Universities, Local Authorities and Culture-based Partnerships:
Case studies, reflections and evidence from REF impact case studies

National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange

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Journeys on diverse, non-linear, circuitous pathways to impact

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My own experience of working for Keele University in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council in pursuit of culture-led regeneration is, I think, illustrative of a common journey spanning almost a decade's worth of collaborative partnership work: patterns familiar, I'm sure, to many from both sectors, in their own places and pursuing similar goals.

In 2015-16 the city of Stoke-on-Trent threw its hat into the ring, declaring itself as a candidate for DCMS's City of Culture 2021. Coventry won that competition, as we know: but the long-term benefits for Stoke-on-Trent, and Sunderland (also a runner up for 2021, but more on them below) have been significant. In Stoke-on-Trent, the local authority (LA) provided important leadership for City of Culture and its legacy, even though the authority was living with the effects of the Westminster government's austerity drive, which bit with increasing severity from 2010. In 2016-17, I worked alongside a range of colleagues with the City Council's Culture and Events Manager, developing a body called The Cultural Forum and devising a culture strategy, which was published in 2018. By 2019, even before the pandemic, that Council post had been deleted in one of many rounds of staffing cuts. Despite unavoidable workforce depletion, the City Council has never abandoned culture as a leading component of its portfolio of commitments. In 2021 the Cultural Forum became Stoke Creates, a multi-partner cultural compact, with the City Council as member of the Board. The local universities – Keele and Staffordshire – were key partners, along with the Arts Council England (ACE) NPOs, leading charities and others. Stoke-on-Trent's Cultural Strategy was refreshed in 2021-22, a process in which the compact, and the city's communities, played a co-producing role, working with the LA. The LA's statutory commitment to core social services, placed in a condition of severe and mounting shortfall by central government cuts, continues to grow as the scale of our present social and cost of living crisis deepens. At the same time, council officers continue to provide essential expertise in and leverage around the management of civic estates and capital projects, without which life-improving regeneration projects are hard to progress and sustain. For example, the City Council led Stoke-on-Trent's recent (2023) successful capital bid (c.£5M) to ACE's Cultural Development Fund. This will result in the strategic re-development of the city's key heritage site, the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery. The ability of LAs to keep focused, while severely financially challenged (including the threat of bankruptcy) offers perhaps to universities lessons in service resilience that we, from the HE sector, now ourselves have to confront. The figures from local government are eye-watering. Daniel Mutibwa's (et al) essay reports figures from the Local Government Association (LGA) on the scale of the present crisis

of LA spending cuts — £15b real terms reduction since 2010, a funding gap of £3.4b in 2023/24, rising to £4.5b in 2024/25.

The essays assembled here valuably explore as their subject matter journeys undertaken in developing partnerships between local authorities, universities, and culture strategies, and their impacts through a variety of time frames and foci, as Evelyn Wilson's introduction shows. We see a kind of career structure to these partnerships, ranging from early, to mature, and leading, in some instances to retirement: though the retirees often have a powerful legacy to bestow to those who are following up behind. These relationships demonstrate variety in ambition and scale, building on local authorities' statutory responsibilities for libraries, as well as adult and child social care. There are experiences of new opportunities through, for example, the cultural compact structure.

The work assembled here should also be seen in the context of two national level reports. The report from Southampton University, Ashton and Bell (2023) Cultural strategies and futures.pdf (southampton.ac.uk) contains important recommendations for those from HE or local government who are considering or acting closely with partners to develop a partnership model that draws on and enhances local assets and resources. Such activity should also take account of the important Local Government Association (LGA) report 12.24 Cultural strategy in a box_04.2_2.pdf (local.gov.uk) We recommend that these reports be read alongside the essays assembled by NCACE here. The essays are vital lived experience reports from the frontline of research, policy and practice development that continue to underline the sheer diversity of approaches to partnership opportunities. This work needs to be seen in the context of that deep crisis of funding for local authorities, as reported by Matibwa, (et al). Perhaps what the essays don't report on fully, yet, are the imminent risks posed by an unprecedented and spiralling funding crisis for the HE sector, where it may become increasingly challenging to find the capacity to sustain partnerships.

As of now, some essays assembled here reflect on nascent university-led partnerships as a shared solution to the challenges faced by local authorities providing cultural services in a time of austerity. For example, Daniel Mutibwa's (et al) essay focuses on VCCC (Visioning a Cultural and Creative County) partnership development framework between the University of Nottingham, Leicestershire County Council, supported by Arts Council England and varied UKRI funding avenues. As the essay reports, this partnership framework has secured ACE NPO status, but it does not identify as a cultural compact. This underlines the sheer variety of partnership structures that are available to support cultural regeneration strategies: it also points to the way in which each place is steeped in a logic of under-served need that makes one unit of place – here the county – the appropriate organisational focus. In another essay, Idrees Rasouli and Matt Burman reminds readers that cities, as the usual loci for compacts, themselves have their own career pathway to acknowledge in assessing that need: despite the age (eight-hundred years plus) of its oldest university, Cambridge is a 'young' city, having been granted that civic status only in 1951. Rasouli and Burman, from Anglia Ruskin, Cambridge's newest (post-1992) university, reflect on the way in which Cambridge projects an image of wealth, privilege, and massive growth in the tech and life sciences sectors. However, they also point out that the city is also practically experienced as expensive and unequal, with need for

the combined resources of a compact to culturally engage those touched most deeply by the inequalities. City-based and regional partnerships need a variety of structures to support their needs.

Partnerships strategically look to past practice and insight to aid them on their nascent journeys. Daniel Mutibwa casts a retrospective eye over the important PhD work of Ian Hutchcroft, defining from the perspective of Plymouth in the mid-1990s what we've now come to recognise as the university as anchor institution — though in the mid-90s, Hutchcroft identified what seemed then like unbridgeable 'siloed' positions into which LAs and HEIs were defiantly dug. The strategic support for public engagement by NCCPE through the 2000s, further supported by funding council initiatives such as AHRC Connected Communities, and programmes of KE, were the game changers: and the work of NCACE itself extends this important tradition of bridge-building work.

Rasouli and Burman's experience of developing the compact Create Cambridge is also strategically retrospective in the model it followed: it draws on the important historical example of Bristol Ideas, a thriving engine of a cultural compact before the very idea of a compact had been conceived. Rasouli and Burman's essay is important for reminding us, again, of the formative period of the 1990s. Bristol Ideas was founded in 1992, and closed just this year, in April 2024. Closure of Bristol Ideas: Farewell Event — Bristol Ideas, reminding us, perhaps, that compacts, and other like-organisations have a finite life course, and that closure is an important stage of the journey if they bequeath anything like the legacy of Bristol Ideas. The 'closure' on its long history of multifarious activities is recorded in the book *The City is the Project* (2023), focusing on a legacy of strategic projects that encouraged deep and lasting civic engagement. The idea of the city, or conceivably the county, as project represents a collective opening up, beyond Stoke, Bristol, Cambridge and the County of Leicestershire, including new ways of conceiving local authorities' execution of statutory responsibilities in cultural provision.

Such ambitions can be realised through large-scale capital projects, a key area of expertise and responsibility for local authorities. Sunderland is another place where the city, its people and their cultural ecosystems have become 'the project'. Leanne Littlewood, Sunderland City Council, is directing the completion of Sunderland's Culture House, due to open in Summer 2025 and designated the National Centre for Creative Smart Cities. In essence Culture House is a library, and thus Sunderland's innovative take on a statutory requirement: that the LA must provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. The 'smart' dimensions of the project have implications for Sunderland's entire arts ecology (including Sunderland Culture, the compact, though it is not formally a partner in this project). The origins of Culture House can be traced to Sunderland's City of Culture bid, and its Riverside Vision, which gave the project some immunity from the political winds of change that can affect local authority capital works programmes (this capital project is funded through the Future High Street Fund, with match from the LA). Culture House will, through a facility known as the 'City Eye', function as a story-telling artefact, relating narratives of the data-driven decisions the city has reached, enabling communities to connect with and contribute to those decisions. Thus, Culture House is a part of the city's democratic aspiration: through books (the traditional tool of democratic education) but also multi-media, immersive experiences.

The new library is thus an embodied, but contested, symbol of future possibility. If its modernist architectural design is not universally loved, it is a way of showcasing and promoting career opportunities in the creative industries. There is an important HE partnership angle to this aspiration: Leanne Littlewood's discussions with university educators reveal that while their suites of creative courses are attractive to potential students, it is their parents who at times need convincing about the viability and variety of career openings available within the creative industries'. A widely used, accessible and multi-media offer in the centre of the city can help to make that case for a career pipeline from HE to tangible opportunities. (With thanks to Leanne Littlewood, recorded conversation, 17 June 2024)

The other essays brought together in this collection, as Evelyn Wilson's introduction notes, reflect on more established, mature and sometimes highly focused collaborations. Nicola Wallis's case study focuses on the partnership between Cambridge University, the Fitzwilliam and a consortium of Cambridge museums, accounting for the educational and creative work with the council-run children's service. The partnership has evolved an ethos of co-production through a methodology of 'enquiry as stance', as befits its guiding, non-goal specific aspiration for change, building on the excellence of a former SureStart centre.

Rowan Bailey's piece begins in Raymond Williams's commitment to the ordinariness of culture as a source for building relationships in 'places at risk of creative depletion' – in Bailey's case, from her base at the University of Huddersfield, the singular place is Huddersfield and the polycentric (not unique to Stoke-on-Trent's Six Towns, by any means) towns and villages comprising the West Yorkshire borough of Kirklees. As part of a by now recognisable journey, Bailey's work with the communities of Kirklees, integrated as it now is into West Yorkshire Combined Authority, involves programmes of creative, festival- and conference-based activity (focused on Place, Sound, Creative Health, Climate Change), dovetailing with the consultation process that results in the development of a local authority cultural strategy. Shared priorities around public health between university creative researchers and the LA drives the development of an ambitious creative health system, confronting the context of austerity and the ever-increasing fragility of primary care provision. Bailey's essay, through the work of Rosy Greenlees, is urgent and timely for reminding readers about the need not to devalue arts and humanities disciplines: they are the essential glue binding research and education driven creative partnerships. It cannot be repeated often enough: these are presently at severe risk. The health humanities is a superb field – but arts and humanities are ailing.

Bailey reflects on the importance of the 'slow learning' that emerges from the 'culture of making' that, over time, produces 'the new' through positive change at multiple, interwoven levels in the equally complex networks that create places. Bailey notably cites the important report by John Holden, on cultural ecologies and written for AHRC's Cultural Value programme in 2015, which states that 'culture is an organism, not a mechanism' – much less a series of linear outcomes. The Ecology of Culture (publicartonline.org.uk) this may encourage readers to re-think what we mean by research impact, especially as we listen to the accent on the importance of collaborative activity, too, which is generative.

This brings me, finally, to the work of Federica Rossi, who has completed some valuable work on the 2021 REF results, focusing in on the way in which local authority and creative arts and

HE partnerships figured in Impact Case Studies. Rossi's analysis demonstrates how university and local authority partnerships were especially evident in Main Panels C (Social Sciences), and Panel D (Arts and Humanities). Rossi's analysis demonstrates that, in 2021, there tended to be an emphasis on local authorities 'commissioning' research from universities, soliciting their expertise. Sometimes, Rossi found it hard to fathom precisely the partnership status of the LA. This perhaps points to an earlier phase of research partnership, based more on a commissioning model, and a hangover from the siloed worlds that Hutchcroft's research identified in the 1990s: REF cycles, after all, often cover a long period, and impact can be a slow burn activity. Moreover, REF Impact Case Studies authors need to be able to demonstrate linear relationships and outcomes in which the impact can be traced back to the primacy of their own research. As many of our contributions demonstrate, the same sense of linearity is harder to discern in the dynamic, collaborative, non-hierarchical eco-systems of knowledge exchange relationships between universities and LAs. Does this mean REF criteria should consider adjusting expectations of impact case studies for 2029, to better capture actual impacts of cultural partnerships? That may at last recognise all the messy productivity of fungal mycelium that best characterises their positive powers of generation.

Introduction

Evelyn Wilson, National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange

This collection of papers was inspired by and follows from an Evidence Café event we held in October 2023.[1] It took as its topic University and Local Authority Cultural Partnerships and its purpose was to explore some of the ways in which universities and local authorities work together on arts and culture related projects and partnerships. It highlighted a number of different models of practice, including those connecting to strategic initiatives such as Culture Compacts, and it also presented a number of case studies from partnerships based in different parts of the country. Our intention was to bring people together to start a conversation and share stories, advice and good practice about what the future of cultural partnerships between universities, local authorities and other arts and cultural actors might look like and how they might best be supported and communicated.

Due to the richness of the discussion, the diverse nature of the work presented and indeed the palpable energy in the room and enthusiasm about such partnerships, we invited contributors as well as event attendees to write up short papers. This was partly to create a small legacy of the event itself, partly to contribute to the nascent evidence base around this work and partly as a pilot, to test the appetite to develop a larger future piece of work to showcase the values and impacts of these collaborations. We are at a point in time when it behoves us to be working together in imaginative and brave ways to maximise public resources for wider societal, cultural, environment and economic good and our universities and local authorities are key in such endeavours.

These eight papers, albeit in very different ways, narrate some of the ways in which universities and local authorities are working together on cultural projects, culture-making, cultural strategy development and placemaking. They identify and reflect on the values and future potential of partnerships between universities, the arts and cultural sectors and the wider communities in several of our towns and cities, highlighting work taking place in the Midlands, the North, London and the South West. Although they have different points of focus, the papers all emphasise something that so many of us inherently know, which is that partnerships take time to develop and require trust, goodwill and substantial effort, commitment and positivity from many actors across the ecosystems in which the work is taking place.

