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Exploring Place and Public Memory: Huddersfield and the Regional North

Co-Authored: L. Montague¹, A. Powell², S.Swindells³

¹Department of Architecture & 3D Design, School of Art, Design & Architecture, University of Huddersfield, UK

²Department of Art and Communication, School of Art, Design & Architecture, University of Huddersfield, UK

³Department of Art and Communication, School of Art, Design & Architecture, University of Huddersfield, UK

l.montague@hud.ac.uk tel: +44 (0)1484 472939 s.p.swindells@hud.ac.uk; a.powell@hud.ac.uk;

Abstract

Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, England, faces a particular set of circumstances which are representative of those faced by many post-industrial settlements in current times. This paper traverses the socio-economic, political and cultural background to these circumstances: to broadly understand the interrelationship between urban design, the regional cultural offer and civic society through the lens of 'cultural economics'. At a time when much of Europe is still feeling the effects of the global recession; and when the north of England has been particularly devastated by cuts to public sector funding, it explores heritage, culture and history in relation to place-making and place 'branding'. It asks how a cultural offer within a locale might be understood in terms of economic infrastructure, and how culture as a social and economic resource might be strengthened by the support of local government and the community through 'creative consultation'. To gauge these issues as an initial barometer to 'life in Huddersfield' we talk and photograph people in close proximity to the town's art gallery and library about their perceptions.

Key words: *local identity, public memory, place, heritage, creative consultation*

LOCAL IDENTITY IN CONTEXT

Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, England, faces a particular set of circumstances which are representative of those faced by many post-industrial settlements in current times. This paper traverses the socio-economic, political and cultural background to these circumstances: to broadly understand the interrelationship between urban design, the regional cultural offer and civic society, through the lens of 'cultural economics'. Central to this research is an exploration of the role of the town's Art Gallery and Library, seen as a cultural focus and barometer for the town. This paper concludes by proposing a series of events that are intended to facilitate diverse public participation through creative consultation.

With a population of approximately 146,000 and rising, Huddersfield is a large Pennine town originally built on a booming textile industry. It boasts a rich vista of historical architecture, including a much celebrated neo-classical railway station and a plethora of striking Victorian mills set in a distinctive rural landscape. A large amount of the town is listed for protection by Historic England. However, this architectural legacy is contrasted against areas of the town centre that exemplify the principles of 1960s/70s architecture, planning and urban design: for example a ring road which prioritises motorised transport over the pedestrian, physically and perceptively segregating the town centre from surrounding communities. In addition, the town's socio-economic difficulties pose a far greater problem – relative to other UK towns of a similar size Huddersfield suffers from high levels of deprivation, including significant income deprivation, high levels of health and mental health problems, and is ranked lower than average for education and skills. [1]

In 2009, Kirklees Council produced an *Area Action Plan (AAP)* for Huddersfield. The purpose of the AAP is to guide development in the town centre to 2026. [2] The plan aims to build on the area's policies set out in the local authority's Core Strategy and provides the opportunity to consider how best to guide the town's growth and prosperity in a way which offers a decent standard of living, better jobs, pleasant open spaces, vibrant culture and all the quality services and facilities a major town should command.

Such plans are not isolated for the area. In March 2009, urban design consultancy URBED was commissioned by Kirklees Council to develop an *Urban Design Strategy (UDS)* for Huddersfield. [3] This work ran in parallel to, and complemented the development of the options stage of the Area Action Plan, and the two pieces of work formed part of a joint consultation. It is clear from the analysis that the heart of the town is considered a very high quality urban environment that is one of the finest examples of Victorian planning in the

