WOR CULTURE - HYPERLOCALISM, CULTURE AND THE NORTH EAST

Welcome to this reflection from our Wor Culture event Hyperlocalsim, Culture and the North East. Here, we'll share the presentations and reflect some of the discussions.

For those of you who couldn't be with us, further information on what Wor Culture is about can be found at the end of this document. Please get in touch if you'd like to contribute, have any suggestions, or would like to share any links or resources.

We look forward to welcoming you to one of our events.

The #WorCulture team,

James - Acting Dean of Culture and Creative Arts james.annesley@ncl.ac.uk

Kirsten - Acting Associate Dean of Engagement and Place (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) kirsten.gibson@ncl.ac.uk

Bob (Engagement and Place Projects Manager) bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk

@engageNCL

Presentations

Our event was curated and hosted by **Iain Watson**, a creative consultant and Visiting Professor at Newcastle University and included presentations from **Steve Bishop (Head of Culture, North Tyneside Council)** & **Catherine Hearne (Independent Creative Consultant)**, **Jess Hunt (Director, East Durham Creates)** and **Daniel Mallo (Senior Lecturer in Architecture, Newcastle University).**

Steve and Catherine shared some broader thinking of Hyperlocalism through an overview consultation work that has taken place on North Tyneside Council's Cultural Strategy, this was followed by specific examples of hyperlocal work with Jess presenting East Durham Create's Arts Council funded 'Creative People & Places' project and Daniel speaking about his work on the Fenham Pocket Park.

BREAKOUT GROUPS

After the presentations we split into breakout groups, here's a summary of the key points from those groups.

1. How does hyperlocalism feature alongside a north eastern or northern identity?

• There is sensitivity around 'Where you are from?'
• Think about the 'other bits' – local identity and boundary lines between localities – Duality of assumptions + complexities
• Place as something that shapes you
• What is the role of universities?
• You need agency to shape a place - Energy can shape a place.
- Agency can give you confidence - "I can – I will – I belong". Give agency and power to people who live in the place – value the knowledge they have
- Important to be aware of disempowerment and entitlement
- Sometimes the systems in place that appear on the surface as a grass roots – can be exclusive & illusive
• There is a need to define Hyperlocalism as very diverse in definition e.g. Street, town, knowledge – shifting / moving / shaping / growing. If it is a hotchpotch – Where does that leave us?
• Important to consider relevancy of global, local and hyperlocal
• Important to consider value, importance and hierarchy of significance
• Think about purpose
• Exploration of research + "dabbling" – upskilling – interventions with discussion about eliciting local knowledge and starting from a place of informed accessibility, trust & connection.
• Personal vs institutional motivations – incentives + collaborations
• No Space for tables + who to invite to the party – Who's not there? Why don't they want to be there?
• Being aware of multiples lanes and crossover of people with many hats
• Listening as a doing word – engage
• There is potential to perpetuate stereotypes
• Every project that defines an identity also includes a challenge of that definition
• Community doesn't just mean geography
• Roots of authenticity (also roots of exclusion)
• Construct of values people want
• Human nature & inherent tribalism
• How to handle negative aspects?
• How to manage relationship with the past and vision of the future
• Multiplicities in identity
• Hyperlocalsim as one tool of many – harness, not embed
• 'Think globally, act locally'

3. Does hyperlocalism just keep us all in our own comfort zones or is it the start of a journey to a wider and more engaged cultural life?

• All of us?

- For artists – we want to not just work on our own patch and take inspiration from being with a variety of other artists
- For co-creators / participants an on a journey to becoming an artist?
• Comfort zones can be good!

• Hyperlocalism doesn't have to be pitched as 'where are you from?' How do we ask that question?
• Hyperlocalism to 'keep' creative people here, but the impact can be wider
• Wider horizons can be a comfort zones
• Comfort zones can be tied up in privilege
• Important to consider aspirations and connectivity
• We all need them – some more than others
• Who is the 'our' – cultural practitioner?
• Is it better to be on a cultural journey to somewhere else?
• A local building can be a comfort zone but not necessarily for everyone
• Cultural development work takes time – funding is often short term
• Pathways needed for people to follow if they culturally 'find their thing' and want to pursue it
• How does digital effect hyperlocalism?
• Berwick – can be resistance to culture – can be excluding – danger of terms like parochial
• Issue of language terms
• Community not just place-based – virtual, interest-led
• More engaged cultural life?
• Embedding artists in long term
• Needs trust and investment

4. How does hyperlocalism contribute to identity and belonging?

• More engaged cultural life?
• Embedding artists in long term
• Needs trust and investment
• This can depend who is asking?
• Enhanced relevance that engages people
• Building communities within communities
• Bringing new people to a space
• There is an issue of short termism – how to invest time?
• Terms like hyperlocalism – what does this mean to people that don't see themselves as 'local'

5. How do we create high quality cultural activity at a hyperlocal level in a funding crisis – what does hyperlocalism mean for the cultural practitioner and what does it mean for the consumption of culture?