Our first two papers explore recently established and ongoing projects. We hear first from Dr Idrees Rasouli and Matt Burman on the exciting ambitions of the newly established Create

1 Soundcloud recording

Cambridge, a new Cultural Compact with partners including Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge City Council, Cambridge Curiosity & Imagination, Cambridge Junction, Collusion, the Fitzwilliam Museum, King's College, Raspberry Pi Foundation, and Wysing Arts Centre. It is heartening to see just how much interest there is in the compacts as some of our previous work also indicates.[2] Our second paper by Daniel H. Mutibwa, Cat Rogers and Amanda Hanton describes a partnership between the University of Nottingham and Leicestershire County Council (LCC) (2023-2026) that is evolving to explore how LCC and indeed local authorities in multi stakeholder partnerships in general could be best supported to navigate constantly evolving cultural landscapes. It does so by looking back to look forward, reminding us of how far our thinking about the need for more joined up working has shifted since the early 90's.

The next three papers highlight some notable established ongoing collaborations projects. Dr Rowan Bailey, from University of Huddersfield, outlines some of the key activities that she and others have been developing with the Creative Development team at Kirklees Council since 2018 to contribute to the cultural development of Huddersfield through public realm programming and in the establishment of ground-breaking initiatives such as *Temporary Contemporary*; a network of meanwhile spaces on the high street for creative communities to initiate and deliver cultural activities to different audiences. The theme of research collaborations and cultural programming in public space, with a very specific focus on Climate Emergency, is highlighted in Andy Franzkowiak's paper on Cultural Reforesting, demonstrating the power of issue-based collaboration whilst also urging us as readers to think about the importance of the intersections of place, climate, history and community.

Nicola Wallis's paper 'For the Increase of Learning' demonstrates yet another innovative approach to cultural partnership development, this time between Cambridge University and the Local Authority mediated by The Fitzwilliam Museum, an art museum which is part of the University of Cambridge Museums consortium (UCM). The UCM has a long-standing relationship with different elements of the council-run Children's Services. The focus of this inspiring work is on maximising their collective capacity to transform the experiences of young children and families, and she urges collaborators to make sure that their first joint project is one that is done really well so that it inspires and builds trust.

Our last three papers focus on: the value of long-term strategic thinking and of evaluation, recognising the complexities of the collaborative process and on REF as a mechanism that indicates some of the key ways in which university collaborations with local authorities around cultural projects are performing.

Anna Kime and Pam Johnson's paper discuss how an evaluation focussed research placement between Centre for Cultural Value and Leeds City Council is helping to bridge the gap between academia, policy and practice in Leeds and helping demonstrate the value of LCC's longstanding investment in and commitment to supporting culture. It also usefully flags the development of the strategic relationship between the university and the local authority and how they have been working together to establish Areas of Research Interest, and this, it seems to me, could be a powerful method that other institutions hoping to build their collaborative research capacities might also usefully adopt.

2 Cultural Compacts, collaboration, knowledge exchange festival event and Cara Courage's Greater than the Sum of Parts paper

So often missing from the partnership narrative is reference to the hidden labour and other such often invisible entanglements that are integral to supporting deep change. Rebecca Di Corpo's sensitive reflection of her and others work at Bath Spa University brings these and the sometimes overlooked aspects of the collaborative process to light. In so doing she widens the lens to encourage a different perspective on the myriad of actors that are needed to conceive, buy into and support the successful delivery of university and local authority cultural collaborations.

As part of our ongoing work on REF, Dr Federica Rossi's paper investigates the roles local authorities play in cultural knowledge exchange between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other societal actors, highlighting four areas in particular: their role as collaborators in bid development, research commissioners, access facilitators and collaborators in implementing research outcomes.

I hope this publication will be of interest to and valuable not just for those who have experience of developing cultural partnerships and/or co-creating R&D between Higher Education, local authorities and the arts and cultural sector, but for anyone interested in the future of local cultural policy formation and the role that university partnerships can play therein. It is a small-scale intervention designed to add to the knowledge and evidence base on such work, and indeed also to celebrate it, and it also hopefully indicates not just how crucial these partnerships are in supporting cultural projects, infrastructures and strategy but how much potential for future innovation lies in this space and, as our recent events would seem to testify, how much goodwill and energy there is to make this happen.

I would like to extend my thanks and deep gratitude to Professor David Amigoni for writing our Foreword. It sets a rich context, highlighting important work being developed by colleagues elsewhere in this field and drawing out some rich and compelling observations from the papers presented here. It is in no small part due to our conversations over the years since establishing NCACE that this publication, and the events that have preceded it, have come to fruition. Huge thanks to all our writers for your generous and inspiring contributions and for your patience as we worked through the process of bringing this publication to fruition. Your work is a testament to the rich panoply of innovative ways of working that are creating opportunities for learning, community, cultural and civic empowerment and achieving positive solutions to challenges across the country. Finally, many thanks to my colleagues at NCACE and to Noshin Sultan in particular for all her work in bringing this publication to fruition.

Author Biography

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Evelyn Wilson is Co-Director of NCACE (National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange) and Director TCCE (The Culture Capital Exchange)

Create Cambridge: A New Cultural Compact for Cambridge

Dr Idrees Rasouli, Anglia Ruskin University
and **Matt Burman, Cambridge Junction**

Introduction

As a young city (officially a city in 1951), Cambridge's existing narrative is the victim of its own success. The Cambridge 2050 vision set out by the UK government's *The Case for Cambridge* (2024) will require an unprecedented level of physical and psychological change at the local and global level that will need *"a new kind of leadership for culture"* built upon a strong, strategic, and sustained collaboration between place-based partners to support collective and coordinated cultural actions that drive lasting benefits (Arts Council England, 2020).

This paper explores how Create Cambridge — currently being developed by a collaboration that includes independent artists, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge City Council, Cambridge Curiosity & Imagination, Cambridge Junction, Collusion, the Fitzwilliam Museum, King's College, Raspberry Pi Foundation, and Wysing Arts Centre—is transforming the role of culture, cultural leadership and partnership in the city, ensuring that Cambridge can become a globally recognised champion of creativity and innovation, where the arts, culture and its producers can flourish, and actively help design the future of the city and drive inclusive growth.

> "Culture can help our cities to define a shared vision for the future, to promote innovation and positive change in our businesses and institutions, to equip communities to deal positively with change, and to realise more equitable opportunities for all individuals to succeed." (Cultural Cities Enquiry, 2019).

Drawing on critical evidence and insights gathered from various workshops, consultations, focus groups, interviews and insight-gathering events in Cambridge, this paper discusses why Create Cambridge, a new Cultural Compact, was initiated and the ways that it is supporting the development of a thriving cultural sector in the Cambridge City Region.

Cultural compacts *"set out to develop a strategic plan for culture"* in cities that focuses the region's economic and social infrastructures towards building an inclusive and impactful cultural ecosystem (Local Government Association, 2022). Successful cultural compacts are *"partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority"* (Arts Council England, 2020) and make more people aware and feel the economic and social benefits of cultural participations in their cities (Core City UK, 2019).

Image: Cambridge Arts Network. Caption: Panel discussion on the Value of Culture and Pride in Place at the Cambridge Arts Network Conference (Feb 2024).

Rethinking the Role of Universities, Local Authorities, Arts Organisations and Urban Citizens in Cultural Partnerships

Cambridge has an established national and international reputation as a centre of research, innovation, and learning; a carefully projected image of wealth and privilege that is home to significant multinational tech, life and bio-science corporations, game-changing discoveries, ideas, and inventions, with many significant cultural assets and a rich heritage. Cambridge is also one of the fastest growing cities in the UK, with the central government seeing the city as an area of opportunity for significant further growth in the future.

However, Cambridge is identified as one of the most expensive and unequal cities in the United Kingdom (Centre for Cities, 2017), with a difference of 10-year gap in life expectancy between its neighbourhoods. At the same time, citizens and the local government are concerned for the environmental and cultural (in the widest sense) impact this may bring, with a clear risk of damage to (eco)systems and major challenges to infrastructure including water and energy supply, public transport, schools and the health service. To address these growing issues, Create Cambridge was formed to help Cambridge become a city where culture is not just celebrated but also serves as a dynamic force for positive change.

Partnerships between universities, local authorities, arts and cultural organisations, and a city's citizens play crucial roles in enriching the cultural, social, and economic landscapes. These partnerships can influence policies and strategic initiatives through the design of renewed urban relationships and cultural interactions as well as circular, shared, caring, and joined-up thinking and doing that are contextual, ecological, strategic, and systematic (Rasouli, 2023).

Create Cambridge seeks to align local ambitions with broader cultural, economic, and social goals by moving beyond negative narratives, and to tell new stories, to imagine otherwise and collectively find solutions to the city's future challenges by working collaboratively with local individuals, organisations, and communities to grow equity and power, particularly with young people who have been marginalised by Cambridge's image and reputation. It is not motivated by a need to exploit artists as the vanguard of regeneration or indeed gentrification and wants to work

in partnership with stakeholders (local authorities, universities, developers, cultural organisations) to realise and secure long-term (more than meanwhile) solutions to a need for these spaces for creativity, that has been righteously declared by the city's artists for many years.

Adding value in place and making a difference in the cultural landscape of Cambridge re-enforced the need for a strong, strategic cultural leadership that would drive for change and renewal of the city's multifaceted identity and its key socio-economic challenges. This requires rethinking of the conventional models of cultural compacts by moving beyond static notions of culture, emphasising intersectionality, incorporating power dynamics, promoting dialogue and mutual learning, fostering a foundation of trust and respect, adopting a global perspective, encouraging community-led initiatives, integrating digital and virtual spaces, and ensuring sustainable practices.

To address this, Create Cambridge is working to ensure that culture is central to the city's future agenda, not only in terms of cultural infrastructure that has the capacity to provide to an increasing population but also through the evidenced role vibrant, international, contemporary cultural programmes can play in increasing well-being, happiness, participation in civic life. Create Cambridge aims to renew the city's pride and lay the foundations for a future-facing cultural, economic, and social ecosystem by bringing together and forming cohesive, new communities, and ensuring that new arrivals to the city find a visibly rich accessible and inclusive cultural offer and feel a belonging and an urgent connection to the city.

Lessons from Existing Models, Practices, and Frameworks

There are many examples of cultural compacts across the country, that are either city, town or region/county focussed partnerships. A successful comparator for Create Cambridge is Bristol Ideas, which was founded in the mid-90s to respond to the challenges faced by Bristol such as crime, poverty and lack of opportunity through *"strengthening and creating new social infrastructure as well as using existing social infrastructure in the city"* (The Bennett Institute for Public Policy, 2023)—spaces for learning and coming together. Bennett Institute's recently published report, *The City is the Project* (2023), highlights three key factors that contributed to the longevity of Bristol Ideas: the ability to adapt to the changing needs of the city, working in partnership with other organisations on long-term and shorter-term projects, and drawing upon the stories of the city for inspiration. Bristol of Ideas was more concerned about changing people's behaviour through culture and through strategic projects that encouraged civic engagement than merely getting people to attend events and take part in activities. To change the city for the better, it focused on both the economic and the social impact of arts and cultural programmes.

Findings from the *Cultural Cities Enquiry (2019)* further provides practical recommendations for cities to harness the transformative potential of arts and culture and recognises the social and economic benefits of cultural engagement in people's lives. For example, Hull saw arts and culture as an opportunity for renewing its identity and regeneration which in turn increased its citizen's confidence and pride in place as well as long-term ambitions. Liverpool used arts and culture to tackle its local problems by developing long-term collaborations with artists and arts organisations across all of its municipal life. Plymouth, on the other hand, used arts and culture as a catalyst for repositioning the city and turning international aspiration into reality,

especially its waterfront, for its residents, visitors, and investors. These examples devise new ways for using arts and culture to create an ecosystem that will help cities grow and become more resilient, ambitious, and the sites of innovation and enterprise.

Cambridge is home to many critically acclaimed, award-winning artists, designers and creatives, as well as cultural organisations and creative businesses; however, it lacks a post-industrial architecture that could be occupied by arts workers, and artist-led collectives elsewhere in the country, transforming into affordable and accessible studios and creative workspaces. It also lacks the necessary physical and psychological infrastructure to link its diverse communities and sectors to long-term social and creative experiences and activities in the city.

Thus, for Create Cambridge to be successful, it is vital to ensure Cambridge's identity, cultural organisations, and programmes are resilient and high-quality in the face of rapid change, development and growth by increasing support for artists, improving dialogue with all stakeholders, and collaboration through distinctive cross-sector collaboration and community co-creation. A key factor is to find ways for becoming more present and truly open to all of Cambridge's communities, visitors and those newly arriving to foster a renewed sense of community, connectivity and sustainability. Create Cambridge is, therefore, formed to ensure that the city's collective cultural offer, and the value that arts and culture create for the city becomes much more than the sum of its parts, is inspirational, thought-provoking, inclusive, accessible and visible. Ensuring in turn that culture in the city can make a more decisive contribution to sustainable (economic) growth, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Create Cambridge as a Future of Cultural Partnerships

Over the past year a group of cultural leaders from across the city have participated in a series of cultural conversations in consultation with the cultural and community organisations, artists, universities, local authority, and other local institutions to discuss the critical role that culture can play in Cambridge. These co-creation opportunities have been strategically curated to enable all partners to imagine and find solutions to the many challenges that Cambridges faces and explore the type of change that could work for the city. This resulted in co-creating a shared vision that positions Cambridge as a truly international city of culture, that embraces diverse perspectives and artistic expressions, building on our combined strength in research and innovation and enabling us to tell new stories that might help us co-design a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Image: Idrees Rasouli. Caption: Create Cambridge workshop and discussions involving artists, designers, curators, councillors, executives, educators, and innovators from across Cambridge on shaping a more vibrant and inclusive cultural landscape for Cambridge at the Cambridge School of Art, Anglia Ruskin University (Dec 2023).