north. The priority for Huddersfield is to conserve and improve what exists, and to ensure that new development complements the historic buildings that give the area so much character, whilst avoiding the pitfalls of pastiche. Beyond the centre, the quality of the built environment is much poorer. The town has a ring road that has the sole benefit of facilitating traffic circulation but, equally, it has damaged the structure, permeability and legibility of the town. This, together with a number of unsympathetic modern buildings located on the ring road affects the impression of the town on people passing through by car. URBED's strategy suggests a way in which the centre could be reconnected to its hinterland by repairing the damaged shatter zone that surrounds it. This would involve reconfiguring the street network to create a 'horseshoe' ring road, redesigning the roads so that they are friendlier places for cyclists and pedestrians, and shaping new development over the coming years so that it addresses and animates public spaces.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Geographically, Huddersfield is advantageously positioned in the middle of a network of northern cities – Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield. But there is of course a political dimension to Huddersfield's regional context. Following the Scottish referendum on independence, recent rhetoric in the United Kingdom has responded to increased sensitivity to the perceived north/south divide and concentration of resources directed to London and the south-east. On the 23rd June 2014 the Chancellor George Osborne gave a keynote speech in Manchester proposing England's great northern cities to become a northern 'powerhouse' for the British economy. Speaking in the Power Hall of Manchester's Museum of Science and Industry, the Chancellor stated while the cities of the North are individually strong, they are not collectively strong enough. He asserted, *"We need a Northern Powerhouse. Not one city, but a collection of cities – sufficiently close to each that combined they can take on the world"*. [4] This is echoed by, Tom Bloxham, Chairman and co-founder of award winning property developer Urban Splash who states, *"One of the great things we have got are our universities [...]. Yet still the majority of research funding goes into the south-east – that's something that could be relatively easily addressed"*. [5] Despite being named the 2014 Times Higher University of the Year the Chancellor omitted the University of Huddersfield, stating,

"Durham, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and York and more – the north is blessed with world class universities. These universities have been at the forefront of the urban renaissance here over the last three decades. Many of them were founded by enlightened industrialists – today they are still leading the way in cooperation between academics and industry." (Osborne, 2014)

This correlates with the N8 group - a partnership of eight research-intensive universities in the north of England: Durham, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and York. The N8 universities (predominantly members of the Russell Group) have a critical mass of research capability and represent a significant cluster of research power among the 130 universities in the UK. In receipt of a large Arts and Humanities Research Council award (AHRC), the N8 propose culture can refuel reinvention, helping people to adapt to change and generate new models for sustainable development. In March 2013, the N8 Research Partnership was awarded funding from the AHRC for a pilot study to explore how universities can work closer with the arts and humanities sector to generate growth and answer a diverse range of research questions on cultural infrastructure.

All of these themes are both credible and admirable as they relate to national and international priorities and challenges, including the need to promote economic growth, enhance knowledge exchange, develop effective public engagement and create employment opportunities. However, though the Russell Group represents twenty-four of what are deemed the UK's leading universities, traditionally they have not provided the vocational focus in their arts and cultural programmes – and arguably have a particular academic approach to employment and practice within the cultural industries. Vocational programmes in arts and cultural industries have a long-standing history with the previous polytechnic universities, now referred to as 'Post-92'. The AHRC N8 project is being coordinated by Professor Dinah Birch, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research & Knowledge Exchange at the University of Liverpool. She states,

"This is the first time that the N8 Research Partnership has engaged with the arts and humanities research community. [...] The cities represented by the N8 university partners include several of the giants of the Industrial Age. These cities have a history of self-reinvention; and have dynamic economies and vibrant arts scenes. Culture can fuel the process of reinvention, helping people to adapt to change and generate ideas for sustainable and fair models of development – and these workshops will explore how this can be achieved." (N8 Research Partnership, 2015)

Professor Mark Llewellyn, Director of Research at the AHRC, commented that the N8 plans to, “[...] support activities that will stimulate new ways of bringing arts and humanities researchers together across the north of England to think about heritage, digital cultures and creativity [and ...] to challenge and debate their own role in regional cultures, communities, growth and regeneration.” [8]