Using existing heritage buildings who are looking for new uses of these

• National Trust spaces (Push them) – ask people with resources – they have an agenda and want them to be used. E.g. Seaton Delaval + November Club project
• Opportunity for Pop up activity – e.g. in a caravan, pocket park or on people's doorsteps!

- How do we create a list / network of under-tapped resources so artists know about this e.g. places for artwork on walls
- Is there a list of underrepresented local players that artists can have access to?
- High quality activity needs to be well resourced to create quality experiences for people. 'Do less better' as a strategy to not compromise on quality in a funding crisis

LINKS

This is a list of some useful links from the session and topic. If you have any other resources you would like to add to this list please email bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk

- Turnaround Towns UK - Carnegie UK Trust
  https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/turnaround-towns-uk/
- Quantifying kindness, public engagement and place - Carnegie UK Trust
  https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/quantifying-kindness-public-engagement-and-place/
- Talk of the Town: Supporting place based storytelling - Carnegie UK Trust
  https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/talk-of-the-town/
- East Durham Creates http://eastdurhamcreates.co.uk/
- Research report_ Mallo, D. & Tardiveau, A. (2019) Fenham Pocket Park. Stories, Practices and Processes. Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University. ISBN: 978-0-7017-0268-7 Available at: https://en.calameo.com/read/006096643d954a55eef70?page=1
- Art on the Balcony Berlin https://artreview.com/look-up-art-on-the-balcony-berlin/
- 'Turing the Hourglass - Creativity and a place-based approach to community empowerment' Northern Heartlands Event - 18th April https://www.northernheartlands.org/events

Finishing Notes - in case you are wondering...What is Wor Culture?

Wor Culture is a forum for discussing issues relating to the culture and creative sectors in the North East, and contribute to shaping its future. The gathering is facilitated by Newcastle University but we strongly encourage you to propose topics for discussion, join in the debate, or offer to lead a session.

How is the programme put together?

The sessions focus on topics suggested by you. You can also suggest speakers (or offer to do a presentation or provocation) and/or host a session (we'll support you!). All suggestions to: bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk

What is the format of the event?

Normally the event follows a format where we have a series of short presentations (c. 10 minutes) to help establish the context for the discussion. This is followed by a Q&A. We then have a series of breakout groups each focused on a different theme or topic. Breakout groups

are smaller, focused discussion groups. After this each group feeds back into a general discussion.

For online events there is a function in Zoom called the 'Chat' function which is like texting or messaging. We use this to gather questions and comments. Participants can also use it to contribute or send a private message to the host if they do not want to speak using their video.

What is expected of me?

We warmly welcome everyone who would like to come along to the event. How you participate is entirely up to you.

At the beginning of online events we ask everyone to mute their microphones and turn off their video to try to avoid any problems with background noise and videos crashing. You can listen, keeping your video and microphone off; you can contribute to the discussion via the chat function; you can contribute by turning on your video and asking a question following the presentations; you can have your video on in the breakout rooms or not. **We would love to hear your voice and have your thoughts** but there as absolutely no pressure to contribute.

What if I can't join in or come along to the Zoom gatherings?
We are very aware that digital gatherings are not accessible for everyone for many reasons. We are working to make our sessions as accessible as possible (if you have any ideas or suggestions let us know) but we are still conscious that they still will not be accessible to everyone. If you would like to contribute to any of the sessions but cannot attend the zoom gathering, we'd be happy to talk to you beforehand by whatever means is best for you, you could contribute in writing or by submitting a short video, and we can feedback to you after the event. Or, if you have any other ideas, do let us know.

We have also started to run in-person events and ask everyone when registering if they have an accessibility issues.

What happens after the event?

After each event we will produce a reflection of the event including information from the presentations, insights and questions drawn from the conversation on 'chat', information from the breakout room discussions, and any useful resources participants might have shared or we've discovered that are relevant to discussions. This might take a little time as we're a small team but bear with us! We will then circulate this to participants, regional networks, colleagues in local authorities etc. so they can see what your thinking is.

We will also look at the information and issues raised and, where possible, feed these into future sessions.

Want to be kept in the loop?