Create Cambridge was formed to help Cambridge become a city where culture is not just celebrated but also served as a dynamic force for positive change, inclusivity, and the pursuit of shared ambitions. This, we truly realise, will require weaving together of the city's cultural, community and innovation ecosystems in patterns that will be more representative and increase equity for those of us who experience marginalisation. By embracing collaboration, celebrating diversity, and surfacing and addressing inequities, the Create Cambridge partnership aspires to make Cambridge not just a city with a storied past but a city whose story is continually unfolding by retelling the city's history and reimagining the city's future. With this new narrative shaped by the city's people and the genius of this place, Create Cambridge (currently a small co-leadership group) is developing a governance structure and terms of reference to help raise funds necessary to further develop the project and an ambitious ten-year plan designed with partners with a focus on:

- Delivering new cultural and creative collaborations across the city that addresses issues of precarity for artists and arts workers.
- Ensuring equitable access to culture in all its forms, unlocking opportunity through creative participation and engagement across generations.
- Building multi-stakeholder consortium between the cultural sector and universities, technology and innovation sector, government and civil society.
- Creating sustainable infrastructure for making and experiencing culture in the city.
- Developing a major new international cultural programme for the city.

Achieving these aims and objectives is defined by Create Cambridge's leadership model that centres on leadership by the cultural sector to ensure culture is at the heart of future plans for

Cambridge; that decisions are made openly and transparently in collaboration with local and national government (and their agencies) as well as universities, corporate partners, and civil society; that artists and communities are integrated in our plans.

Thus, Create Cambridge is a new cultural compact for the Cambridge City Region formed out of collective passion and shared ambition for curating, producing, responding to and delivering exceptional, new artistic ideas, creative concepts and collaborative cultural projects for Cambridge through long-term cross-sector partnerships and structures that enable care for all with an intersectional approach to equity, diversity, and inclusivity.

Author Biographies:

Dr Idrees Rasouli

Dr Idrees Rasouli is an award-winning designer, academic, and researcher of products, processes, and places with a focus on innovation and transformation. As a creative leader and systems-thinker, Idrees has worked with a wide range of cities, organisations, and people, helping them solve issues of urbanisation in the 21st century. He has led and delivered projects in a variety of industries, including technology, healthcare, transport, consumer goods, manufacturing, education, and construction throughout the UK, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. As Associate Professor and Deputy Head of Cambridge School of Art at Anglia Ruskin University, Idrees is the Chair of Art & Design and provides academic leadership and strategic direction for a diverse community of students and staff with a focus on extending the school's purpose and offering in the 21st century, particularly around ethical, inclusive, and systemic education, research, and practice. He is the Founder and Creative Director of X-Crop, a Cambridge-based research and innovation lab focused on making cities, organisations, and people better by design, and a co-lead of Create Cambridge, the city's new cultural compact.

Matt Burman

Since 2018, Matt has been Artistic Director & CEO of Cambridge Junction, leading on the curation and production of theatre, dance, live art, circus, and artist development programmes including commissioning and co-producing more than 60 new projects, including Quarantine's 12 Last Songs, Marikiscrycrycry's Goner, Back to Back Theatre's The Democratic Set Cambridge, Igor x Moreno's Karrasekare, Bert & Nasi's x ATRESBANDES' It Don't Worry Me, and Laura Murphy's A Spectacle of Herself. Since early 2024, he is a co-lead of Create Cambridge, the city's new cultural compact. Between 2016-2018 he developed an independent producing and programming portfolio, working across artforms, locating radical structures for the creation of new work. Projects included Leeds 2023 (developing the programme for Leads' bid to be European Capital of Culture), LIFT (producing the UK tour of Lola Arias' Minefield), Northern Stage, Unlimited Theatre, Proto-type Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse and independent artists Luca Rutherford and Hannah Jane Walker. He was Artistic Director of Yorkshire Festival 2016, Head of Programme & Audiences at Warwick Arts Centre (2011-2015), Executive Producer for Norfolk & Norwich Festival (2008-2011) and General Manager of Forced Entertainment (2003-2008).

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Visioning the Future of University-Local Authority Cultural Partnerships Beyond Austere Times

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Summary

Cultural provision and associated partnerships play a significant role in enriching people's lives through inspiration, education and capacity-building. Local authorities have been their greatest funders. But with budgets under unprecedented pressure due to enduring austerity and numerous national and global crises, significant and successive cuts are being made — leading to considerable adverse effects. This paper explores how an ongoing partnership between the University of Nottingham and Leicestershire County Council (LCC) (2023-2026) is responding innovatively to this challenging financial and political environment and discusses how LCC in particular, and local authorities in multi stakeholder partnerships in general, could be best supported to navigate the constantly evolving cultural landscape.

Reviewing the Current Cultural Landscape and Local Authorities Trapped in 'Dire' and 'New Territory'

Cultural services play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of people's lives. The same can be said for the organisations and practitioners that provide those services. In addition to introducing people to the intrinsic value of the arts, culture and heritage, cultural services also deliver a wide range of outcomes. These include:

- facilitating the development of new and adaptive skills;
- enabling local communities to develop civic engagement competencies and local pride;
- promoting local economic growth through the creation of employment opportunities in the creative and visitor economies;
- contributing to addressing people's health and wellbeing through bringing together local communities at times of individual and collective crises and celebration; and
- remaining an essential outlet through which many people learn about, and experience, the world around them.

To put in context just how essential cultural services are, the United Nations designates engagement with them as a human right — one whereby '[e]veryone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits'[3]

3 United Nations (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available online at: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights (Accessed 27 October 2023).

The enabling of this right requires a wide range of stakeholders to provide support in different forms and ways. Examples include (1) tiered levels of government (e.g., county and district/borough councils as well as unitary/combined/mayoral authorities), (2) arms-length bodies (e.g., Arts Council England, Historic England), foundations and trusts (e.g., Calouste Gulbenkian, Paul Hamlyn), civil society organisations and the private sector. For the purposes of this paper, the focus is placed on councils.

According to the Local Government Association[4], councils in England in particular sit at the heart of the cultural landscape — running and supporting a nationwide network of arts, cultural and heritage organisations ranging from 3,000 libraries to 350 museums to 116 theatres to numerous castles and amusement parks to monuments and historic buildings to parks and heritage sites.

It is worth noting that whilst cultural spend is a small part of the wider offer that councils provide, 'they remain the biggest public funders of culture nationally, spending £2.4 billion a year in England alone on culture and related services' (ibid.). However, councils are facing considerable challenges — some of which are longstanding, and others relatively new. Nearly all of those challenges stem from a combination of national and global crises including (1) the Financial Crisis of 2007-8 the aftermath of which led to the launch of the austerity programme in 2010 in the UK, (2) the exponentially mounting cost of statutory services, especially adult and social care as a result of an ageing population, (3) persistent (illegal) immigration, (4) BREXIT, (5) the COVID-19 pandemic, (6) the geo-political, military conflict in Europe — and resultant energy and cost-of-living crises, and (7) rising inflation.[5]

This state of affairs has placed the budgets of authorities (local and central government alike) under unprecedented pressure. As in the past during times of perceived economic crisis, cultural spend has been affected the most.[6] As a consequence, significant and successive cuts are being made to museums, libraries and the arts.[7]

4 Local Government Association (LGA) (2022). Cornerstones of Culture. London: LGA. Available online at: https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/cornerstones-culture (Accessed 04 February 2023).

5 County Councils Network (CCN) (2022). *County Spotlight: Cost of Living Crisis: Supporting Those Most in Need in County Areas*. London: CCN; HM Government (2022). Levelling Up the United Kingdom. London: Crown Copyright. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom (Accessed 04 September 2022); Rex, B. (2020). Which Museums to Fund? Examining Local Government Decision-making in Austerity. Local Government Studies, 46(2), 186–205; Martin, D., and Richardson, H. (2023). Leicestershire County Council Warns of 'Dire' 100m Funding Gap. BBC News. Available online at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-66891440 (Accessed 11 February 2024); World Economic Forum (WEF) (2023). The Global Risks Report 2023. Cologny/Geneva: World Economic Forum. Available online at: https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2023/ (Accessed 22 September 2023); Gilmore, A. (2024). CCN: Council Spending on Libraries and Culture Reduces by Nearly £500m. 151 News. Available online at: https://www.room151.co.uk/151-news/ccn-council-spending-on-libraries-and-culture-reduces-by-nearly-500m/ (Accessed 05 February 2024).

6 Hesmondhalgh, D., Oakley, K., Lee, D., and Nisbett, M. (2015). *Culture, Economy, and Politics: The Case of New Labour*. London: Palgrave Macmillan; Neelands, J., Belfiore, E., Firth, C., Hart, N., Perrin, L., Brock, S., Holdaway, D., and Woddise, J. (2015) *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth. The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value*. Warwick: University of Warwick; Harvey, A. (2016). *Funding Arts and Culture in a Time of Austerity*. London: New Local Government Network; Durrer, V., Gilmore, A., Jancovich, L., and Stevenson, D. (2023). *Cultural Policy is Local: Understanding Cultural Policy as Situated Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

7 Open Access Government (2019). £400 Million Funding Cut to Libraries, Museums, and Arts. Available online at: https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/400-million-cut-to-libraries/57706/ (Accessed 13 August 2020); Rex (2020); Butler, P. (2023). Majority of English Councils Plan More Cuts at Same Time as Maximum Tax Rises. *The Guardian*. Available online at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/mar/07/english-councils-cuts-services-maximum-tax-rises-local-finances (Accessed 13 March 2023).

A breakdown by cultural service shows that the net spend on culture and heritage by councils has declined dramatically by 35.5 per cent between 2009/2010 and 2019/2020, and that on libraries by 43.5 per cent.[8] A further breakdown drawing on a new analysis by the County Council Network is instructive here. Aysha Gilmore reports that council spend on 'libraries and tourism has reduced by almost £500m since the onset of austerity' and that while 'English councils budgeted to spend almost £1.6bn on library services, culture, heritage and tourism' in 2010/2011, their 'latest accounts show that £1.1bn was spent on these services in 2023/24, a £470m decrease from 14 years ago'.[9] Gilmore notes further that library services have experienced the greatest cuts — totalling £232.5m since 2010. The situation is further compounded by the fact that councils are being asked to make even more substantial savings in the coming years. Proponents of budget decreases for cultural services argue that investing in museums, libraries and theatres at such a time of major confluence of crises would seem misguided. Opponents counter — recounting that places and regions without support for cultural services would risk losing out further as traditional sites of culture, heritage and community, thereby exacerbating the already stark existing structural inequalities across the UK.[10]

Of the numerous factors that have put enormous pressure on council budgets — and by extension fostered considerable reduction in spending on cultural services even before the COVID-19 pandemic struck — the rising demand for statutory services (particularly adult and social care as well as special educational needs for young people) has often been cited as the most extremely pressing.[11]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the pandemic has exacerbated the already considerable pressures — as have the cost-of-living and inflation crises.[12] With the exception of the accommodation and food sectors, no sector has been more severely affected by the pandemic than the arts, cultural and heritage sectors.[13] And whilst the UK Government acted decisively in establishing the Culture

8 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (2023). Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing England: 2021 to 2022 Individual Local Authority Data — Outturn. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-england-2021-to-2022-individual-local-authority-data-outturn (07 November 2023).

9 Gilmore (2024).

10 Mansfield, C. (2014). *On with the Show: Supporting Local Arts and Culture*. London: New Local Government Network; Harvey (2016); Gross, J., and Wilson, N. (2020). Cultural Democracy: An Ecological and Capabilities Approach. *International Journal of Cultural Policy, 26*(3), 328–343; Mutibwa, D. H. (2022). The (Un)Changing Political Economy of Arts, Cultural and Community Engagement, the Creative Economy and Place-Based Development during Austere Times. Special Issue: 'Culture, Heritage and Territorial Identities'. *Societies*, *12*(5) 135: 1–24; Rex, B., and Campbell, P. (2022). The Impact of Austerity Measures on Local Government Funding for Culture in England. *Cultural Trends*, *31* (1): 23–46.

11 Davies, N., Hoddinott, S., Fright, M., Nye, P., Shepley, P., and Richards, G. (2023). Performance Tracker 2022/23 Spring Update. *Institute for Government*. Available online at: https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/Performance%20Tracker%202022-23%20Spring%20Update.pdf (Accessed 14 January 2024); DLUHC (2023); Martin and Richardson (2023).

12 CCN (2022); WEF (2023).

13 Tobin, J. (2020). Covid-19: Impact on the UK Cultural Sector. *House of Lords Library*. Available online at: https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/covid-19-impact-on-the-uk-cultural-sector/ (17 May 2021); Sargent, A. (2022). *Covid-19 and the Global Cultural and Creative Sector: Two Years of Constant Learning — New Foundations for a New World*. Leeds: Centre for Cultural Value; Walmsley, B., Gilmore, A., O'Brien, D., and Torreggiani, A. (2022). *Culture in Crisis: Impacts of Covid-19 on the UK Cultural Sector and Where We Go from Here*. Leeds: Centre for Cultural Value.