Critics to the ‘Northern Powerhouse’ concept question the idea that large cities are needed for innovation and economic growth; citing examples of small towns in the US, such as Cupertino, now home of the apple campus and Menlo Park, headquarters of Google. Wayne Hemingway designer and retail expert states, “London needs to have real competition in the UK – ideas, creativity, club culture, music and film aren’t owned by the capital but infrastructure is so heavily focused on the south, it’s created a lopsided economy. Look at Germany – it’s so much stronger because it has a set of regional cities with strong industries that give people equal opportunities to live and work.” [9] With a similar perspective, Siemens CEO Juergen Maier argues that the issue is not “the North versus London – it’s the North versus the rest of the world”. [10] He calls upon authorities from across the Pennines to collaborate, and give businesses the confidence to continue investment, stating, “If every devolved region does its own thing it would be the worst possible scenario. You need a national industrial strategy and then you agree which regions are going to take ownership of which areas to create world-class clusters.” [11] George Osborne reiterates,

“Global cities are also great places to go out [...] great cities are competing for the ‘creative class’ that powers economic growth. [...] [Economists show] how innovators and entrepreneurs are attracted to creative, cultural, beautiful places. Here we already have world-class arts and culture, from Opera North in Leeds to the Tate in Liverpool, to Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and the new Hepworth over in Wakefield. And then there’s the music of the Halle and the Liverpool Philharmonic and of course the best pop music on the planet.” [12]

It is in this context that regional towns such as Huddersfield appear to be overlooked by both neighbouring universities and national government strategies, raising particular questions about the dynamic between culture and the arts, politics and economics in this area.

CULTURAL ECONOMY

Recent reports that have focused on the cultural offer, such as the Warwick Commission, highlight that publicly funded arts, culture and heritage projects, supported by tax and lottery revenues, remain predominantly accessed by a narrow social, economic, ethnic and educational demographic: those from a privileged socio-economic background with university-level educational attainment and a professional occupation. [13] It is noteworthy that this demographic is particularly drawn to those activities that attract significant public funding, while other demographic groups are not. It suggests that nationally, this type of cultural offer remains exclusive, failing to attract or engage the broader spectrum of the population. There are, of course, many possible sociological and economic reasons for this, but it is suspected that a contributing factor is the cultural and creative industries’ failure to express, represent or develop the voices, experiences and talents of the United Kingdom’s population as a whole.

Writing for DEMOS in 2006 John Holden’s paper, *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy: Why culture needs a democratic mandate*, highlights the challenges facing a political understanding of cultural value. He states,

“The ‘cultural system’ faces a crisis of legitimacy. At local government level culture is suffering extreme funding cuts, the recent Arts Council England (ACE) Peer Review uncovers a rift between ACE and its Whitehall department, and individual organisations continue to stagger from one damning headline to the next. These are the current symptoms of a deeper problem that has dogged culture for the last 30 years. Politics has struggled to understand culture and failed to engage with it effectively. Cultural professionals have focused on satisfying the policy demands of their funders in an attempt to gain the same unquestioning support for culture that exists for health or education; but the truth is that politicians will never be able to give that support until there exists a more broadly based and better articulated democratic consensus.” [14]

In his studies of governmentality, Michel Foucault identifies the transformation of the pre-modern administrative state into modern forms of government. Foucault’s analysis utilises the old definition of ‘police’ to include policy, authority and polis in relation to articulating ‘power’. Rejecting the conventional theory of power, defined as a central point from which struggle is waged, as in hegemony theory, Foucault proposes real power exists in a micro-politics of habits, language and the vernacular; a micro-politics that is able to circuit the couplet of culture and governmentality. [15] In other words, power exists at the level of the particular and

what is deemed 'normal'. In response to historical debates on cultural policy, Theodor Adorno proposes that a cultural policy must be based on a self-conscious recognition of the contradictions inherent in applying planning to a field of cultural practices which stand opposed to planning in their innermost processes; hence planning in government must involve a critical awareness of its own limits. [16]

Holden, Foucault and Adorno reiterate the difficult but intrinsic relationship that exists between politics, economics and culture. However, in the 1990s Bennett argued that Adorno's model of maintaining an autonomous cultural policy for the arts was outdated. [17] In contrast, he saw culture as an industry; recognising that any aesthetic and critical disposition forms merely a particular market segment within that industry. According to Bennett, different competing patterns within the 'cultural industry' will determine public expenditure, forms of administration to be debated and assessed in relation to different publics, and their relationships to competing political values and government policy objectives. What Bennett advocates is instrumentalisation that teeters on the reification of culture; an accusation frequently levelled at current UK government policies. However, he also proposes that communities are funded and formed from the policies within government – cultural policies for Bennett, are thus seen as national political instruments that construct communities – rather than perceiving communities as emerging external to government initiatives.