For information on future sessions you can sign up here and view our blog at
https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/culturencl/

Wor Culture
7th February 2023

Steve Bishop, Head of Culture, North Tyneside Council

Catherine Hearne, Independent Creative Consultant

SING YOUR SONG

North Tyneside Council

People, Place and Power

- Where are we from?
- Where do we live?
- What is our address?

- How do these fit with our sense of personal and community identity?
- How do they fit with local government and wider regional power structures?

North Tyneside Council

Carnegie UK Trust

- Quantifying kindness, public engagement and place – Jennifer Wallace and Ben Thurman (2018)
  - "In the UK, two in five people define themselves as living in a town."
- Turnaround Towns UK - Issy Petrie, Pippa Coutts and Hannah Ormston (2019)
  - "…our high streets and town centres are more than places to shop; they are places where people meet, talk and connect with one another."
- Talk of the Town – Supporting place-based storytelling – Lauren Pennycook (2020)
  - "…communities often speak of their town's achievements, strengths and potential - and take pride in their place."

Where is North Tyneside?

North Tyneside Council

Seven sector challenges

- Following the consultation work undertaken on the Cultural Strategy, seven challenges were identified as being key to developing a fully fledged strategy for the Borough. These were as follows:-
    - Developing networks to bring the sector together
    - Recognising super-localism
    - Supporting creatives to access funding
    - Embedding Culture, Creative and Tourism in Masterplans
    - Developing skills and career opportunities
    - Culture promoting health and wellbeing
    - Addressing inequity in accessing culture

Recognising super localism

- Partnership – address the specific sense of place in North Tyneside's towns and villages with neighbourhood cultural leads

- Outputs – four cultural production hubs to expand workspace and develop making spaces for production, rehearsal, heritage development and incubator activity

- Impact – Culture as a key driver of community development

North Tyneside Council

CULTURAL HUBS
Creating cultural capacity in left behind places

EAST DURHAM
CREATES
.CO.UK

Jess Hunt - Director
East Durham Creates

Derwent Valley Partnership

Mid-Durham Rural West AAP

Stanley AAP

Chester-le-Street and District AAP

Durham Area Action Partnership

East Durham AAP

Weardale Action Partnership

Three Towns Partnership

Spennymoor AAP

East Durham Rural Corridor

4 Together

Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership

Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP

Teesdale AAP

Consett
Stanley
Chester-le-Street
Seaham
Castleside
Lanchester
Langley Park
Durham
Peterlee
Stanhope
Brandon
St John's Chapel
Tow Law
Wolsingham
Willington
Bowburn
Crook
Spennymoor
Trimdon
Ferryhill
Bishop Auckland
Sedgefield
Shildon
Middleton-in-Teesdale
Newton Aycliffe
Staindrop
Barnard Castle
Bowes

OUR CONTEXT

(SO FAR...)

Cultural Hub

noun

a space, generally a community centre or welfare hall, who are committed to programming arts and culture on a regular basis. Work in these spaces is designed to be relevant, accessible and without barriers as well as being co-created with the community.

EASTLEA COMMUNITY CENTRE

DAWDON YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE

HEART ON THE TERRACE IN MURTON

ARTS CAFE @ COMMUNITY HOUSE (Test Site)

SHOTTON COMMUNITY HUB

THORNLEY VILLAGE CENTRE

BLACKHALL COMMUNITY CENTRE

GREENHILLS COMMUNITY CENTRE

DEAF HILL & TRIMDON STATION COMMUNITY CENTRE

OUR CULTURAL HUBS

(SO FAR...)