Recovery Fund[14] and providing councils with a wide range of support packages[15] to plug gaps and stimulate recovery, the cost-of-living crisis and rising inflation are unhelpfully undermining these efforts. The chairman of the Local Government Association — Councillor James Jamieson — captures the gravity of the situation aptly when he notes that 'the dramatic increase in inflation has undermined councils' budgets. Alongside increases to the National Living Wage and higher energy costs, this has added at least £2.4 billion in extra costs onto the budgets councils set in March [2022]'.[16]

Jamieson notes further that 'having faced a £15 billion real terms reduction to core government funding between 2010 and 2020', councils are not only grappling with future financial sustainability and local services that are already on a cliff-edge, but also 'facing a funding gap of £3.4 billion in 2023/24 and £4.5 billion in 2024/25'. It is no wonder that council after council in England is going bankrupt.[17] The situation is predicted to get only worse if 'an extra £350m as a short-term measure to ease the pressure' is not immediately provided by central government.[18] Councillor Nick Rushton, the leader of Leicestershire County Council, has remarked that even councils that are 'super-efficient, decisive and not ducking difficult decisions' find themselves in a 'dire' situation whereby 'spiralling costs are making it much harder to keep [their] head[s] above water' and, as such, are 'reaching new [uncharted] territory'.[19] If past funding cuts during times of economic crises (imagined or real) are anything to go by, this does not bode well for the arts, cultural and heritage sectors. With councils clearly having their backs against the wall, this begs the question: where do they go from here? And what does this unprecedented circumstance mean for the support of cultural services? What does it mean for local communities and others with a stake in those services? Might the formation of partnerships be part of the answer? If so, what might such partnerships look like in future, especially those that are inclusive, meaningful, purposeful and sustainable?

Looking Back to Look Forward

> 'The practice of looking back to look forward affords us an opportunity to gain a better understanding of connections between the past and present as we envision the future'[20]

It is fair to say that even in circumstances where councils did not face such major financial challenges as described above, they would benefit from collaborating closely with numerous stakeholders within and outside the cultural ecosystems they support. Cases in point include

14 AHRC-DCMS (2021). *Boundless Creativity: Culture in a Time of COVID-19*. London: Crown Copyright. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/boundless-creativity-report (Accessed 17 November 2021); UK Parliament (2021a). COVID-19: Culture Recovery Fund. Available online at https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1136/covid19-culture-recovery-fund/ (Accessed 23 November 2021).

15 Brien, P. (2023). Local Government Finances. *House of Commons Library*. Available online at: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8431/ (Accessed 19 January 2024); Local Government Association (LGA) (n.d). *COVID-19: Council Finances*. London: LGA. Available online at: https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils/covid-19-service-information/covid-19-council-finances (Accessed 09 January 2024).

16 Jamieson, J (2022). Council Cost Pressures — A Comment Piece by Cllr James Jamieson. *Local Government Association*. Available online at: https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/council-cost-pressures-comment-piece-cllr-james-jamieson (Accessed 07 October 2023).

17 Butler (2023); Harris, J. (2024). One by One, England's Councils are Going Bankrupt – and Nobody in Westminster Wants to Talk about It. *The Guardian*. Available online at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/14/englands-councils-bankrupt-westminster (Accessed 11 February 2024).

18 Martin and Richardson (2023).

19 Cited in Martin and Richardson (2023).

20 Knight, W. B. (2016). Looking Back, Looking Forward Editorial. *Visual Arts Research, 42*(2): v-viii.

cultural organisations and venues, artists and creative businesses, faith groups, youth services, actors in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, the private sector, colleges and universities. Whilst these stakeholders would not have the capacity to help plug the massive financial gaps that councils are facing, building partnerships with them has huge potential to provide councils with some much-needed respite, however brief. And it is here that looking at the past can add value in the search for what appropriate partnerships might look like in future. Wanda B. Knight — an arts education and cultural studies scholar — persuasively argues that '[f]oresight does not exist without hindsight [meaning] we can benefit from the lessons learned from looking back'.[21]

The Genesis of Contemporary Alliances and Cultural Partnerships Involving Local Authorities, Local Communities, and Universities

Ian Hutchcroft worked as an Environment Officer for Devon County Council whilst pursuing doctoral research at the University of Plymouth back in the mid-1990s where he was writing about alliances on and around sustainable development between local authorities, universities and local communities. He noted that '[i]n any community, certainly those with a major urban area, the university will be one of the largest employers, spenders and influencers in the area'.[22] The same can be said for councils as political entities, commissioners and public service providers. Councils employ millions of people, are responsible for hundreds of functions that significantly shape places and regions, and, as explained by Councillor James Jamieson above, also spend billions per annum totalling up to at least one quarter of public expenditure.[23] In these capacities, both councils and universities have a responsibility 'to engage actively [with] the communities which they serve and are a part of'.[24] At the time Ian Hutchcroft wrote his article, he lamented what he viewed as a siloed approach taken by councils and universities which did not serve local communities effectively and meaningfully. He championed institutional change, arguing that adopting local authority/university partnerships would facilitate 'mutual support, cross-fertilisation of ideas, identification of common objectives, [and] joint working [thereby] resulting in [local authorities and universities] becoming part of a dynamic, wider community rather than separate parts of a compartmentalised community'.[25] What Hutchcroft argued for in 1996 in relation to sustainable development would become reality in the context of cultural partnerships over a decade later.

Until the mid-2000s in the UK, engagement with external bodies such as councils and local communities — a process which later came to be known as public engagement — was not part of what universities understood their core mission to be. The research-driven culture at UK universities at the time did not align with the demands and vision of public engagement.[26] In addition, public engagement was not well regarded by university researchers who felt that it

21 Knight (2016).

22 Hutchcroft, I. (1996). Local Authorities, Universities and Communities: Alliances for Sustainability. *Local Environment*, *1*(2): 219–224.

23 Brien (2023).

24 Hutchcroft (1996: 219).

25 Hutchcroft (1996: 220).

26 Mawson, J. (2007) Research Councils, Universities and Local Government: Building Bridges. *Public Money and Management*, *27*(4): 265–272.

was hard to resource because it did not bring in significant funding.[27] From 2008 onwards, however, this gradually began to change with the establishment of initiatives such as the Beacons for Public Engagement and, in 2010, the launch of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Connected Communities Programme.[28] Both initiatives championed 'outward-facing, dynamic, and two-way exchange with the world outside the academy [supported] by a host of external policy drivers [based on the understanding] that universities are there to "make a difference" and to transform individuals' lives'.[29]

Ever since the early 2010s, those 'external policy drivers' have used universities as a commercial, cultural, knowledge and technology driver for the government's regional development agenda designed to raise national and regional productivity levels.[30] A case in point is the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Challenge Fund — also referred to in some discourses as the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.[31] Unsurprisingly, there have been critical voices that have pointed to the constraining nature of this arrangement, arguing that the government needs to ensure that the financial support awarded to universities allows for more flexibility, freedom and autonomy than is currently the case.[32]

Out of these past developments has emerged a body of knowledge underpinned by principles and practices on and around public engagement that can usefully inform how inclusive, meaningful, purposeful and sustainable cultural partnerships among local authorities, universities and local communities might look like in future. For instance, public engagement is now formalised and embedded as a valued and recognised activity for many university researchers through iterations of the frameworks for knowledge exchange, research excellence and societal impact broadly considered.[33] More than ever before, local authorities that have partnered with universities and local communities on projects of shared affinities and interest understand the value of (1) working flexibly in partnership with various stakeholders, (2) inviting the broadest possible perspectives from outside council circles, and (3) embracing co-production approaches to the development of solutions that sustainably address major challenges as opposed to imposing decisions designed in isolation and from a position of power.[34]

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27 Duncan, S., and Manners, P. (2012). 'Embedding Public Engagement within Higher Education: Lessons from the Beacons for Public Engagement in the United Kingdom'. In: L. McIlrath, A. Lyons, R. Munck (eds.). *Higher Education and Civic Engagement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 221–240.

28 Facer, K., and Enright, B. (2016). Creating Living Knowledge: The Connected Communities Programme, Community-University Partnerships and the Participatory Turn in the Production of Knowledge. *Arts and Humanities Research Council*. https://connectedcommunities.org/index.php/creating-living-knowledge-report/ (Accessed 03 May 2016).

29 Duncan and Manners (2012: 221).

30 Mawson (2007); AHRC-DCMS (2021); DLUHC (2023); Corner, J. (2024). Spinning Out the Benefits of Academic Research. *UK Research and Innovation*. Available online at: https://www.ukri.org/blog/voices-spinning-out-the-benefits-of-academic-research/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery (Accessed 08 February 2024).

31 UK Government (2017). UKRI Challenge Fund: For Research and Innovation. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/industrial-strategy-challenge-fund-joint-research-and-innovation (Accessed 03 August 2017).

32 Mawson (2007); UK Parliament (2021b). A New UK Research Funding Agency. Available online at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmsctech/778/77807.htm (Accessed 03 February 2024).

33 National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) (n.d). *The Beacons for Public Engagement*. Bristol: Watershed Media Centre; Research Excellence Framework (2024). Securing a World-class, Dynamic and Responsive Research Base across the Full Academic Spectrum within UK Higher Education. Available online at: https://www.ref.ac.uk/ (Accessed 19 January 2024); UK Research and Innovation (2024). Knowledge Exchange Framework. Available online at: https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/supporting-collaboration/supporting-collaboration-research-england/knowledge-exchange-framework/ (Accessed 19 January 2024).

34 Hutchcroft (1996); Duncan and Manners (2012); Local Government Association (LGA) (2019). *New Conversations 2.0: LGA Guide to Engagement*. London: LGA; Rex and Campbell (2022).

Among many essential features, past successful cultural partnerships involving local authorities, universities and local communities are those that have (1) broken down barriers among stakeholders by demystifying partnership working, (2) involved local communities as contributors and researchers through creating opportunities for people to co-design and inform the research questions being tackled, and (3) worked collaboratively to inform policy.[35]

In what follows, and based on some of the past learning discussed above, we explore how a university-local authority policy impact project on and around the arts, culture and heritage between the University of Nottingham and Leicestershire County Council (LCC) is supporting the latter to navigate as effectively as possible the challenging cultural landscape discussed earlier. The project began in January 2023 and will continue until the end of 2026. It is our hope that some of the learning and experiences gathered to date, and shared in this paper, would be of interest to other university/local authority cultural partnerships involving multiple stakeholders.

Visioning a Creative and Cultural County: Developing Leicestershire County Council's Cultural Strategy (VCCC)

Visioning a Creative and Cultural County (VCCC) is developing a Cultural Strategy as an LCC policy document through joining up culture, heritage, and the creative industries in a way that delivers inclusive and sustainable cultural, economic, health and social outcomes for the people of Leicestershire. This work is happening against the backdrop of austerity, a challenging financial and political climate, and recent award of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisation funding.

Research-policy impact work on VCCC is being undertaken with the ultimate goal of contributing to (1) unlocking and spreading opportunities for cultural engagement more equitably amongst diverse local communities across Leicestershire, (2) revitalising the cultural and social fabric(s) of the county, and (3) stimulating creativity to improve productivity and to contribute to an inclusive economy. The backstory to VCCC has its origins in the developments in the cultural landscape that we have discussed in this paper thus far. Two strategic leaders at Leicestershire County Council (LCC) — Cat Rogers and Franne Wills — mooted the idea of creating a Cultural Strategy in the early 2010s.

This was in the immediate aftermath of the launch of the previously mentioned austerity programme. The creation of a Cultural Strategy was prompted by the withdrawal of creative and cultural service provision that was felt by LCC officers and end users to be extremely beneficial. The thinking at the time was that a Cultural Strategy would highlight the value and benefit of service provision, something that would be very helpful to present as a reference point to decision-makers, primarily Heads of Service within LCC and councillors. Tying this to the LCC Strategic Plan at the time was seen to be extremely essential.

35 Facer and Enright (2016); Gross and Wilson (2020); Arts Council England (2021). *Let's Create: Strategy 2020–2030*. London: ACE. Available online at: https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-strategy-2020-2030 (Accessed 23 October 2021); Mutibwa (2022).

Image: Festival of Stories in Libraries @Libraries and Heritage Services, Leicestershire County Council

As a result of the major challenges discussed above, it would take around 12 years until the foundation for the development of an LCC Cultural Strategy was laid in late 2022 and early 2023. Learning from past university/local authority cultural partnerships shows that contacts and working relationships developed from existing collaborations can be built upon to initiate further, deeper links and work on and around shared agendas, affinities and interests. This is how VCCC was formed. LCC colleagues expressed a clearly identified need and university researchers committed to working closely with LCC colleagues to address the specified need. With the benefit of hindsight, it is fair to say that LCC colleagues clearly championed institutional change of the kind that Ian Hutchcroft argued for back in the 1990s. They could have sat back and done nothing in the hope that things might change for the better. But they did not.

They sought to do something. In doing so, they demonstrated that they are progressive in orientation and that they want to make a difference to the quality of life of the diverse local communities across Leicestershire that they serve. This demonstration of commitment in the midst of very challenging circumstances that local authorities have been compelled to work under is remarkable. The university researchers on VCCC have also shown a commitment to (1) working side by side with LCC colleagues and with as many members as possible of the diverse local communities that LCC serves, (2) bringing an openness and willingness to learn about the inner workings of local government — including the analytical and operational needs of LCC colleagues, and (3) understanding LCC's stakeholders — both within and outside Leicestershire's creative and cultural ecosystem.

Partnership working on VCCC has been strongly guided by the co-production ethos which has informed the collective process of (1) identifying LCC's policy needs in relation to joining up cultural provision, heritage service delivery, and the creative industries under a Cultural Strategy, (2) evaluating the feasibility of undertaking associated preparatory work, (3) developing a programme of research activities, consultation exercises and knowledge exchange events to support the overarching objective, (4) determining the overall project budget and related spend, (5) articulating how the process of Cultural Strategy development will inform policy development and related impact, and (6) reflecting on how policy impact work will be taken forward beyond March 2024 when the project ends.