These different theoretical perspectives on cultural economy further provoke consideration of the cultural offer in Huddersfield and how it might be possible to sustain and develop this within existing political and economic constraints. Through tracing the history of the thinking around these challenges, the complexity of the issue becomes apparent – as does its prevalence in discussions spanning several decades. What is more, the challenges of articulating and understanding such concepts as 'power' in this context, and the difficulties in drawing together the different strands of thinking in relation to what might be termed 'cultural economics' become evident. Bennett's ideas, for example, might be seen to correspond with those underlying the N8 consortium and with Osborne's comments, that cultural progress for the north of England might be made by providing structure, steering funding and allowing for a 'vernacular' direction. Whereas Adorno completely opposed any sense of instrumentalising communities towards central government objectives, and Holden proposes there should be greater consultation and democracy in the constitution of cultural, how it is formed and accessed.

It is anticipated that the process of facilitating creative consultation will help to tease out some further responses to these issues. It will respond to the challenges faced by the fact that funding is so often steered in such a way as to make it either inaccessible or at least alien to those who need it. The creative consultation further aims to empower local understanding about some of the discussions happening at a national level, facilitating a 'bottom-up' as opposed to a 'top down' consultation process.

HUDDERSFIELD'S CULTURAL OFFER

Huddersfield Art Gallery and Library, as Huddersfield's primary cultural site, might be regarded as the main civic facility which embodies the town's cultural offer. As such, it functions as a useful case study for examining the broader social, political and financial challenges of the 'top-down' approach endorsed by Bennett and Osborne, in contrast to the democratisation of culture proposed by Holden and Adorno. The building and its contents might be read as a 'cultural barometer' from which to gauge how the population views the status and value of culture *per se* in a town such as this. The local authority perceives the Art Gallery and Library building as a cultural focus for the town, and, as such, is interested in its role within current and future urban design planning for Huddersfield: the building is composed of two library floors and the third floor forms the five room gallery space. Originally set within the traditional Victorian fabric of the town, this public building has since been subsumed into a pedestrianised retail development known as the Piazza area. It has recently been listed by Historic England as a significant example of 1930s architecture. [18] Despite its architectural elegance, the building, and the local authority itself, face a number of challenges. Set against a backdrop of severe public funding cuts, they include the issue of how the building can be revitalised or re-conceptualised to become a vital cultural hub, capable of stimulating the cultural offer within Kirklees by being both accessible and culturally dynamic.

Across the UK there is currently a series of government led initiatives concerned with measuring and documenting the value of culture in relation to social, economic and health infrastructures. [19] The drive to measure cultural value is nothing new. Back in 2002 Michelle Reeves, Research Officer for the Arts Council England, drafted a report on 'Measuring the economic and social impact of the arts: a review'. She proposed that one of the most important reasons for monitoring, measuring, assessing and evaluating creative work is the genuine desire "to help to make the complex and intriguing web of creative exchange more visible, to articulate actual and potential achievement, to help us all move forward". [20] This is a common goal. These challenges might be regarded as fundamental to much of the cultural sector both within and outside of

academia; relevant not only in relation to the current funding climate, but constituting a more deep-seated profundity; being fundamental to our understanding of how arts and culture 'works' in the UK.