WHY IT WORKS

WHY IT SOMETIMES DOESN'T
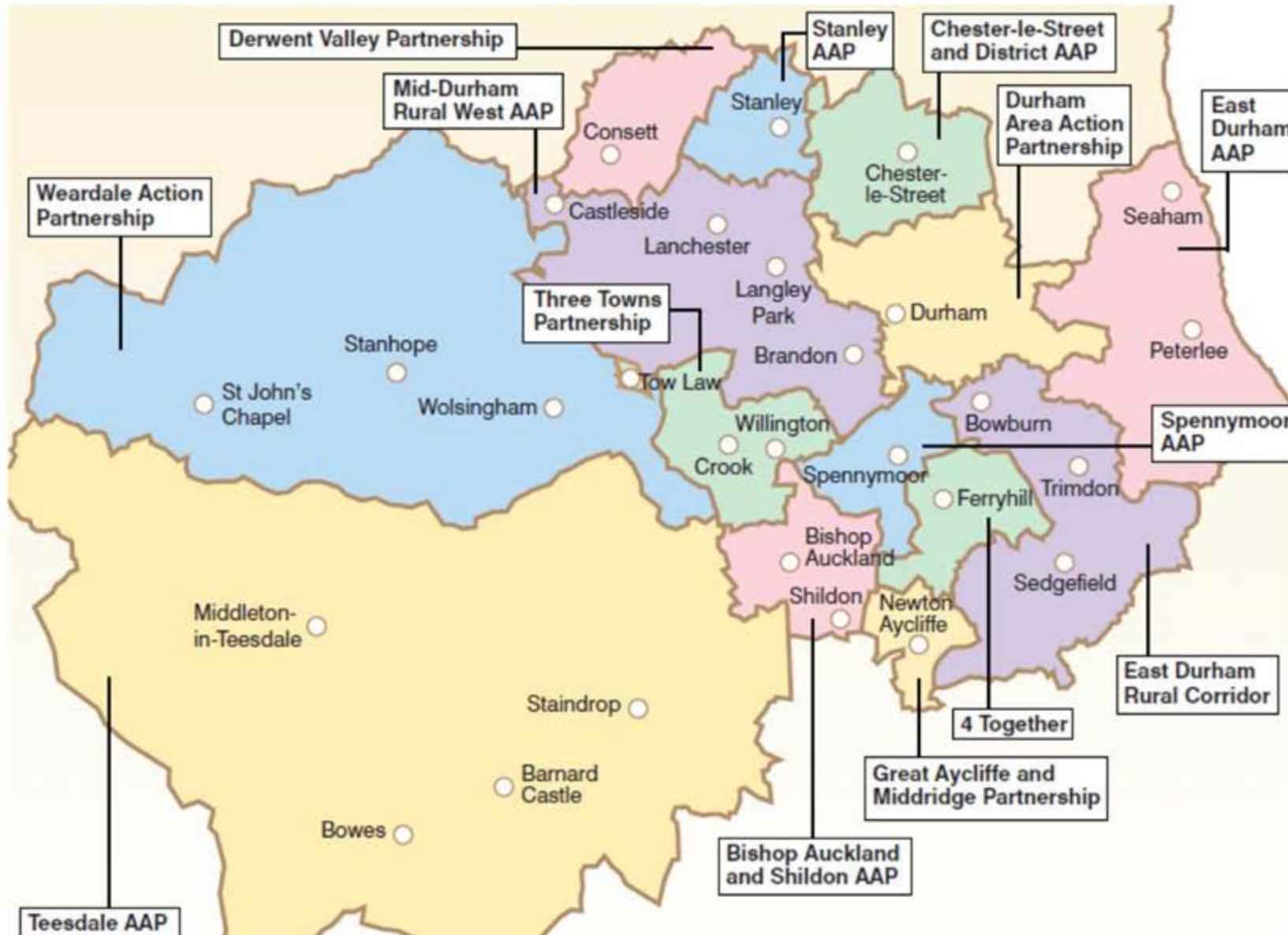
HOW TO STAY HYPERLOCAL ACROSS A COUNTY

ANY QUESTIONS?

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Fenham Pocket Park

A Creative-Practice Approach to the Co-production of Urban Space

Daniel Mallo + Armelle Tardiveau
School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University_7 February 2023

Fenham Pocket Park is a creative practice research that sought to stimulate community action and bring about community-led change in the neighbourhood of Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Our approach is a *form of critical spatial practice that operates on the fringes of, or 'outside commercial or governmental structures'. An approach that* can be defined as 'design activism' (Amstrong et al. 2014).

The process seeks to promote experimentation and test alternative urban experiences in order to:

- Understand the realities of people and gain insights of existing settings from an insider perspective, paying attention to **the ordinary preoccupations of everyday life**.

- Explore **open-ended and inspirational approaches**, using designed prompts and temporary interventions, which enable the establishment of a new, shared language between participants.

- Activate dialogue and open up aspirations, thus **challenging closed briefs and agendas**.

- Shift the emphasis from facilitator-led events to **community-led practices: such as gardening, celebrating and playing** (Mallo et al., 2020).

How did the project unfold?

Initiated in 2015, this ongoing research project has unfolded in three phases:

Phase 1 (2015) developed alongside sustainable transport charity Sustrans, comprised a series of **temporal and experimental design interventions** drawn from a design activist approach.

Phase 1 **Unpacking affects, meanings and desires:**

Adapted from 'cultural probes' (Gaver et al., 1999), these **designed prompts or tasks aim at enabling inspirational responses**. Specifically, our method sought to map social and material assets, capturing the feelings and stories of the site.

