

PEOPLE, PLACE AND SPACE

NSCD Conference 2027 | Call for Contributions

Thursday 7 and Friday 8 January 2027 | Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds

An invitation to artists, educators, researchers, students, cultural organisations, communities and sector leaders.

People, Place and Space

How do people shape the places and spaces they inhabit - and how do those places and spaces, in turn, shape people, practice, learning, identity and belonging?

People, Place and Space invites contributions that explore the relationships between human experience, geography, environment, culture, community, partnership and the spaces in which art, education and everyday life happen. At a time when questions of belonging, access, identity, sustainability, technology and community are increasingly interconnected, the conference creates a meeting place for practice, research, dialogue and performance.

For artists and educators, space is never neutral. A studio, theatre, classroom, street, public square, screen, landscape or community setting can influence who participates, whose voices are heard, how bodies move, what is created and what becomes possible. Place can carry memory, heritage and identity; it can also be contested, reimaged and transformed. People create communities around places, but increasingly also across digital and hybrid spaces that challenge conventional ideas of proximity and participation.

The conference will ask how artistic and educational practices can help us understand, animate, question and reshape the environments around us. We are interested in contributions that move between the local and global, physical and digital, individual and collective, established institutions and unexpected places.

Purpose of the conference

The conference is designed as a generous, interdisciplinary space for exchange: bringing together those who make, teach, research, lead, participate, commission, fund and experience the arts. We want the day to connect ideas with practice and create encounters between people who might not ordinarily find themselves in the same conversation.

Through the day we aim to:

- Explore how people experience, make, occupy, share and transform places and spaces;
- Consider the role of arts practice and education in creating belonging, connection, agency and participation;
- Examine how physical, social, cultural, environmental and digital spaces influence creative and learning practices;
- Share research, lived experience, artistic practice and innovative approaches across disciplines and sectors;
- Create opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange and new networks; and
- Open up critical conversations about access, power, sustainability and the future of the spaces in which we live, learn and create.

Call for contributions

We welcome proposals from individuals and teams, institutions and independent practitioners, students and student bodies, artists and companies, educators, researchers, community organisations, policymakers, regulators, funders, local authorities and colleagues working beyond the arts and higher education.

We particularly encourage proposals that bring different perspectives together, foreground lived or embodied experience, share work in progress, test ideas with delegates, or use the conference itself as a space for enquiry. Contributions do not need to be conventional academic papers.

Proposals may respond directly to one or more of the provocations below, sit across several of them, or introduce a related interpretation of People, Place and Space.

Suggested themes and provocations

1. People, identity and belonging

How do people find, negotiate or create a sense of belonging? How are identity, culture, heritage, migration, memory and lived experience expressed through artistic and educational practice? Who feels invited into our institutions, spaces and communities - and who does not?

2. Place, locality and community (including public space, Participation and Social Space)

What does it mean to make work with, for or within a particular place? How can artists and educators respond to local histories, communities and changing neighbourhoods? What can cultural and educational organisations contribute to civic life and place-making? What happens when artistic practice enters streets, parks, civic buildings, healthcare environments, workplaces or other shared spaces? How can participation change relationships between people and place, and how can creative practice support dialogue, wellbeing, agency and social connection?

3. Space, bodies and movement

How do bodies experience and negotiate space? What can dance, circus, theatre, performance and embodied practice reveal about architecture, proximity, restriction, freedom, visibility and encounter? How do different bodies experience the same space differently?

4. Spaces for learning

How are studios, classrooms, theatres, campuses and community settings changing? What makes a learning space inclusive, creative and enabling? How might pedagogy move beyond conventional classrooms and institutions into public, outdoor, professional, community or digital environments?

5. Access, inclusion and who space is for

How do design, culture, cost, geography, disability, race, class, gender and other lived realities affect access to artistic and educational spaces? How can spaces be made more welcoming, equitable and responsive without assuming that one model works for everyone?

6. Digital, virtual and hybrid space

Where is 'place' when people meet, learn and create online? How are digital platforms, immersive technologies, AI, virtual environments and hybrid practice changing presence, collaboration, authorship and access? What is gained - and what might be lost - when creative encounters become less tied to physical location?

7. Environment, ecology and sustainable space

How can artists, educators and institutions respond to climate and ecological challenges through the ways we make, tour, teach, build and occupy space? How can creative practice deepen relationships with landscape, nature and environment? What might more sustainable cultural and educational spaces look like?

8. Power, ownership and contested spaces

Who owns, controls, names and defines space? How do histories of power, colonialism, displacement, regeneration and inequality remain visible in places and institutions? How can artistic and educational practices question, reclaim or reimagine contested spaces and narratives?

