultural and creative industries. The benefits of this collaborative PhD to us as an organisation are:

- Articulating impact (positive and negative) to inform organisational decision-making and new developments.
- Enriching the understanding and value of artists' practice going beyond our organisational remit to manage and develop spaces.
- Developing shared knowledge that can support our drive to being leaders and experts in working with temporary venues.
- Supporting new kinds of artistic practice that operates outside of traditional gallery and theatre venues, linking directly with audiences as co-producers.

Our Temporary Spaces Programme is one of several innovative developments we are currently delivering and are strongly connected to research collaborations. It sits alongside in particular:

Artist House 45: A programme of artist residencies that are hosted within a back to back house in South Leeds exploring the impact of artists working and living in communities. This is a part of a wider strategy for developing a range of live/work spaces and is supported by a collaborative PhD with Huddersfield University now in its 3rd year.

Guild: A four-year national project to support 20 artists' spaces to develop their resilience and embed themselves into their localities. This project is funded by Arts Council England and is supported by a collaborative PhD with Leeds University that starts in September 2018.

Other programme areas are supported where possible by a range of research initiatives as we aim to develop all of our activities with meaningful data. This collaborative PhD with the University of Sheffield will link directly to these areas of our work, thus enhancing our practices and activities. At the same time, given our collaborative research with other academic partners, this collaborative PhD studentship with the University of Sheffield can serve as a catalyst to develop an active community of PhD students and researchers interested in artists' use of temporary spaces and their embeddedness in local communities and to explore new multi-disciplinary research initiatives at a larger scale.

### **Engagement, outreach, dissemination and impact**

The student will have various opportunities within this programme to both enhance their research and employability and to support us in our public engagement and organisational practices.

A large proportion of the Temporary Spaces host public events, such as exhibitions, workshops, performances, talks etc. Additionally, across the United Kingdom, we have 25 artist partners that manage key spaces and develop their operations through this scheme. These partners have long-term relationship with us and through them we offer support, develop joint projects, and encourage a national supportive network. Thus, the student's work can support not only our work as an organisation, but also the work and practices of our key partners.

Our vision for the student to contribute to engagement, outreach, dissemination and impact initiatives that benefit East Street Arts, our key partners, our audiences, and the student include:

- Assisting in how we monitor and evaluate the use of temporary spaces and its impact for artists and audiences.
- Working specifically with the 25 partners to understand better the theory and contexts around temporary space in order for them to be better informed and enhance their activities, practices, and support initiatives.
- Underpinning the design and delivery of events through the student's knowledge, findings, and experience.
- Linking artists' work to a strategy that uses social media to raise the profile of artists' work and the context of using temporary spaces.
- Supporting our organisational archive and online resources through documentation, contextual data and challenging articles that share best practice or highlight problematic areas.

We have been working on developing a national symposium on artists' use of temporary spaces and this would be an ideal project for the student to lead on. This could include a visual aspect such as an exhibition, films/photography and interactive events.

### **Financial support**

Full-time AHRC Competition Studentships for doctoral research are 3 years in duration (or 6 years part time). Awards are subject to satisfactory academic progress. Awards must be taken up in October 2019. No deferrals are possible. Awards will comprise UK/EU fees at Research Council rates and, for eligible students, a maintenance grant (£14,777 in 2017/8).

### **Eligibility**

Strong applicants will have a good first degree in an appropriate subject, as well as a Master's degree and professional experience relevant to the scope of the project (or experience of belonging to a collaborative team).

Please note that all applicants should meet the AHRC's academic criteria and residency requirements (<http://wrocah.ac.uk/new-student/2019-cda/>).

## How to apply

**Before applying for any WRoCAH Studentship, please first ensure that you have read the WRoCAH webpages about Collaborative Doctoral Awards, the WRoCAH training programme and requirements**

**<http://wrocah.ac.uk/new-student/2019-cda/>**

## STAGE 1

Expressions of interest should be sent to Dr Elizabeth Carnegie ([e.carnegie@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:e.carnegie@sheffield.ac.uk)).

## STAGE 2

Students should then complete a WRoCAH Studentship funding application (online form) via the link above by the **5pm on Wednesday 23 January 2019 deadline**.

## Date of interviews

**4th & 5th February, 2019**

## For more information contact

Dr Elizabeth Carnegie ([e.carnegie@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:e.carnegie@sheffield.ac.uk))

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1759pqPfbWr0zPFGbeWAhRL3i9TynIBjJ-vhgVUpqYZ0/edit?fbclid=IwAR2tSTbdG6HoxxDuygzPjEhEBYzdaIEY\\_uCbjCPJmFry7Fz-KU9rB5B8Ak#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1759pqPfbWr0zPFGbeWAhRL3i9TynIBjJ-vhgVUpqYZ0/edit?fbclid=IwAR2tSTbdG6HoxxDuygzPjEhEBYzdaIEY_uCbjCPJmFry7Fz-KU9rB5B8Ak#)