Sensory mapping, March 2015

Mobile artefacts, March 2015

I like these [the bench], we can sit here after finishing your swimming and eat your sweets and get your energy back.
(young child)

Phase 1 Disrupting urban narratives:

Purpose-built mobile benches were installed along a car-dominated pavement over the course of three days. This form of 'provocation' was 'not [only intended] to understand the [urban environment], but to expose both the possibilities and constraints on future design directions' (Blomberg and Karasti, 2013).

Disrupting urban narratives, March 2015

Phase 1 Enabling a new urban experience :

Together with local residents who had engaged in previous events, we collectively envisaged a temporary intervention focusing on themes previously discussed, including positive lingering, playing and greening. We enacted a public / community space for four days.

Temporary intervention, October 2015
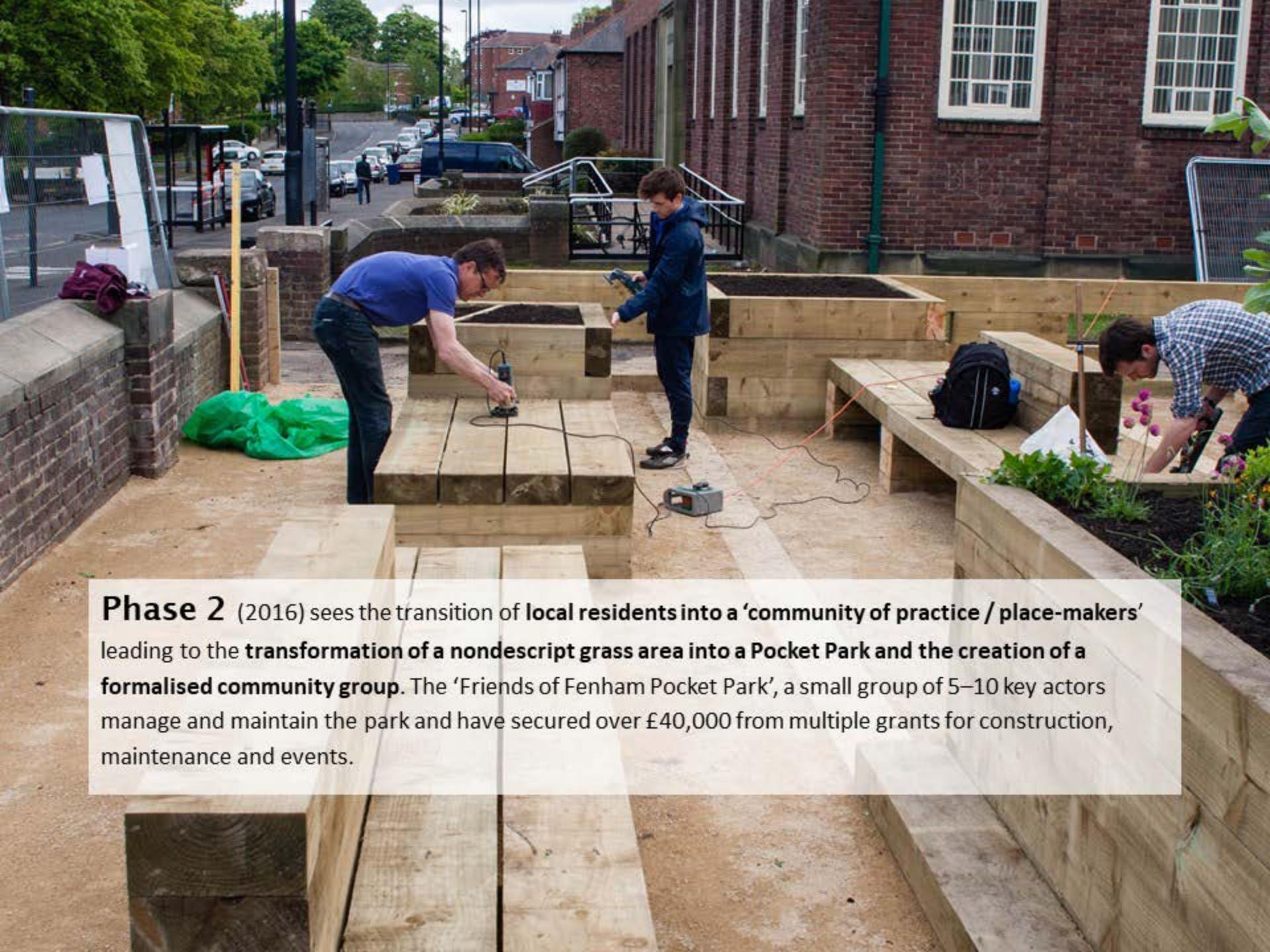
Phase 2 (2016) sees the transition of **local residents into a 'community of practice / place-makers'** leading to the **transformation of a nondescript grass area into a Pocket Park and the creation of a formalised community group**. The 'Friends of Fenham Pocket Park', a small group of 5–10 key actors manage and maintain the park and have secured over £40,000 from multiple grants for construction, maintenance and events.