Ever since austerity struck, LCC budgets have been much tighter, and workload pressures much higher. This has reduced the capacity to conduct research in-house. The research capacity that university researchers have brought to VCCC would clearly not have been available to LCC under those circumstances. By the same token, university researchers would not have been able to conduct research in preparation for the development of a Cultural Strategy for LCC outside the context of VCCC — had LCC colleagues not articulated its need, especially at such a time when spend on the arts, culture and heritage appears to be continually under threat. Twenty-eight years ago, Ian Hutchcroft dreamt of researchers and local authorities 'having a foot in each other's camps'[36] as they strove to serve the local communities they are a part of. VCCC is a clear embodiment of that today — as are many other university/local authority cultural partnerships doing similar impactful work.

36 Hutchcroft (1996: 223).

To date, VCCC has been driven by invaluable input from (1) strategic leaders and frontline officers from different teams and units within LCC, (2) creative practitioners across the county, (3) members from diverse local communities, and (4) officers from district and county councils in Fenland, Derbyshire and Kent. Input has informed the production of a blueprint to inform the next steps of developing a Cultural Strategy for LCC.

Image: Anand Mangal Community Heritage Curators Planning an Exhibition @Libraries and Heritage Services, Leicestershire County Council

Like many past university/local authority cultural partnerships, VCCC has prided itself on being inclusive and purposeful — a feature that many stakeholders have related with. Among other things, this has contributed to the generation of very interesting and insightful findings that are going to serve the process of Cultural Strategy development very well going forward. For instance, despite minor reservations about whether or not LCC needs a Cultural Strategy — there was a general consensus amongst stakeholders that a Cultural Strategy could help demonstrate, in a tangible way, the value that LCC assets have for local communities. Examples of assets include libraries, museums, parks, monuments, historic buildings and heritage sites. Capturing that value effectively could help justify the importance of those assets and the impact of associated cultural engagement. Over and beyond capturing value and impact, a Cultural Strategy could be used to (1) link cultural provision to LCC's broader strategic agendas and priorities as outlined in the Strategic Plan (2022-2026)[37], (2) apply for grants to develop and fund more cultural activities underpinned by co-creation between LCC and the diverse local communities it serves — with possible involvement of university researchers if desired, and (3) aid LCC officers in decision-making — with a sense of clarity of purpose, including a certain level of protection.

37 Leicestershire County Council (2022). *The Strategic Plan*. Glenfield: Leicestershire. Available online at: https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/council-plans/the-strategic-plan (Accessed 14 December 2022).

Moving Forward

For LCC going forward, it is clear — based on the key insights gathered so far — that developing a Cultural Strategy would be a valuable investment in terms of (1) articulating cultural offerings much more clearly and strongly, (2) enhancing cultural engagement in ways that (a) render those offerings much more visible to the public, and (b) enable more people to engage with the offerings to enrich their lives, (3) building new collaborative partnerships both within and outside the county council, (4) engaging more effectively and regularly with local communities — both existing and new, (5) empowering frontline officers as cultural advocates and ambassadors, and (6) supporting creative practice and creative practitioners in ways that enable them to (a) build capacity, (b) connect to networks of other creative people and organisations across the county, and (c) grow their creative entrepreneurial capabilities.

In addition, VCCC has found that it will be vital to put in place a steering group to ensure that the role and value of an LCC Cultural Strategy are understood both within and outside the county council. In times of economic crisis such as these, all this adds great value and much-needed visibility to LCC's cultural services and the officers that look after them.

To succeed in this endeavour, working in close partnership with stakeholders in the cultural ecosystem within Leicestershire is going to be critical because it is these stakeholders that are going to benefit the most from the opportunities and possibilities offered by a Cultural Strategy. As in past effective university/local authority partnerships, these stakeholders could range from cultural organisations and venues to artists and creative businesses to faith groups and youth services to local charities and voluntary sector to sports and other relevant interest groups to universities and colleges. In addition to these stakeholders — and in the absence of a cultural compact[38] in Leicestershire at the time of writing, LCC could take the initiative by bringing together stakeholders outside the county's cultural ecosystem.

Such stakeholders could include representatives from tiered council levels, businesses, and education providers among others that could be brought on board with a view to (1) consulting on and co-designing a vision for the role of culture in Leicestershire, and (2) delivering against shared priorities. Throughout this process, the University of Nottingham will continue to be a committed, supportive, and reliable partner.

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38 Arts Council England (2020). Review of the Cultural Compacts Initiative. Available online at: https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/201102_Compacts_Report%20_031220_0.pdf (Accessed 06 May 2022).

Cat Rogers

Cat Rogers has nearly twenty years' experience of arts management in both public and third sector organisations and has worked with micro rural creative enterprises in a wide range of art forms in the UK and abroad, supporting them to grow. She currently leads Creative Leicestershire in Leicestershire County Council's economic growth unit and is an Associate of Advantage Creative. She has been a trustee of two arts organisations, advocating for quality participatory arts. With skills in innovation, business management, storytelling and communication, she has delivered and written business training seminars and workshops for universities and British Council's international programmes.

Amanda Hanton

Amanda Hanton is the Audience Development Manager for Leicestershire County Council's Heritage. Libraries, Collections, Learning and Participation teams who form Culture Leicestershire. https://www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk The service is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation which Amanda leads on. Her expertise is supporting the facilitation of co-created cultural projects with underrepresented communities. Amanda leads on volunteering for the service and wrote the corporate framework for volunteer engagement. She is chair of the East Midlands Heritage Volunteering Group (HVG) and sits on the National HVG Advisory group.

Working in Collaboration: universities, local authorities and place-based cultural development.[39]

Dr Rowan Bailey, University of Huddersfield

Introduction

Partnership working between universities and local authorities is a timely and significant area of development for places at risk of creative depletion under the pressures of austerity and cuts to cultural funding. For example, central government grant funding for local councils dropped by 40% between 2009-10 and 2019-2020 (from £46.5bn to £28bn). A recent campaign report 'Save our Local Services', published by the Local Government Association (LGA), states 'by 2024/5 cost and demand pressures will add £15 billion (almost 20 per cent) to the cost of delivering council services since 2021/22'.[40] Further cuts to funding from central government has meant that councils are now facing an increased demand for statutory services over and above other kinds of local authority offer.[41] Culture is usually on the list for reduced funding when these kinds of crises hit places.

This paper addresses some of the challenges and opportunities place-based cultural development presents to places with high IMD deprivation. I will be referring to Kirklees, a district in West Yorkshire, as a place-based case study for my own engagements with culture as a Director of Knowledge and Cultural Exchange and Reader in Cultural Theory and Practice in the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield. I have been working with the Creative Development team at Kirklees Council since 2018 to contribute to the cultural development of Huddersfield through public realm programming and in the establishment of initiatives such as *Temporary Contemporary*; a network of meanwhile spaces on the high street for creative communities to initiate and deliver cultural activities to different audiences. Between 2018-2020, *Temporary Contemporary* actively increased the vibrancy of Queensgate Indoor market with over twenty research exhibitions (some of which have toured internationally to China and New Zealand), music and artisan pop-ups, exhibitions by emerging and mid-career artists and practitioners, undergraduate and postgraduate research showcases, providing opportunities for students to curate in the public realm, and a host of 'happenings' to create networking possibilities for cultural producers.[42]

39 I would like to personally thank the research team involved in the delivery of our place-based cultural development work through the Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design and Architecture and to the staff who have actively contributed to the programme content. Thank you to the continued collaborative working with the creative development team and Adele Poppleton at Kirklees Council and all the creative and cultural partners who have contributed to and engaged with our Cultures of _ programme.

40 Five local authorities have declared bankruptcy since 2021 (Thurrock, Slough, Woking, Birmingham, Nottingham) with others reporting they may have to do the same (Bradford, Middlesborough, Cheshire East, Stoke-on-Trent, Leicester, Coventry, Dudley, North Hamptonshire, Enfield, Havering, Medway, Hastings, Southampton, Somerset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole). See: Local Government Organisation (2024). *Save Local Services: Council pressures explained.* Available at: https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/save-local-services/save-local-services-council-pressures-explained (Accessed: 08/02/2024).

41 A statutory service is paid by taxpayers, funded by the government and set up by the law. These services have to be administered.

42 See: Bailey, R., Booth-Kurpnieks, C., & Velvick, L. (Eds.) (2022). *Cultures of Place*. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press. https://doi.org/10.5920/CulturesOfPlace

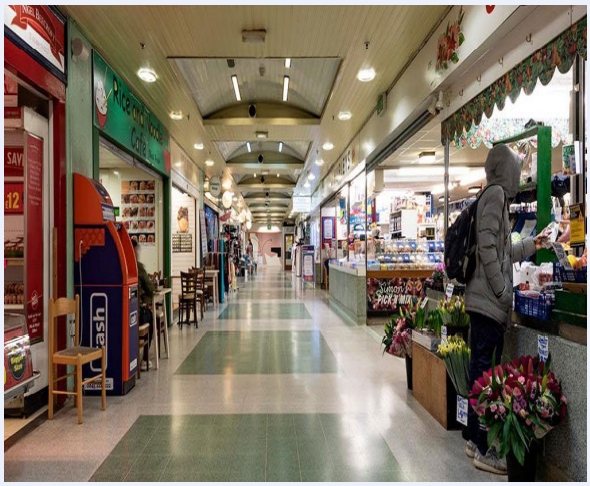

Image left : Queensgate Indoor Market; Image right: Temporary Contemporary

These activities have supported the cultural life of the town. Our audiences reported enjoying 'the atmosphere, the space, the curation, the market as an example of classic modernist architecture' and remarked that the initiative added 'character to what had become a dated market'[43]. Insights from the *Temporary Contemporary* programme have fed directly into the Huddersfield Blueprint regeneration plan for the Cultural Heart, a 10-year vision, launched in 2019 to 'create a thriving, modern town centre.' Collectively, we now have a greater understanding of how creative spaces can contribute to wider place-based making.

Through this collaborative work enacted by academic researchers, students, creative and cultural providers, third sector and voluntary organisations, creative businesses, small community groups, independent artists/practitioners and civil servants, we have morphed into a mixed cultural ecology. My understanding of knowledge and cultural exchange is informed by an ecological mindset.[44] Rather than take knowledge as transactional, I am much more interested in the entanglements of practice at work in larger ecosystems, such as the creative and cultural industries or the university sector, or indeed, local government. These are complex and often unwieldy infrastructures within which ecologies of practice intermingle and co-emerge like a mycelium of fungal threads. I would argue that knowledge and cultural exchange is part of the organism of culture as an ecology. The ebb and flow of thinking and doing in these broader ecosystems often goes unrecognised despite these practices providing economic leverage, momentum and growth. The UK Creative Industries' GVA value in 2019 was £115.9 billion, represented multiple sectors and generated 2.1 million jobs but this does not tell us how each part is an entanglement within the system as a whole, nor how we navigate the industry drivers of this ecosystem as educators, researchers, practitioners, civil servants and the general public.[45] We not only consume culture through this economic ecosystem we also produce culture through it. I am interested in exploring how the messy particulars on the ground of

43 Visitor feedback from Temporary Contemporary happenings (2018-2022)

44 As John Holden explains: 'An ecological approach concentrates on relationships and patterns within the overall system, showing how careers develop, ideas transfer, money flows, and product and content move, to and fro, around and between the funded, homemade and commercial subsectors. Culture is an organism not a mechanism; it is much messier and more dynamic than linear models allow.' John Holden (2015), *The Ecology of Culture*, Swindon: Cultural Value Project: Arts and Humanities Research Council, p.4

45 See: Creative Industries Council (2022). UK To the World. Available at: https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/ A recent call for a debate in the House of Lords revisits all of this material to once again reinforce the significance of the creative economy for the GDP of the UK, but also, interestingly in the betterment of health and wellbeing of people. See: Contribution of the arts to society and the economy — House of Lords Library (parliament.uk)

culture are entanglements as these complexities are the seeds of 'know-how' and coming to 'know-with' at the heart of collaboration.

I offer three reflections about working in collaboration. Firstly, how partnership working in place-based ways will generate new avenues for knowledge and cultural exchange between academic and non-academic partners, thus contributing to the shaping of place in and through a mixed ecology of stakeholders and communities. Secondly, how the tools of co-creation and co-production can lead to new forms of engagement with culture on the high street. Thirdly, how place-based cultural development can foster lifelong learning cultural experiences between audiences, through what I am calling culture *for* capabilities. I am going to argue that as arts and humanities researchers in a university setting we can collaboratively offer a pragmatic and action-orientated way to build cultural resilience in a place.

1. Place-based Cultural Development: Cultures of _ programme.

Cultures of _ is a changeable programme of arts and humanities research in the public realm that developed out of the groundwork of *Temporary Contemporary* and is engaged in furthering place-based cultural development in Kirklees and West Yorkshire. It supports the development of projects in the public realm, with the aim of expanding arts and humanities wide networks of knowledge and cultural exchange, civic engagement with a range of audiences/communities, partnership building and long-term strategic development and planning to enrich, enhance and grow our international reputation as a school, university and place of and for cultural production.[46]

Part of this work involves our ongoing collaboration with Kirklees Council. Our rolling programme enables relationships to be formed, communities to comingle, learning to develop, skills to be shared and knowledges to manifest across the higher education sector and with creative and cultural providers and producers. We are open and receptive to the idea of working strategically *and* spontaneously. That means curating a programme that leaves enough space for opportunities to happen, ideas to develop, collaborations to flourish and relationships to cement. Cultures of _ currently has four thematic iterations feeding into Kirklees' future cultural, tourism and heritage strategies and the broader West Yorkshire Combined Authority vision for culture across the five districts (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield) of the region.