This proposal builds on an established relationship between the Gallery and the University. In 2011 the University of Huddersfield commenced a formal partnership with Huddersfield Art Gallery to offer a public engagement programme entitled 'ROTOR'. ROTOR can be seen as a response to Michelle Reeves' point that a locale's cultural offer can be improved or sustained by partnership working. Acting as a metaphorical 'bridge' to link town and gown; connecting the University with the Art Gallery and its users, ROTOR exemplifies Reeves' idea of sharing responsibility through collaboration. Featuring the art and design work of University staff, this on-going series of exhibitions, public events and talks creates a platform for showcasing a community of artists, designers and curators whose ideas and connective practices migrate and span art and design production. Central to ROTOR's ethos is an enquiry into art and design's impact upon, and value to its locale, with respect to contributing to the cultural offer. ROTOR aims to locate interpretation at the pivot between academic research and public engagement, where points of intersection are considered and debated from multiple perspectives; including the interrelationships between learning, identity and agency in people's lives.

ROTOR, then, provides a useful case study for the University and Art Gallery's partnership working, which we plan to draw upon and further develop in relation to our creative consultation research project. Not only has ROTOR provided insights into Huddersfield's cultural context and identified areas where challenges exist – for example in enabling engagement and understanding in hard to reach audiences – it has also highlighted some of the benefits of collaborative working, and of 'bottom-up' approaches to public engagement.

HUMANS OF HUDDERSFIELD

The first approach to be piloted draws on the work of photographers and writers, such as, the American photographer Diane Arbus, the British writer and photographer Martin Usborne and the photographic blog Humans of New York. In these projects photography, unstructured interviews and anthropological encounters work in parallel to capture representations of local people and their personal stories in relation to place.

In the case of Arbus, her work of the 1950's and 1960's focused on people and their environs on the fringes of society, uncovering eccentric personalities with exceptional biographical narrative. The images are direct in the way the subject confronts the camera and the subsequent viewer, exploring the inter-relationship between identity, place and the self-conscious encounter between photographer and subject.

Martin Usborne's photographic book based on the latter stages of life of Joseph Markovitch, 'I've Lived in East London for 86 ½ Years' (Hoxton Minipress 2008) produces a moving and humorous account of how life in the East End of London has changed through the eyes of a single old man [*rephrase?*]. The accompanying text to each photograph reveals a psycho-geographic account that uncovers a deep personal narrative resonating with the urban fabric, both past and present.

Humans of New York (HONY) is the personal project of photographer Brandon Stanton. Stanton started collecting quotes and short stories from the people he photographed: Based in a city famed for its cosmopolitan culture and residents, he does not appear to deliberately seek out marginal characters in the same way that Arbus does. Rather, he photographs a wide range of people from different demographics, gender and age groups in New York streets and public spaces. A transcribed excerpt from an interview accompanies each portrait offering insight into the individual and often unexpected personal narratives or perspectives. Stanton's HONY now has eight million followers on social media and provides a worldwide audience with snippets of the everyday perceptions, occurrences and narratives of life in New York.

In these examples the photographer provides a record and broad physical and on-line dissemination on the plurality of local people in relation to where they live. Our approach to generate a 'people's voice' project to life in Huddersfield provides a similar opportunity to ~~the~~ dispel the misnomer of a single public, as well as ~~or~~ preconceived notions of predictable or stereotyped urban identities. Anthropological and psycho-geographic approaches to photography show how capturing a range of opinions for consultation can reveal a deeper human story on understanding the breadth of the local community's ~~sies~~ perceptions of place, and therefore enable a more meaningful dialogue to take place as part of a broader consultative process.

This method of data collection presents a creative, visual approach to qualitative research. Qualitative methods are based on the premise that it is not possible to accurately categorise and measure the social or cultural world, and indeed it is not appropriate to do so, since this would be to represent an interpretation of the world which is that of the researcher and which may not be shared by others. In preference, observing and

recording what is happening, and suggesting possible explanations offers the opportunity for individual consideration of the event under scrutiny and invites a variety of interpretations. Whilst this may pose more questions rather than offer clear answers, the standpoint is that to do otherwise is to mislead; individuals view and experience the world differently, and to ignore this in favour of a single interpretation falsely represents the nature of events and experiences. **See Ch. 6 in Philip Jones, *Studying Society: Sociological Theories and Practices* (London: Collins Educational, 1993).**