2014

Jun / Jul

School Workshops

Sustrans

Oct

Walkabouts
Treasure Hunts
Halloween Lanterns

Sustrans

Nov / Dec / Feb

Outdoor Winter Warmer
Sunflower Planting

Sustrans

2015

Newcastle University Awarded ESRC Funding

Mar

Street Trial

Sustrans
Newcastle University

Mar / Apr

Sensory Mapping

Newcastle University

Apr

Street Observation

Newcastle University

Jun

Visual Conversation

Newcastle University
Sustrans

Jul

Visual Conversation

Newcastle University
Sustrans

Oct

Temporary Intervention

Newcastle University
Sustrans

Oct / Nov

Focus Group

Newcastle University
Sustrans

2015

Dec

Applying for DCLG Pocket Park Funding

2016

Jan

Funding Awarded

Mar

Design Phase

Apr

Quantity Survery

Apr / May

Construction Phase

21st May

Opening of Pocket Park

2015
2016

Jan

Feb

Pocket Park Opening

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Pocket Park In Use

Nov

Dec

Christmas Event

2017

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

One Year Celebration

Jul

AGM F.A.R. Centre

Nov

Dec

Christmas Event

2018

Jun

Feb

Mar

Planting Event

Apr

Jul

Oct

Dec

Christmas 2018

Planting Event

Admin

Public Event

Meeting

Communication
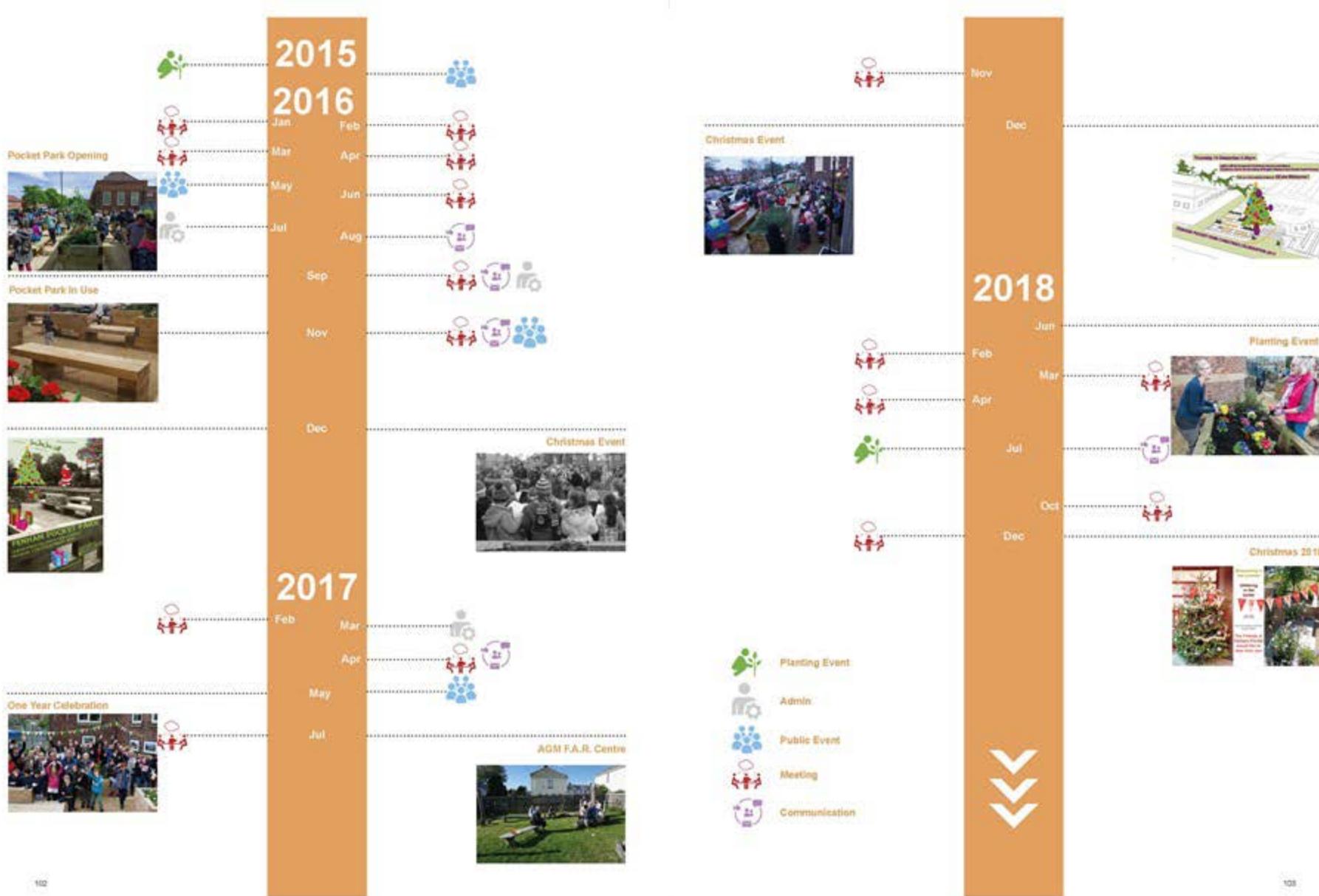
Phase 3 (2019 to date) **widens the scope and reach of the project** with an extension to the initial park. This phase is fully led and managed by the 'Friends of Fenham Pocket Park'. The extension is conceived as **a blank canvas on which to deploy events and engagement with the local community with a view to widen participation**; a much-needed approach post-COVID pandemic.