9. Cultural spaces and the future of institutions

What should theatres, conservatoires, universities, galleries, studios and cultural organisations become? How can institutions be porous, collaborative and connected to the people and places around them? What new models of cultural and educational space are emerging?

10. Women in Leadership

How are women shaping leadership across the arts, education, culture and wider society? How do people, place and space influence women's opportunities to lead, progress and create change? We invite contributions that explore women's experiences of leadership, visibility and representation; the structures and cultures that enable or inhibit progression; and approaches to creating more equitable and inclusive spaces for leadership. Contributions might consider different models of leadership, mentorship and networks, intersectionality, organisational culture, caring responsibilities, career pathways, women-led creative practice, and how women are claiming, creating and transforming spaces in which to lead.

11. Global and intercultural perspectives

How does People, Place and Space change across cultures, countries and communities? What can international and intercultural exchange teach us about locality, mobility, tradition and global connection? How do artists sustain meaningful relationships across distance and difference?

12. Imagining new spaces

What spaces do we not yet have but need? We welcome speculative, experimental and future-facing contributions that imagine new spaces for creativity, education, community and performance - physically, socially, digitally or conceptually.

13. Other...

An option for you to be creative and suggest to us a theme that we haven't imagined yet

Ways to contribute

Interactive workshop | up to 45 minutes

Participatory sessions that invite delegates to explore an idea, method or practice through doing, discussion, experimentation or reflection.

Lecture-demonstration | up to 60 minutes

Practice-led presentations combining demonstration, performance, observation and discussion, with time for questions.

Roundtable or discussion panel | up to 45 minutes

A structured conversation around a clear question or provocation, designed to open into dialogue with delegates.

Oral presentation | 15-20 minutes + up to 10 minutes for questions

A focused presentation of research, practice, action research, a project, case study or work in progress. We welcome emerging enquiries as well as completed work.

Poster / visual presentation | A1 or A0

A visual way to share research, practice or a project. Posters may combine text, images, drawings, data, mapping or other visual material and will be displayed during the conference.

Low-tech performance / artistic intervention | 10-20 minutes

Short performances or artistic interventions responding to the conference theme. Proposals should require minimal technical support; selected artists will discuss practical requirements with the NSCD technical team.

Interactive research symposium session (30 mins)

Enabling presenters to gather data

Interactive research symposium session (60 mins)

Enabling presenters to gather data

What we are looking for

We are looking for a programme that is curious, challenging, accessible and varied. Proposals will be considered for the clarity of their connection to People, Place and Space; the value of the ideas, practice or experience being shared; their potential to engage delegates; and their contribution to a programme representing a breadth of people, disciplines, perspectives and contexts.

Submitting a proposal

Please be ready to provide:

- title of your contribution;
- lead contact name and email address;
- presenter/contributor names;
- institution, organisation, company or independent practitioner details, where relevant;
- preferred contribution format;
- a 150-250 word abstract suitable for publication;
- a short biography for each presenter (maximum 150 words); (submitted to teams after acceptance)
- anticipated participant capacity, where relevant;
- preferred room/space layout;
- equipment and resource requirements; and
- any accessibility, access or other requirements that will enable you to participate fully.

Submission deadline: **19 November 2026.**

Submit your proposal here: [NSCD Knowledge Exchange Conference 2027: PEOPLE, PLACE AND SPACE – Fill in form](#)

Once your proposal has been accepted:

Folder for presenters to upload their biographies: [Presenter biographies \(Word document\)](#)

Folder for presenter to upload their headshots: [Presenter headshots](#)

Conference information

Conference	People, Place and Space
Date	Thursday 7 January 2027: 9.30am – 7pm Friday 8 January 2027: 9.30am - 2.30pm
Venue	Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds
Format	In-person conference with presentations, workshops, discussion, visual work and performance

Presenter information and conditions

Presenters will be expected to attend the conference in person to deliver their accepted contribution.

Presenter places may be offered at a discounted conference rate rather than free of charge. As part of registration, presenters will be asked to agree to NSCD's relevant privacy and conference terms, including the use of submitted biographies and session information for conference publicity and, where applicable, photography, filming or sharing of agreed conference resources.

Detailed terms and conditions, final technical guidance, key dates and booking arrangements will be provided with the submission form and acceptance information.

Further information

For an informal conversation about the conference or the suitability of a proposed contribution, please contact Darren Carr, Vice Principal & Director of Higher Education, Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Darren.Carr@nscd.ac.uk – please title subject of email 'Conference 27'

For expressions of interest around the theme of 'Women in Leadership', please contact Sharon Watson, MBE DL, CEO & Principal Sharon.Watson@nscd.ac.uk – please title subject of email 'Conference 27'

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