Cultures of Place (21/22) was our inaugural festival which ran over two weeks, hosting twenty-seven events at fourteen locations across Huddersfield town and the University of Huddersfield campus. To those unfamiliar with Huddersfield, a large ring road separates the main campus from the town centre, so the curatorial focus for this programme was to encourage visitors to cross the threshold from the town to the campus and from the campus into the town. Moreover, the curation of themed programmes is not insignificant. It offers a way for people to participate and engage in a topic from the perspective of their own curiosity and expertise. It is also an invitation for arts and humanities researchers to actively explore and investigate something in collaboration across a range of different creative and cultural practices

46 This is a four-year university research funded project entitled: 'Arts and Humanities: Place-based Cultural Development and Delivery through knowledge exchange, public engagement and international collaborations (in the West Yorkshire region and Kirklees district 2022-2026)'. PI: Dr Rowan Bailey. Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design and Architecture. Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design and Architecture — University of Huddersfield

Image: Depth Gauge

including art, architecture, creative writing, cultural studies, design (graphics, product, illustration), drama, English literature, fashion, film, history, media, music, performance and photography.

These are the practices we make culture from. Cultures of Place was also a significant starting point for our place-based cultural development work. We co-hosted a conference with Kirklees Council called 'Culture is Ordinary', taking influence from Raymond William's writings about culture contributing to social change.[47]

The purpose of the conference was to bring together a range of voices and conversations about the development of a new cultural strategy for Kirklees that would sit alongside the draft Heritage, Tourism, Everybody Active Strategies and Libraries Plan. The future cultural strategy also aims to connect to Kirklees' shared Economic and Health and Wellbeing strategies, the Kirklees Futures Strategy for Children and Young People, and the masterplans for towns and local centres across Kirklees. Taking influence from Cultures of Place and the ethos underpinning the words of Williams, the conference emphasised the importance of developing a strategy that is about people, artists, musicians, makers, creatives, thinkers and innovators working across all sectors. Such a strategy is about place and place-based working.[48]

Cultures of Sound (22/23) coincided with Kirklees Year of Music 2023.[49] A range of creative outputs were generated, ranging from live public performances, exhibitions, workshops,

47 Williams explains: 'Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. [...] We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life – the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning – the special processes of discovery and creative effort.' Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary (1958)' In. Jim McGuigan (ed.). (2013). *Raymond Williams: On Culture and Society. Essential Writings*. London; Los Angeles: Sage, pp.2-3.

48 See: Culture is Ordinary, Friday 11 November, 2022 (conference details): Culture Strategy | Kirklees Council

49 See: Cultures of Sound Cultures of Sound — University of Huddersfield

Image: Tainted Love Book Launch in the Kings Head

creative residencies, walks and talks all engaging with the idea of sound. Our experiences of these occurred in different event places, including the Bath House Galleries at Sovereign Design House, Phipps Hall, the Create Lab in the Barbara Hepworth Building, Heritage Quay, Holocaust Centre North, Dai Hall, Huddersfield Town Hall and The Kings Head, a local pub at Huddersfield train station.

Cultures of Sound both received and produced vibrating frequencies, many of which were experiential engagements with public realm working. The energy and focus of our cultural programming is informed by our understanding of knowledge exchange as a creative process that brings together academic staff, users of research and wider groups and communities to increase the impact of place-based work in collaboration.

Cultures of Creative Health, the third iteration of our programme launched in January 2024.

The concept of creative health involves creative approaches and activities that have a positive impact on our happiness, health and wellbeing. This can range from visual, music, craft, textiles and performing arts through to gardening and outdoor activities. Design (architecture, interior, product) also plays a role in making spaces and places (indoor and outdoor) conducive to achieving better health and wellbeing. Our curatorial focus for this programme is informed by previous research in collaboration with the School of Health and Humanities and the Business School, supported by an Arts and Humanities Research Council bid, which explored how to build a consortium of creative and cultural providers to help address health inequalities in West

Image: Cultures of Creative Health

Yorkshire.[50] This work is linked to the recent announcement in December 2023 of a Creative Health System for West Yorkshire, by Mayor Tracy Brabin and the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership Board. This system will drive forward creative initiatives designed to make people feel happier and healthier.[51] Our programme features Knowledge and Cultural Exchange projects with creative health providers, creative residencies, exhibitions, talks and performances that involves external partners and researchers from across West Yorkshire and further afield, to explore creative health with us. Cultures of Creative Health considers how culture can enable all kinds of capabilities in a person's life.[52]

Cultures of Climate the last programme, will launch in January 2025. Our focus will align to Kirklees' UNESCO status as a lifelong learning district and we are keen to develop our international knowledge and cultural exchanges between other UNESCO places, working with climate as a theme. We have also initiated potential opportunities for gallery/exhibition exchanges, including research and cultural exchanges on climate with the University of Hull. We will continue to build our partnerships with other universities and the cultural sector to mobilise our collaborative engagements with climate challenges.[53]

As researchers we hope that working in collaboration to achieve district and region wide goals and ambitions can help shape the future of culture across West Yorkshire. In this respect, the Cultures of _ programme is a direct way to create new partnerships through cultural processes and forms of making in the public realm. This creative process encourages the sharing of ideas, data and experiences with a view to exploring mutual benefits and increased capacity for embracing positive change (particularly within the arts and cultural sector and in people's lives).

50 See Creating Change Creating Change — University of Huddersfield. Also see: Percy-Smith, B., Bailey, R., Stenberg, N., Booth-Kurpnieks, C., Munt, D., McQuillan, D., & Towns-Andrews, L. (2023). *Creative Heath in Communities: Supporting People to Live Well in West Yorkshire*. Creative-Health-in-Communities-Final.pdf (hud.ac.uk)

51 See West Yorkshire Combined Authority (2024). West Yorkshire Announces Plan to Boost Health with Creativity. 13 December 2023. Available at: West Yorkshire announces plan to boost health with creativity — West Yorkshire Combined Authority (westyorks-ca.gov.uk) (Accessed: 08/02/2024).

52 Bailey, R., Clear, N., Cotton, C., Davies, K., Fitzpatrick, D., Powell, A., & Pittwood, L. (Eds.) (2020). *Temporary Contemporary: Creating vibrant spaces to support the conditions for creative and cultural activity*. University of Huddersfield. https://unipress.hud.ac.uk/plugins/books/22/

53 See Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art Design and Architecture, University of Huddersfield https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/ceada/.

2. Tools of co-creation and co-production

There are many different forms of co-creation and co-production at work in the arts and humanities and in our work with communities: exhibition curation, workshop development, the co-making of artefacts and the facilitation of new ways of working together particularly in collaboration towards shared goals and capabilities. Our previous work with *Temporary Contemporary* has included co-located commissioning and shared programming, often with local collaborators and partners including West Yorkshire Print Workshop, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Holocaust Centre North, Woven in Kirklees, Wilson's Republic and Huddersfield Art Gallery.

Relevant research streams that are funded through the AHRC, and led by Programme Directors, include: Health Disparities (Helen Chatterjee), Place (Rebecca Madgin) and Creative Communities (Katy Shaw). These strands create research opportunities across the fields of co-creation and co-production. Whether resourced by them or not, the macro context of the AHRC as a funding body for arts and humanities research has invested in driving forward new ways of working/undertaking research with others. In this regard, these three strands are mobilisers of co-creative/co-productive activity which feeds into the overarching strategic delivery plan of the AHRC (between 2022-2025) which aims to enable cultural participation, to address contemporary social challenges and to create economic value. In their 2019 published delivery plan they outline several objectives, one of which is 'to promote knowledge exchange between arts and humanities research and a range of other sectors, including the creative industries, the heritage sector and health services'.[54] We have been exploring this objective in and through our knowledge and cultural exchange activities and public realm work which has led to new insights and thinking about the shapes these exchange activities take and the forms of knowledge they may generate or even help move into visibility. In the 2023 deep dive report 'The Power of Partnership' produced by Shaw as part of the Creative Communities strand, co-creation is defined in the following way:

> There are three elements that are key to co-creation: community; collaboration; and context. In co-creation, research is done with a community, rather than to a community; all collaborators are of equal importance in providing individual expertise. These collaborators come together over shared goals to create something meaningful that is dependent upon unique contexts.[55]

The challenges, also outlined in the report, include the usual complex entanglements of partnership working, such as the time it can actually take to build a relationship, or 'community washing' or 'co-washing' where those in positions of power adopt the terminology of collaboration and exploit it under the guise of being 'equitable'.[56] There are ethical considerations in doing research with communities, particularly if hierarchies, assumptions and expectations aren't addressed through the creative process of co-working together. When it comes to place-based making and place-based cultural development co-creation and co-production is necessary to mobilise ideas-into-action through the collaborative process, which

54 See AHRC (2019) Delivery Plan. Available at: AHRC-250920-DeliveryPlan2019.pdf (ukri.org) (Accessed 08/02/2024).

55 See AHRC Creative Communities (2023) *By All, For All: The Power of Partnership – Deep Dive Report*, p.5. Available at: CREATIVE-COMMUNITIES-REPORT-12.04.23 (creativecommunities.uk) (Accessed; 08/02/2024).

56 AHRC Creative Communities, *By All for All*, p.6.

as we know, is inherently divergent and not at all linear. There are two underlying research approaches we have taken to our Cultures of _ programme, which are often used as a conceptual steer for thinking about what the cultural reception and production of a specific activity or output might be. Is, for example, the proposed activity feeding into 'Cultures of Making' or 'Making Place'? In the introduction to our first publication *Cultures of Place* I discuss the differences between these two nodal points in the ecological network of culture.[57]

Firstly, making is cultural, involving skill, technique, aptitude and attunement with the world. Tim Ingold speaks about this as a kind of 'wayfaring'; a process of carrying knowledge on. Knowledge is not transmitted but acquired through 'creative improvisation'.[58] This describes what research is as a form of creation and resonates with Williams' articulation of 'the making of a mind' where the 'slow learning of shapes, purposes and meanings' is tested out in 'experience' to make 'new observations and meanings'.[59] As a 'whole way of life', both the inheritance of cultures and the creative effort of discovery are in dialogue. Place-based making in and through the Cultures of _ programme thus involves processes of engagement with a locale and a region, and a set of relations shaped by economic, historical, political, technological, social and aesthetic forces. It is the emphasis on making that helps us to understand that culture is produced out of conditions, textures, atmospheres and memories of a place as much as to the wayfaring relations at play in our movement through places.

Secondly, the making of place is not at all a programmable thing. It is much more spontaneous and fluid than we think. Doreen Massey's term 'throwntogetherness' (in her book *For Space*) helps us to rethink our assumptions about place and to realise that the 'challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres)'[60] is an event, a continuous process of change and transformation. Because place is not fixed in space and time, the process of shifting our senses of place is part of our connectedness to and embeddedness within place. This is what we are constantly negotiating and navigating.

These ideas resonate in arts and humanities research. They speak about creativity as a process led by atmospheres and instincts, about culture as something that is simultaneously received and produced, about knowledge as a form of creative improvisation and the conditions of knowledge production being part of the relations of 'throwntogetherness' shaped by internal and external forces. We should be thinking in, with and through the arts and humanities when we think about place-based cultural development, particularly on the high street.

3. Culture *for* Capabilities: the role of the civic university on the high street

When I think about culture on the high street, I am also thinking about how we can build cultural resilience in a place. In the book *Radical Help: How We Can Remake the Relationships Between Us and Revolutionise the Welfare State,* social innovator Hilary Cottam writes about the capabilities we need to live a nourishing, enriching and fulfilling life. Working with

57 See Bailey, Introduction to Cultures of Place, pp.11-14.

58 See Ingold, Tim. 2010. "Footprints through the Weather-World: Walking, Breathing, Knowing." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16 (1), p.121.

59 See Williams, Raymond. 'Culture is Ordinary (1958)' In. Jim McGuigan (ed.). 2013. *Raymond Williams: On Culture and Society. Essential Writings*. London; Los Angeles: Sage, pp.2-3.

60 See Massey, Doreen. 2005. For Space. London: Sage Publications. pp.378-9.

thousands of participants, Participle (founded by Cottam and a team of design researchers) tested out ways of helping people 'to grow their capabilities: to learn, to work, to live healthily and to connect to one another'.[61] Helping people to develop the means to take ownership over their lives, participants started to change and improve their circumstances. Relationships and community were important mobilisers in this process. As were the opportunities to cross the threshold into new experiences. Cottam explains that work/learning, health/vitality, relationships and community are key to enabling capabilities in a person. Culture *for* capabilities follows a similar logic. Culture helps people to cross the threshold into new experiences,building confidence, curiosity, energy and life force, and often creates stepping stones to new learning, work or volunteering experiences, an increased drive to be well and healthy, motivation to be socially engaged or indeed to feel a sense of belonging by being connected with communities in a place. These capabilities are not given. They are learned. They are part of lifelong learning. All of us do it (we receive and produce culture). But not all of us have access to the conditions or opportunities to develop our capabilities for thriving. Or to live well and happy lives. Culture on the high street is a threshold into the development of our capabilities. This extends to our partnership working and the ongoing lifelong learning and continuous professional development needed across the creative and cultural sector, which also includes the creative health sector. This is learning between audiences, which includes academics, students, members of the public, creative businesses, cultural and creative providers, charity and voluntary sectors. Our mixed cultural ecology is key to building the cultural infrastructure in a place and ensuring that condition of opportunity for capabilities to thrive and grow in people's lives are enabled by this infrastructure. And this, I believe, is the civic role and function a university can play in enabling place-based cultural development.

At a conference held at the University of Warwick in November 2023, entitled 'Repurposing the Campus 2.0', Rosy Greenlees delivered a keynote lecture on university cultural strategies. Yes, universities have them. Some of these strategies are part of cultural compacts or represented inside university-wide strategies. Greenlees explains that the benefit of having a strategy creates the opportunity to develop a 'coherent and consolidated offer' but for what and whose benefit? The examples she presents include the University of Exeter which has an arts and cultural strategy including creativity which is successfully permeated into the visionary drivers of the institution feeding into equipping students and staff with creative knowledge, skills and experience or for creating space for collaborations to harness culture for social and economic objectives. Queen Mary, University of London also has a cultural strategy which it positions into the wider context of the artistic and cultural ecology of London, feeding into partnership work across the creative industries and in widening participation. Other examples include the University of Kent and its work with Creative Kent. The Docking Station, run by the university in partnership with Medway Council is a regeneration project that delivers creative digital production, education and community engagement.[62] Greenlees concludes by asking what the equity is between partnership and co-creative collaborations? She explains that if higher

61 See Cottam, Hilary. (2019). *Radical help : how we can remake the relationships between us and revolutionise the welfare state* (Paperback edition.). Little, Brown Book Group Limited.