To trial a similar qualitative approach, the three authors spent time in Huddersfield town centre, within close proximity to the art gallery and library, approaching, encountering and engaging with local people to gauge their views and perceptions about the locale. The aim was to approach people that might represent a broad demographic. In sociological terms our selection of respondents would most likely be classified as probability sampling, where individual members of the research population are selected in a random way. However, as we attempted to approach a range of people, representing a sample of the town's demographic, it might be argued that our approach could more accurately be described as 'opportunity/convenience sampling', which is characterised by minimal selection and based upon convenience factors (such as availability and accessibility of sources), combined with what is termed 'judgement sampling', where the researcher makes a judgement about how the sample should be selected based on known criteria. **See Ch. 25 in Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (London: Sage Publications, 2005).**

The interviews took the form of an informal dialogue as they progressed; no predetermined questions or script was determined, instead using a more impulsive and intuitive approach to adapt to the individual and the direction the interview naturally takes. This was beneficial as it meant that participants were free to express their views and discuss topics of their choice, but was framed within the subject areas set by the interviewer. It was hoped that this might allow different views and stories to be uncovered or volunteered rather than provoking narrow or predictable responses. After speaking with the subject for a few minutes we asked if we could take a photograph of them to accompany their story. The following show the material produced from the individuals who agreed to take part.

Toy shop lady
(Photo + excerpt)

Pet shop boy
(Photo + excerpt)

Gregg's girls
(Photo + excerpt)

Kurdish man
(Photo + excerpt)

Bench boys
(Photo + excerpt)

Retired couple
(Photo + excerpt)

Cakey lady
(Photo + excerpt)

The decision to interview members of the public was made as it allowed us to gain first-hand accounts of their views and ideas. Robert Weiss reiterates this benefit of interviewing as a technique and states that, 'Interviewing can inform us about the nature of social life. We can learn about [...] cultures and the values they sponsor, and about the challenges people confront as they lead their lives'. **Robert Stuart Weiss, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), p. 1.** He continues, 'We can learn also, through interviewing about people's interior experiences [...]. We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves'. **Weiss, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*, p. 1.**

Gubrium and Holstein (1997) distinguish between naturalist/realist and ethnomethodological approaches to primary research, although both are concerned with the everyday lives and experiences of the individual.

The naturalist approach would regard interviews (formal and informal) as, primarily, a resource for collecting detailed information; providing accounts by individuals about their personal and social context; enabling the researcher to answer questions about the reality of the experiences the people have had and discovering how this has affected their actions. The focus is on content; what is said. The ethnomethodological approach would regard the interview itself as a topic for enquiry, as part of the way in which people participate in the construction of their lives – interviews are themselves implicated in this. The focus is on the creation of meaning - how what is said is expressed and how this is interpreted. This research took a naturalist approach for the most part, using the informal interview responses as a means to collect information, but we also hope to demonstrate our awareness - in an ethnomethodological sense - of the implications of the interview process for the data that is collected. **See Ch. 3, 'Ethnomethodology', in Jaber F. Gubrium and James Holstein, *The New language of Qualitative Method* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 38-56**

Taking the decision to interview and photograph members of the public as a method of primary research necessarily raises many practical questions about the effectiveness of the process, the accuracy of its findings and their applications, ethical issues relating to the interview process, and the handling and uses of data. Inevitably, both respondents and researchers construct meaning in each other's comments, even if this is unintentional. **See Jodie Miller and Barry Glassner, 'The "Inside" and the "Outside": Finding Realities in Interviews', in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. by David Silverman (London: Sage Publications, 2007), pp. 125 – 139.** Interviews are not straightforward presentations of reality from the interviewee point of view, but are verbal constructions, and the researcher has to be aware of their potential influence over the outcome of these constructions. **See Miller and Glassner, 'The "Inside" and the "Outside": Finding Realities in Interviews', pp. 125 – 139.** While having benefits such as allowing freedoms that cannot be gained through text-based research alone, interviewing also has its limitations. As William Trochim states, 'We [...] need to recognize that social research always occurs in a social context. It is a human endeavour', and it is, therefore, 'important to consider the critical ethical issues that affect the researcher, research participants, and the research effort generally'. **William M. Trochim, 'Foundations', *Research Methods Knowledge Base*, (2006) <<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intres.php>> [accessed 12th January 2015].** He goes on to underline the fact that the social nature of research means it is always and inevitably 'subject to human fallibility'. **Trochim, 'Foundations'.**