Phase 3 also includes the engagement of Architecture and Urban Planning students at Newcastle University (2022/23). Working closely with the Friends of Fenham Pocket Park, wider community groups, stakeholders and local residents, **students sought to enlarge the reach of the Pocket Park and collectively explore social and climate visions through an event called the Fenham Parliament** in the Spring 2022 - documented on this blog: https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/fenhamfutures/

Phase 3:

Local assets and wider community groups.

Phase 3

https://www.spacehive.com/fenhamfutures?searchText=fenham%20pocket%20park

Communities of practice

This University-third sector collaboration contributes to explore the potential of a creative-practice approach, design activism, in forging **communities of practice: mutually supportive and self-sustaining groups emerging out of the personal relations sustained and organised around a practice (**Wenger 1999).

Through the research, **practices of making, gardening, celebrating** emerged around the Pocket Park fuelled by a shared sense of citizenship.

The future ahead

Despite the thrust of the Friends of Fenham Pocket Park, **six years since the opening of the Park, the area has suffered further from the impact of austerity and retreat of public services** with the closure of the adjacent swimming pool due to lack of funding and maintenance, and the ever-dwindling opening times of the local library.

The future ahead

Findings from recent research (Tardiveau et al., 2022) point out that the future of the group relies upon:

- **supporting opportunities of networking and building relationships** with other community initiatives, creating tighter connections with the Library service users but also more widely in the neighbourhood (medical practice, local schools and more);

- **tapping into existing assets** through the creative reuse of Fenham Pool: *"a beautiful building, with so much potential to boost the community. It seems like a bit of a waste to do nothing with the building. It could be used as coffee shop or break-out rooms in the meantime"* (leader of a Library service group)

Taking inspiration from creative re-use:

John Marley Centre, artist and creative Studios (Scotswood) / La piscine d'en face, community space in former swimming pool (Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois, France):

An indoor market for local businesses
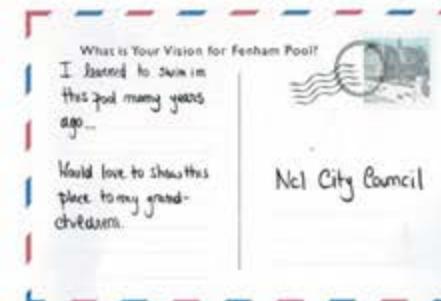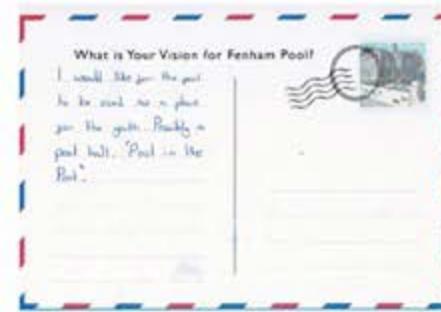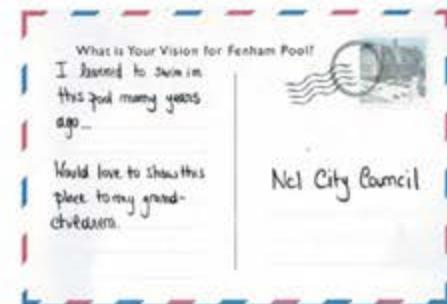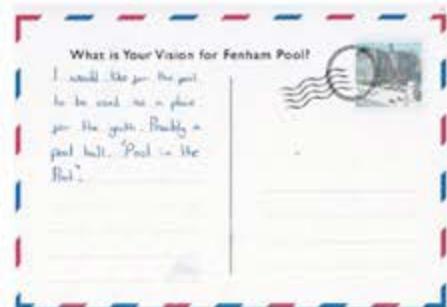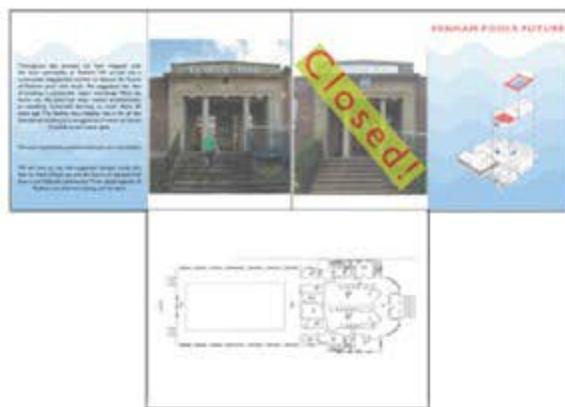
A play space for children / young people