62 See University of Kent, (2024) Docking Station Medway. Available at: Docking Station Medway — Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries — University of Kent (Accessed: 08/02/2024). Greenlees also presented Huddersfield as an example that is creating wider alliances to deliver a commitment to culture off the university campus.

education institutions are to work together with local authorities and the creative and cultural sector then culture must be embedded into university life, particularly at a time when arts and humanities courses are being devalued. Cultural strategies may show how arts and culture can play a bigger and more important role in the life of higher education institutions.[63]

Conclusion

What then, is the potential for universities to pro-actively deliver on cultural strategies in a place, or even to help shape them? It is not a coincidence that the Cultures of _ programme has been carefully crafted and curated to align to West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Years of Culture across the five districts. There is a willingness here, as a university, to want to help further the work of the region and to ensure that *how* we work in collaboration is always focused on thinking about the capabilities culture can help to mobilise in people and in places. This is knowledge and cultural exchange in action. Live, spontaneous and responsive to change.

By way of a conclusion. What are the handy tips for partnership working with local authorities and in cultural partnerships? Here are some suggestions drawn from my own lived experience:

- Stay grounded. Go back to place. Be embedded. Hang out and get to know your communities/ partners. Develop meaningful relationships that can last.
- Don't assume that people are aware of higher-level strategies and deliverables. Spend time explaining the rationale and focus for joining up approaches.
- Find opportunities to map/re-map actions in strategies to see how they align and can lead to new projects/areas of development.
- Keep communicating and updating each other on developments at institutional level: regular check-in meetings.
- Create an ethos of creative problem-solving together. Move beyond stakeholder priorities and start with shared passion and commitment for making culture work with and for communities in a place. Think at the level of collaboration not self-interest.

These tips have helped us to work together to develop new approaches to place-based curation and cultural development as a civic university. Through our Cultures of _ programme we are shaping new models of public engagement by pro-actively engaging with the cultural assets (organisations and people) of the town and district. We have learned to develop our research capabilities in place-based partnership working by actively seeking out ways to create conditions of opportunity for lifelong learning on the high street. We continue to grow our awareness and enrich our understanding of the value of culture in our institutional lives, but also in the lives of the communities we collaborate with.

63 Rosy Greenlees, (2023). University Cultural Strategies: an assessment and consideration of their uses. Repurposing the Campus 2.0. University of Warwick. Keynote paper delivered at the conference on 8 November 2023.

Author Biography:

Dr Rowan Bailey

Dr Rowan Bailey is Reader in Cultural Theory and Practice, Director of Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange and Director of the Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design and Architecture in the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield. As Research Lead of the Cultures of _ programme she is interested in place-based making with different creative communities.
See: Rowan Bailey — University of Huddersfield Research Portal

Cultural Reforesting programme in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Andy Franzkowiak, Richmond Arts Service

Summary

Richmond Arts Service, in comprehending the evolution of our culture through the 21st century, is asking and sharing wide-ranging questions for all to consider and participate. The ecological crisis forms a long-term strand of work of this nature, another is Play and Imagination. Research is led by artists and their collaborators, and we aim to place creative projects publicly across a Local Authority. At a time when policymakers are considering moving the dialogue from climate emergency to *nature* and climate emergency, our programme sits in this aspirational space, fuelled by the imagination of artists and those they are working with, including the more-than-human world.

This essay sets out to shine a light on some of our recent research collaborations, exploring what makes them meaningful and enquiring how they can integrate reflection and learning for all collaborating? How might all that a Local Authority represents be an energising landscape for applied research, knowledge sharing and public engagement?

Introduction

We hear and feel glimpses of a necessary future. Where humanity, with our complex, greedy and brutal infrastructures, realigns to be sensitive to local and global ecosystems. Where western democracies through cutting edge design and research practices, and with diverse and clear voices, evolve these places with their communities. Where we deeply comprehend our everyday relationships to the world around us, with all the more-than-human players that are emphatically necessary for the health of both human and more-than-human lives. We are living in the decade singled out by the IPCC and thousands of scientists, community activists and imperilled global voices to act and listen for a moment to those living in the Marshall Islands, whose homes are almost under the rising seas.

And whilst many are acting, this needs to expand out and influence up. Exeter University's Professor Tim Lenton described the need for hopeful tipping points to energise this grass roots paradigm shift. I shared this same sentiment in a thought piece for Imperial College's Grantham Institute Art/Science prize in 2018. In it, I suggested that it is in interdisciplinary, experimental, collaborative space, particularly when placed in public places, that there exists the potential for stories and experiences to show us the way; as individuals, communities and wider society.

Simply put, deep inside all of us, of each human animal, exists the knowledge that we are part of our ecosystems, an absolute relationship that ignites our imaginations. Demonstrably, in the west, this relationship has been lost, overwhelmed by hundreds of years of development. Shifting the planet's temperature by degrees and causing a mass extinction event shows that our progress has been at a cost, a cost felt most keenly by those who had this development imposed upon them.

How can we renew this lost relational, caring, cooperative phenomenology? How can we renew this proven (as if it really needs scientific study) sustenance giving baseline as part of our home, work and leisure experiences? How might ecocentrism be a philosophical undercurrent to this urgent transformational need?

Image: Dr Tilly Collins with artist, Bryony Ella and students, with their collaborative mural — Take the Time, 2021 ©Richmond Arts

Cultural Reforesting

Let's focus on the local, local communities, ecosystems and cultures, on the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRuT). In 2021 Richmond Arts Service commenced their programme responding to the ecological crisis of our time, Cultural Reforesting. This provocation asks the question, how can we renew our relationship with nature? The big idea, which has gained wider traction, is that we have lost our absolute, conscious and innate, every day relationship with our ecosystems, and that, because of this loss, all the cascading crises have come to bear, from the climate crisis to environmental injustice, from the sixth mass extinction to struggles with mental health. By centring our programme around an action-inviting question the programme, without being naïve to the scale of the crisis, is hopeful.

As a Local Authority LBRuT declared Climate Emergency in 2019, we have set targets for carbon emissions, biodiversity, recycling, pollution, wellbeing and more. People are acting. As an Arts Service we want to take this process to its necessary evolution, that of a regenerative relationship of humanity with nature, as part of nature. Cultural Reforesting invites all to experience ideas of 'reforesting' our local culture, indeed cultures, inclusive of all aspects of our daily life. As a London borough our borders are very porous and the demographics of the communities participating in the various ecosystems are incredibly diverse. It is vital we represent this in all our programmes, including Cultural Reforesting.

This provocation invites expansive and diverse thinking which is why we have opened the programme to multi-disciplinary approaches. The programme has collaborated with research institutions such as the National Physical Laboratory and Kew Gardens, individual academics such as ethnobotanist Dr Sarah Edwards of Oxford University, and interdisciplinary university research groups from Royal Holloway, St Mary's University and University of Kent. These collaborations, whilst instigated by Richmond Arts Service, have manifested across the Local Authority's services and activities. To date, 14 artist-led multi-disciplinary research projects are giving colour and story to Cultural Reforesting.

Methodology

Richmond Arts Service has invited artists to complete an initial proposal form that outlines their specific research question and approach, and how they might collaborate with experts and communities. Many of these artists have a research and multi-disciplinary practice, and bring this to their project There is a list below outlining the hopes and intentions of some of these projects, their collaborators, the more-than-human species with which each project has spent time, and the invited participants, important when considering the cultural aspect of the programme.

Between 2021 and 2023 these projects were centred on Orleans House Gallery, a site that clearly and poignantly speaks to Cultural Reforesting.The 2024 ecosystem which buzzes, flies and scuttles around the gallery includes a tidal, riverside situation, a wonderfully messy, almost wild-feeling woodland, and a contemporary art gallery in a colonial building, with all the technology, culture and tides of people washing in and out every day. Additionally, it is run by the Local Authority, with council relationships, political complexity and local "ownership" conversations at play. All of this means it lends itself to becoming a hub for exploring our relationship with nature.

How might this place be evolving through this programme? How can it be a place for all Londoners contemplating this question? And how are stag beetles, wild garlic, Cedars of Lebanon, parakeets and mosses all part of this evolution?

From 2023 we have been developing projects across the borough, collaborating with researchers, council teams and local communities, and also further ecosystems. As a Local Authority Service we are aware of our colleagues across services, communities and ecosystems, therefore it felt a vital opportunity to work beyond the Borough's Arts venue, so that we could better understand how the outcomes of the artist research projects might provide collaborative models elsewhere. A by-product of this programme is to champion the artistic practice in these local and global conversations. The arts are vital to the souls of our society and, as a Local Authority, we are fortunate to have the support to not just give space to artistic experiences, but to design cross-council multidisciplinary projects with artists at the development table. How are the arts vital to our evolution as an ecocentric society?

It is through this constantly growing series of questions that the art/academia potential lies and indeed is required. To this end we have begun a long-form relationship with Royal Holloway to explore this potential, and test ideas in the local authority and the borough's communities. Ultimately, we would like to understand whether artistic experiences go some way to impacting people's everyday lives in relation to the ecosystems they step through.

Our fourteen projects are leading us all over the ecological crises landscape. Here I outline three of the Cultural Reforesting research projects that demonstrate the breadth of possibility for university and local authority partnerships.

1. Supermarket~~Supermarket~~Forest, Andrew Merritt

> *'The supermarket provides us with all our daily needs – where once we wandered the woods for our daily needs, we now wander the aisles. This project subverts the idea of a supermarket through sculpture and interactive design. Through prototyping, the project will connect us to our ecosystems through food, where it comes from, and what history, as well as futurology, tells us about how western society comprehends its relationship, or lack of, to food.'* Andrew Merritt

Andrew Merritt's work regularly touches on the absurdity of modernity, and how anti-nature much of our society has become. But perhaps these systems, technologies and concrete cultures can be adapted to be part of flourishing ecosystems? Our place as part of nature should be awe-inspiring, elevated to a status reserved for religion. Andrew's project focused on foodways, and how they destroy ecosystems and create a gulf between people and the plants that provide our sustenance. Even in an urban environment through the woodlands, riverbanks, gardens and parks, we are surrounded by edible and medicinal plants. But societally we just see green, missing the cultural, ethnobotanical heritage of all species around us, from stinging nettles and primroses to wild garlic and elder trees.

Super~~market~~Forest collaborated with ethnobotanists from Oxford Botanical Garden and the University of Kent, with Liberal Arts researchers from St. Mary's University, and with the Local Authority's Parks team. This process started with an arts and academia knowledge sharing space supported by St Mary's University in the summer of 2022. The group of approximately 40 people from across the sciences, social sciences and arts & humanities met with Local

Authority collaborators, including councillors to discuss the themes around Andrew's exhibition. To further energise the session, celebrated ethnobotanist Dr Sarah Edwards led the group on a walk through cross-cultural stories of the Orleans House ecosystem. Additionally, there were performances from students related to refugee stories around food, led by Dr Kim Salmons (St Mary's University, Liberal Arts). The framing of this knowledge sharing gave a glimpse of the partnership potential of researchers and Local Authority around urgent issues.

We collaborated with Dr Sarah Edwards, who draws on experience of working with aboriginal communities in Australia and South America. She expanded on the remarkable knowledge that exists across cultures and botany of the species in the grounds of Orleans House Gallery. With funding from NERC, Sarah with Andrew and poet Arji Manuelpillai, carried out a young person's participation programme in schools and the council's Children's Services provider, Achieving for Children. Hundreds of primary students experienced the interdisciplinary nature of the project, and how art and science come together to explore the world around us. The focus of the work with young people is to overcome "plant blindness", through storytelling and immersion in the ecosystems around us. The young people's artistic responses featured in the exhibition alongside Andrew's installation.

The exhibition in the main gallery at Orleans House Gallery was part-supermarket, part-ecosystem factory, part-church, all intended to elevate the remarkable seeds that give us life. The shelves in the gallery were filled with sculptures intended to be planted at the end of the show. The sculptures took the form of objects you would find in a supermarket, and contained 3 seed types, soil and clay. The 3 seed strategy is called "the 3 sisters" way of planting, a methodology used by Native American communities for millennia, and a generative way to plant without needing pesticides or fertilisers. At the end of the show the 70 sculptures were shared among partners, schools, local friends of parks groups, and further national groups in Manchester and Scotland to be planted as a monument to our food systems.

Image: Making and planting a seed sculpture for SupermarketForest, 2023 ©Richmond Arts Service

2. Royal Holloway collaborations

As a Local Authority, we have been seeking a deep, long-term partnership and this approach is being taken up by Royal Holloway. After a series of wide-ranging discussions and workshops led by Cultural Reforesting artists, Royal Holloway Director of External Engagement, School of Performing & Digital Arts, Dr Rebecca McCutcheon and her team produced a scoping document for partnerships and collaboration expanding on what might be possible.

As of February 2024, we are developing three specific collaborative projects and developing a memorandum of understanding. It is clear there is huge potential for place-based, participatory, knowledge exchange around the ecological crisis with possibilities for shared interests across Research and Education, Student Leadership, Our Wider Community and Operations. Here is the fact that we also allcare dearly about the state of our ecosystems and 77% of cultural centre visitors (How do cultural audiences feel about the climate crisis? | pointOne (pointone-epos.co.uk)) expect cultural organisations to show leadership in the response to the crisis.