It was important to ensure that the participant's involvement in the project was completely voluntary, and to try to ensure that their responses to questions were not given under any pressure or coercion. Despite this we remain aware that as the researcher we are necessarily intruding into the research context. As interviewer we necessarily have to make subjective decisions throughout the course of the interview, including how to frame questions, whether to demand clarification when questions are misinterpreted, or whether to press for further detail when faced with complex or even cryptic responses to questions. The presence of the researcher, especially when the research takes the form of an interview, can lead the respondents to provide an 'honourable response'; to answer in the way they feel the research wants them to answer, whether or not this is a conscious decision. **Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. by Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 5.** Pierre Bourdieu discusses this issue when he explains how interviewees might try 'even unconsciously, to show themselves in a good light by giving the answer they judge to be the most noble one'. **Bourdieu and Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, p. 5.**

In interpreting and developing further work around the interviews and photographs, we, as researchers, inevitably and unavoidably become the interpreters and, to some extent, the editors of the participants' responses. When interviews incorporate elements of narrative the researcher also becomes a narrator. The interviewer determines the form in which that the interview findings will be communicated in relation to an envisaged audience, and selects what they deem to be important, discarding what they believe is not. As Lewis Hinchman states, 'Narratives (stories) [...] should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience', however, he notes that they offer valuable 'insights about the world and/ or people's experiences of it.' **Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, 'Memory, Identity and Community: The Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences', in Jane Elliot, *Using Narrative in Social Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 36.**

CONCLUSION: CREATIVE CONSULTATION

The current stage is an initial one in which a variety of creative approaches to consultation are tested to establish which might prove successful in achieving the previously outlined goals: to engage a broad spectrum

of the local population; to enable meaningful rather than limited public participation; and, ultimately, through this to reflect local urban identity and collective memory. The pilot scheme provided an arena for experimentation with the ideas and mechanisms described in this paper, with the aim of reflecting upon and evaluating the benefits and limitations of adopting a 'bottom-up' approach to public consultation, relative to more conventional methods of consultation. Ultimately it is our intention to build a model for further community-led input into the cultural offer of regional towns such as Huddersfield. Reflecting on the pilot project, there are several findings which will inform any further use of this approach in a larger period of creative consultation. Overall, it was found that the majority of people who were approached were happy to talk to us and to have their photograph taken. There were some instances where this was precluded due to employment conditions of those in their workplace at the time of being approached and, as one would expect, others who just did not wish to participate.

Having considered Huddersfield's position, its regional context, the current political setting and theoretical perspectives on cultural economy, we propose a pilot programme of creative consultation events. This paper has attempted to set out the existing rhetoric on the topics relating to the facilitation of creative consultation, providing contemporary context as well as historical background on some of the key issues at stake. The next phase of the research aims to respond to this rhetoric; to facilitate the development of a stronger cultural economy for Huddersfield by creating situations in which the public's voice(s) can be enabled and heard. While an accessible outcome will take place (in the form the exhibition/installation), it is the consultation process itself which will be the focus for the research, and which we plan to critique in a self-reflexive manner in order to provide insights into ways of successfully communicating this multidimensional 'voice'. We are interested in the process of enabling this voice through unconventional and perhaps new ways in order to engage with a broader cross-section of the town's population and more inclusively reflect public memory and identity.