A tree nursery / indoor gardening
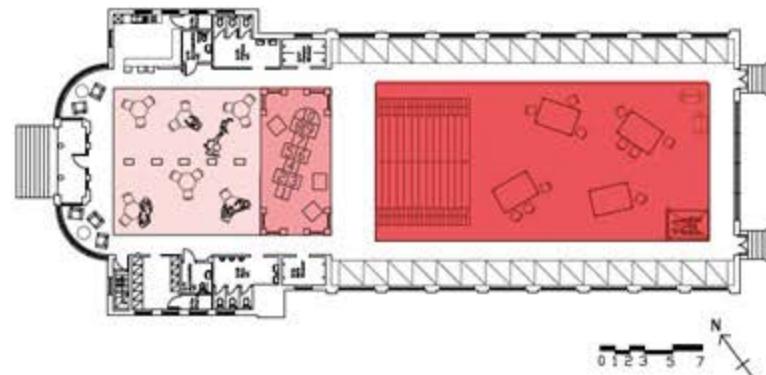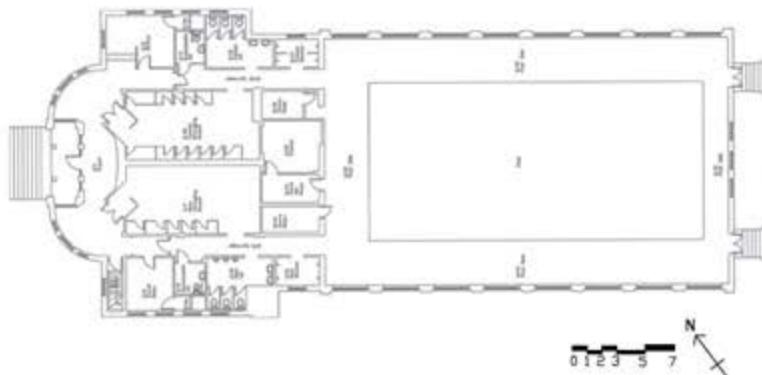
A re-use / repair workshop

Precedent: 'Makerspace': a community-led workshop in Gateshead

Dissemination and selected publications

Paper_ Mallo, D., Tardiveau, A. & Parsons, R. (2020) 'Design Activism: Catalysing Communities of Practice'. *Architectural Research Quarterly,* vol.24, no.2.

Book chapter_ Webb, D., Mallo, D., Tardiveau, A., Emmerson, C., Pardoe, M. & Talbot, M. (2020) The containment of democratic innovation: reflections from two university collaborations. In: Steer, M., Davoudi, S., Todd, L. & Shucksmith, M. (eds) *Social Renewal: Practical Responses to Neoliberal Austerity.* Bristol: Policy Press.

Research report_ Mallo, D. & Tardiveau, A. (2019) *Fenham Pocket Park. Stories, Practices and Processes.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University. ISBN: 978-0-7017-0268-7

Available at:

https://en.calameo.com/read/006096643d954a55eef70?page=1

Exhibition_*Community, Design, Practice*

Boiler House + School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape

Newcastle University, 29 March–26 April 2019

Exhibition_How We Live Now: Making Spaces in the North East with Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative

Newcastle Contemporary Art, 6 May – 23 July 2022

Conference Paper_ Tardiveau, A., Schoneboom, A., Mallo, D. and Webster, M. (2022) 'Fenham Pocket Park: a holding ground '. *Building Ground for Climate Collectivism: Architecture After the Anthropocene, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York City* (unpublished, review in-progress)