



Live Works

Location:

108 The Moor, Sheffield.

Run by:

University of Sheffield, School of Architecture.

Commissioned by:

University of Sheffield, School of Architecture.

Date:

2014 to present.

Timing:

Permanent (with occasional pop-up URs in neighbourhoods).

Space:

Old post-office on pedestrianised city centre shopping street.

Description:

Live Works is located on a busy shopping street in the heart of Sheffield city centre. It is a generous ground floor space with level access and big windows to the street. It offers a changing programme of events, exhibitions and activities, providing opportunities for people to share knowledge and ideas about the past, present and future of Sheffield's built environment. It is also a learning space where architecture students and researchers collaborate with community groups on 'live projects' to develop socially and environmentally sustainable design solutions for the city's buildings, streets and neighbourhoods. The Urban Room also has a makerspace, run by Aalfy, a social enterprise that holds regular events to support local people to design, make and sell their own products using digital technologies.



Image:

Live Works workshop
Credit: Empowering Design Practices

Aims of the UR:

Live Works' aim is to provide an inclusive and creative space for collaboration between the university, civic organisations and community groups in Sheffield. Through facilitating exploratory and curious conversations between groups in the city who don't usually work together we open up the processes of production of the urban environment to new ideas and approaches. We believe passionately that the city, its neighbourhoods, high streets and buildings will be more purposeful, attractive, sustainable and inclusive if a wider cross-section of people are involved in its production. We work hard to connect with marginalised groups and support them to contribute their local expertise through co-design activities. Live Works aims to break down silos, acting as a bridge between academic and city communities: to make our teaching and research more effective; to build collaboration across the city; to improve local placemaking.

How was the UR funded and resourced?

Core funding provided by the University of Sheffield. Additional support for premises from external partners Renew Sheffield, The Moor and Sheffield BID for premises refurbishment, reduced rent and business rates relief. Projects and activities are funded on an ad-hoc basis from various sources inc. National Lottery, Levelling-Up Fund, UK & EU research funding. In-kind funding via UoS student engaged learning modules and staff research activities.

Activities of the UR:

Live Works is used on a weekly basis by architecture students working on design projects and by a drop-in 'laser cafe' run by our partners Aalfy. In addition to these regular activities we hold workshops, events, debates and exhibitions that focus on specific themes or projects in the city. We focus on creative methods of engagement, supported by the design and making skills of our staff and students. We use models, drawings, collective mapping and making, projections, film, 1:1 installations, VR & AR to create a space, both inside and outside the Urban Room, that is playful, experimental and asks 'what if?' about



the future of our city. We also open up the Urban Room to community groups to run their own events, e.g. South Yorkshire Climate Alliance, Men Up North, Sheffield Civic Trust and a local co-housing group. Live Works builds on over 20 years of experience of Live Projects at the School of Architecture and over that time we have developed extensive networks of partners across the city. We prioritise working in areas of deprivation with under-represented groups and aim to make our work as accessible, transparent and jargon-free as possible. We aim to understand both the tangible and intangible impact of our work through collective evaluation with participants and partners through collection of data, interviews, film, stories and testimonials.

Image and Credit:
Live Works



Impact of the UR:

On placemaking:

Live Works has played a key role in establishing and delivering the co-production of both civic and community projects in Sheffield. We have hosted events and workshops to support community-led development of adventure playgrounds, social housing and city-centre regeneration projects. After many years of campaigning with local stakeholders for a community-led development of the Castlegate area of the city centre the resulting shared vision has attracted £17M levelling-up funding. We are currently working with Sheffield City Council to run a programme of co-production workshops in the Urban Room with over 30 city organisations to deliver this vision.

On participants:

Visitors and participants have welcomed having a space in the city centre dedicated to opening up conversations and debate about the urban environment. It has become clear that the Urban Room is a new, much needed typology on our high street, where local people can share their knowledge and experiences of and ideas for their local area. Through the Urban Room people have accessed information about local projects, made connections with the University and contributed to debate around important subjects in our city such as the climate emergency, gentrification and the future of the high street.

On the host organisation:

The School of Architecture is located at the top of the Arts Tower, a landmark building in Sheffield, with panoramic views across the city. Although this is a wonderful vantage point to work from, it can result in a sense of disconnection from the city and its communities. Rather than being removed from the city, at Live Works we take our place within it and this has fundamentally changed how we think about, produce and communicate our work. Live Works has helped us understand the value of our work beyond academia and architecture practice, developing valuable skills of community development, public engagement and advocacy to our students.

What was the primary challenge for your UR and how did you tackle it?

Despite being able to use the space regularly with student activities and the events offered by our partners it is still a challenge to keep the Urban Room animated. Outside university term-time, over holiday periods and the summer months which can be times of high footfall in the city but when teaching activities are at a minimum, it can be a challenge to keep the space active and engaging. We have collaborated with community groups to host their events in the urban room during these periods - helping to extend our networks, providing much needed space for community engagement in the city centre, while keeping the Urban Room animated.

What advice would you give someone setting up an Urban Room?

It takes a lot of resources to initiate and sustain an Urban Room, especially a permanent one like Live Works. We have found that reaching out to civic and community organisations that share our ethos of creative engagement has been vital to setting up and running Live Works. Forming strong partnerships with these groups has enabled us to access funding, share staffing, material resources and the operation of the Urban Room.

Image and Credit:
Live Works

**More information:**

www.urbanroomsnetwork.org/network/
www.live-works.org
www.liveprojects.org
www.aalfy.org
www.renewsheffield.co.uk

Acknowledgements:

The Urban Room Toolkit has been funded and supported by The University of Sheffield, the Greater London Authority and [Urban Room Folkestone](#) and the [Urban Rooms Network](#).

It was researched, written and produced by [Live Works](#), [The University of Sheffield, School of Architecture](#) (Carolyn Butterworth, Rosa Turner Wood, James Harrington)

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Graphic design by [Jon Cannon](#)
Website design by [Ross Bennett](#)

The Urban Rooms Toolkit is a public resource to be used, downloaded and shared by anyone interested in situated creative community engagement in placemaking. If you have any ideas or experience you would like to share and potentially contribute to the Toolkit please join the [Urban Rooms Network](#)!

This document is a downloadable, printer friendly version of the Urban Rooms Toolkit which can be found at urbanroomstoolkit.org