The recent 2014 *Research Excellence Framework* conducted across all UK universities adopted a strict peer review process in measuring the 'impact' of academic research across society with reference to determining artistic excellence. However, as Francois Matarasso states when commenting upon the Brian McMaster report, "*perhaps, in the end, what really needs to be excellent is the conversation we have about culture*", and that "*conversation cannot be excellent if it excludes the voices of the public.*" [21] Indeed, in re-imagining the cultural offer of Huddersfield and the role of its civic embodiment – the Art Gallery and Library building - we see meaningful and democratic public engagement as a fundamental and essential process rather than a luxury.

The intended outcome is a 'people's installation' that reflects, and is born of, the ways in which local people value and relate to culture. This opens up a wider discussion and contestations about the ways in which cultural value can be measured, and the ways in which cultural infrastructure itself is played out in political, economic, urban design sectors. It is our intention for the 'people's installation' to be a mechanism through which to understand the views of 'the public' more deeply and inclusively. Understanding public attitudes through various engagement processes will no doubt reveal a variety of conflicting positions, which we wish to encourage. It is thus important for the research to recognise that 'the public' is a collective term for what is in fact a multitude of different and sometimes opposing viewpoints: hence, the proposal to adopt different engagement strategies and outcomes via a rich and complex art installation is just one way such plurality may be captured. One of the challenges is to overcome the convention of homogenising and limiting the status of the public, something which is particularly prevalent in public funded culture where there remains a tendency to aggregate individuals and perceive them as 'audiences', 'attenders' or 'non-attenders', rather than as contributors or cultural advocates.

This endeavour could be interpreted as an act of collective self-creation. If active 'self-creation' becomes a marker towards a political ideal of self-government, then the main civic cultural building (HAG/Library) provides a good starting point in which to assess the public opinion of Huddersfield's cultural life. In this respect we are interested in political democracy, and the people's installation displaying the characteristics, and challenges, of pluralism, equality and transparency under the guises of artistic expression.

One intention of the research is to assess, from a public perspective, the ways in which Huddersfield's identity might be discovered and marketed, in relation to providing it with a stronger sense of 'place'; useful in relation to tourism, but also as an instrument for attracting the attention of decision makers at regional and national levels of government. The subject of 'place branding' is something we plan to address here, with the aim of helping to further define and position the town from the perspective of its inhabitants and visitors. Successful branding not only helps to develop positive associations with a place, but also provides a point of reference with respect to the competition. [22] Acting as a tool for rapid communication, place branding has

been associated with long-term sustainable economic developments; something which we wish to explore further. [23] We are also interested in the problems of place branding, for example the fact that, when faced with limited budgets, strategies have often focused on creating differentiation and raising awareness through the propagation of logos, symbols, and strap lines rather than articulating what the town and people have to offer (Hankinson, 2001). Too often, it seems, place brands have failed because they do not wholly represent an area in a way that can be understood by local inhabitants, and thus fail to gain acceptance from local communities (Puhakka, 2009). In response to this, our proposed creative consultation aims to work with local stakeholders to provide insights into the local perspectives that are often overlooked by more rhetorical marketing. Creative thinking and research might be one way of developing ideas around place branding beyond that basic response of logo-development, to really take on board dissonance and maximise what might be considered 'brand impact' in this context

We wish to intertwine this with discussion and contestations of the ways in which cultural infrastructure is valued, judged, measured and resourced. Under a notional umbrella term of 'creative consultation', we wish to provide a people's perspective on these issues; enabled by a series of events including, workshops facilitated by creative practitioners, to include artist-led activities, café events, psychogeographic approaches such as mapping exercises and creative play-based activities.

Alongside these events the public will be openly invited to occupy the building to provide a critical evaluation of its role and function; the phenomenon of the recent occupy movement equally is a source of inspiration. As an alternative to the conventional output of public consultation – a predominantly textual report – the final outcome of the events and occupation will be a visual, interactive and immersive installation. The primary intention of this is to explore how to create a more accessible, inclusive and expressive culmination of the consultation process. It is hoped that this will be able to capture a breadth of ideas, feelings and positions from local citizens through an integrated, on-site exhibition of drawings, photographs, sculptures, videos, text and sound pieces that can be experienced in a holistic way.

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