Our collaborations include firstly, developing Legislative Theatre, a practice pioneered by Dr Katy Rubin, in relation to Cultural Reforesting, exploring ideas of legal personhood for ecosystems or other species, and representation for those under 18 in democracy particularly in relation to the ecological crisis.secondly, Urban Right to Roam with Caroline Harris, exploring barriers to being in nature, either culturally or societally particularly pertinent in a time of Local Authorities being forced to sell off land. Our third project focuses on the idea of accreditation for eco-schools.

Academics at Royal Holloway are also evaluating the impact of Cultural Reforesting, and we are currently working together to explore what makes meaningful evaluation.

3. The Ecosystem Plan and Community of Practice

Cultural Reforesting sets out its provocation to not just encourage all to think differently, but to act differently, and to support artists experimentation with nature-based knowledge. It pushes all involved to just try something now, we don't have time to wait.

A core subject Cultural Reforesting visits through most projects is the problematic language landscape of the West when it comes to working with nature. Systematically nature has been denuded intellectually (and with it ourselves), through education, work and society, for financial, extractive gain. And now we find ourselves in the predicament of pushing nature beyond boundaries in which humans can healthily exist.

In 2020, through Cultural Reforesting's lens, we developed a Land Management Plan by another name, The Ecosystem Plan. A Land Management Plan places the human as managers of the ecosystem, and with this authority comes the cascading dismissal of all other species, communities and natural systems that play equal parts in the evolution of the site of Orleans House Gallery, as collaborators of knowledge and value. The simple renaming hopes to engage differently with all species across the site.

The Arts Service are attempting to position the arts and spaces artists work in as places for wider societal experimentation. Through collaborating with further disciplines, species and communities we hope to demonstrate that these spaces are beacons of hope and new ways of being with nature.

The community of practice holding the Ecosystem Plan to account include: ethnobotanists, artists, researchers from Kew Gardens, local teachers, and further council teams, such as those in the Parks Service.

We want ecosystemic thinking to be at the fore in our intentions for the evolution of this place,

and with it to understand how other species might also see the evolution of this site protected for future generations through the Will of the last private owner, Nellie Ionides.

We are working across sectors to understand how this idea might impact beyond our site, and beyond the arts to become a Borough-wide strategy.

Other projects of note

These include: **Kinship Workshop** by Tom Goodwin and Katye Coe and **Darkness in Urban Spaces** by Harun Morrison and Kim Coleman.

> 'We are questioning the cultural habit of production and delivery. How can we, as artist practitioners, live and thrive more simply and locally? Through a process of personal reforesting can we visit a deeper, heartier relationship with the essential aspects of nature connection?
>
> How might Kinship Workshop arrive with gentle purpose in the immediate landscape and community in and surrounding Orleans Gallery?
>
> We want to understand better how Kinship Workshop can be a sustained practice that becomes part of daily domestic life and importantly working practices and decision making in organisations.'
> Kinship Workshop

Kinship Workshop, which has been developed by psychologists, dance artists and social workers, gets to the core of Cultural Reforesting. Through a series of simple daily activities, attending to our sensory selves and our surroundings, and then reflecting in a communal way, it demonstrably renews a relationship with nature. If our bodies and senses are constantly interacting with our ecosystems, then we can attend to these engagements, and with them address our well-being and that of our ecosystems.

These workshops were piloted over a five week period with Council staff, from our Climate team, Adult Services, Sport and more, and the response to these was astounding and clear. We need to spend more time surrounded by other species in vibrant spaces.The council has extended this programme in 2024 to a 10-week programme. The council's culture is literally being reforested.

> Choosing whether to light our parks and open spaces can be contentious. Many of Richmond's green spaces are 'dark corridors' — left intentionally dark to avoid unnecessary artificial lighting that can disturb protected species like bats. However, for many people who use parks and green space to walk dogs, commute to and from work and for leisure, darkness can compromise their ability to use and enjoy the spaces. Councils also strive to ensure community safety. It's currently not a requirement to protect 'dark corridors' in planning terms and much of the UK experiences excess light pollution, particularly in London.

Darkness in Urban Spaces works with local youth centres, parks' friends groups and council services with outcomes around community engagement in their areas development, this project is playing out through 2024.

Outcomes — Place making and artist-led action on the ecological crises.

Knowledge generation and sharing as public duty is an essential part of the delivery and intention of Cultural Reforesting. Giving opportunities to intentions around Civic university and research therein can support a dynamic shift in what high streets, parks, cultural spaces and more can be, not just for festivals, but as a permanent approach, with people. Cultural Reforesting is developing collaborations across the local authority, with teams such as Planning, Climate, Parks and Care Services being part of the knowledge exchange.

Empowering communities isa key aim for Cultural Reforesting sharing the messy bit of research and experimentation and working with communities to create that. The final artistic experience is given heft by the weight of voices who have helped create it. Our position in a Local Authority gives us access to all communities, and underrepresented groups across the Borough. It is hard to overstate the value of this position, we just need to ensure authenticity and generosity of the ongoing experience, so it is not tokenistic or hierarchical.

More than human agency is the deep comprehension of our relationship as part of nature. accept . London is a colonial centre, and the breadth of international species, from the parakeets to the Cedars of Lebanon are testament to our colonial past and present. Philosophical thought borne out of the immersion in spaces shared by cultures and species is giving research an opportunity to create a place with collaborators including more-than-human species. Our place holds this vital trajectory, which is gaining traction in disciplines from the sciences to art and in the public imagination.

Image: Bryony Ella painting at the foot of a tree. Bryony developed wild drawing, as part of her artist research residency, 2021 ©Ewelina Ruminska

Conclusion

Throughout this article I have posed questions that highlight the fascinating and to-be-embraced unknown, and the hopeful energy that is the life-blood of Cultural Reforesting.

How might a Local Authority be a landscape for applied research, knowledge sharing and public engagement?

Clearly there is appetite for public space to be reinvigorated through the arts and knowledge sharing. As a Local Authority we can bring together a range of communities, expertise and policy-makers to give vital heterogeneity to the lived experience that will ensure that any application of knowledge sharing is challenged through real-world experience. As the LA we can ensure that it leaves a permanent shift in experimental activation of place, we must give evolution a chance, and artists a thoroughly supported infrastructure to experiment with us. How might Cultural Reforesting help wider society understand the vital value of art and the artist, and the reforesting of our imaginations?

In 2023 Cultural Reforesting brought the arts-led nature-connection workshops, Kinship Training, to the Local Authority, specifically to employees across all services. The workshops which have ecocentrism at their core were a huge success and are being delivered in 2024 to a wider group of employees over 10 weeks. This opportunity should be as integral to staff development as health and safety training.

The essence of Cultural Reforesting is certainly capturing the imagination, as the expanding partners attests, but is it making a difference in the ecological crisis landscape?

As Rebecca Solnit said of hope, “Authentic hope requires clarity — seeing the troubles in this world — and imagination, seeing what might lie beyond these situations that are perhaps not inevitable and immutable.”

The clarity of place, with the imagination of artists and their collaborators is giving hope a chance. We as the Local Authority need to keep providing space, usual and unusual, particularly outside, surrounded by vibrant ecosystems — as programme collaborator, Sámi leader, Liisa Holmberg says so clearly, without all the fuss, “you only learn something when you have the wind on your nose.”

Image: Artist Abigail Hunt working with early years as part of her research, 2022 ©Richmond Arts Service

Author Biography:

Andy Franzkowiak

Andy Franzkowiak is a Programmer with Richmond Arts Service, who recognises that we have been challenged to do things differently if we are to address the ecological crises.

Through working with several higher education institutions on cultural programmes that involved artist and academic projects, such as King's College London, Andy has led on expansive programmes that at their heart are collaborative, interactive and risk-taking, and regularly site-specific.

Andy has a passion for bringing the artistic practice into the centre of vital, social spaces, recognising the need to unlearn, question authentically and test ideas from a range of voices in order to evolve somewhere new. Andy's role with a Local Authority Service is a place with huge amount of potential to realise all of this.

His practice has been supported and inspired by wonderful people whilst working for the likes of Punchdrunk, Battersea Arts Centre, Somerset House and King's College London, as well as creating stories through his own company Shrinking Space.

‘For the increase of learning’ — Enacting change through a University Art Museum and Child & Family Services Partnership

Nicola Wallis, Fitzwilliam Museum

Summary

This case study demonstrates innovative approaches to cultural partnership between Cambridge University and the Local Authority mediated by The Fitzwilliam Museum, an art museum which is part of the University of Cambridge Museums consortium (UCM). The UCM has a long-standing relationship with different elements of the council-run Children’s Services. This case study focuses on the iterative growth of a participatory research programme within the partnership between The Fitzwilliam Museum and the Cambridgeshire Early Years, Childcare & School Readiness service (CambsEYC).

Background to the project

I work as a Practitioner Research Associate in Early Childhood and Collections at the Museum. Prior to this I was a Museum Educator developing public and targeted programmes for young children. Practice and research are intertwined in my methodology, through an ‘enquiry as stance’ (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) approach. This means that I entered into the work with the CambsEYC team with curiosity and a commitment to ongoing reflection and iterative development, rather than with a clear goal in mind for what we might achieve together. Our partnership has grown very organically in ways that were not foreseen at the start. Through my work as practitioner researcher in the university art museum I have been able to support the growth of the partnership in incremental ways that are impactful for professionals in both organisations and for the community they serve. This has been a genuinely ground-up approach, with grassroots level work developing in ways that now inform the strategy and research agendas of both organisations. Even more importantly, by working in partnership, CambsEYC and the university museum are able to maximise their collective impact to transform the experiences of young children and families.

Do the first thing well.

The partnerships started small with two practitioners — me from the Museum and Sally McGivern from CambsEYC – working together to deliver a creative session for families. We were keen to expand the museum’s early years offer to new families, and reached out to the County Council team who had the necessary contacts to facilitate this. SureStart Centres were keen to offer a range of activities to the families they were supporting. We did not realise at the time, but this one-off event with no follow up activities planned would be the first of many future collaborations. My first piece of advice to others therefore is to: do the first thing well.

Build Trust Through Care & Attention

Neither partner knew what to expect from this event, but the care and attention from both the SureStart practitioner in building confidence and enabling the participants to access a new environment and from the Museum Educator in tuning into families and creating a welcoming and nurturing environment made for a high-quality experience. Seeing each other's professional expertise in action was an important building block in establishing the trust and understanding from which further work could grow.

From this initial activity, more group visits were organised, followed by an opportunity for more extended engagement through the development of *Creative Families* – a specially-designed course with four consecutive weekly visits. This was a targeted offer which could provide more in-depth experiences for families while also building the foundations of a shared pedagogy across the two organisations[64].

> *'Great fun for both kids and parents. Very inspiring environment, lecturers and activities. Actually the biggest thing we liked: it encourages people -parents- to go out with kids!!!'*
>
> Comment following a recent Creative Families course

When Cambridgeshire County Council launched its *Talking Together* initiative to address the impact of inequalities on young children's language and communication development, we were invited to contribute. As a university museum with a commitment to 'the increase of learning' we have an academic interest in addressing barriers such as language or communication issues that might negatively impact children's learning. At the same time, the Museum is positioned as a community asset, well placed to support children and families outside the statutory and voluntary sectors. Understanding the university as a part of the community ecosystem, rather than as something separate that the community needs to engage with, has been a helpful way of configuring the local authority-museum partnership on an equitable basis. There was a shift in emphasis from both partners as part of this process, with the Child & Family Centres viewing the Museum as a way of extending their offer, and the Museum positioning the work with Early Years audiences within their mission to challenge social injustice.

This can be seen in a piece we contributed to the Museum of London Early Years Toolkit[65] about a collaborative project: *Talking and Eating Together,* in which families explored an exhibition around food culture in early modern Europe over the course of four weeks. By this point, Child & Family Worker Sally McGivern had been engaged in many partnership projects with the Museum going back a number of years. Although this case study was written for a museum practitioner audience, Sally's confidence and understanding of the essence of these programmes was very secure, and so we felt that she should author this piece herself to bring a new voice into the toolkit. Here she describes the impact of working together with the Museum on families:

> *'I can see from talking to the families how this programme has benefited their confidence, social interactions, and positive relationships between children and adults. For example, a shy child with Cystic Fibrosis who initially hid behind her grandmother at groups came out of her shell during the sessions. The grandmother said that she settled into her new nursery class straight*

64 https://www.museums.cam.ac.uk/blog/2023/03/14/creative-adventures-for-families/

65 EYT_EarlyYears_PineapplesandGingerbreadMen_Fitzwilliam.pdf (museumoflondon.org.uk)

away, which she thought was due to the social experiences she had had at the museum and C&FC [Child and Family Centre] groups.

One family was referred to me because there was concern about the lack of play opportunities at home and they were not attending our groups, but they engaged with the museum activities with encouragement and asked me at the last session to let them know if there were any similar activities'

Sally McGivern, writing for the Museum of London Early Years Toolkit

By engaging deeply with the issues at the heart of the attainment gap between young children facing disadvantage and their more wealthy peers, the University, Museum and CambsEYC are learning together and offering practical, evidence-based interventions to support children and those who care for them.

Image: Child at the Centre

Understand your own expertise

When working within our own networks and organisations it is easy to assume that everyone shares the same foundational knowledge and to become fixed in certain approaches and patterns. Working in partnership, particularly within a framework of practitioner research, necessitates a clear articulation of one's own positionality, combined with an open disposition to the expertise of others. On this basis over nearly a decade the Museum and CambsEYC have used their combined capabilities to co-develop:

- Interventions for families:
  - 23 museum visits
  - 10 outreach sessions at local community settings

  - 9 extended engagement courses
  - 3 x postal mailouts during COVID reaching 250 families
  - Nearly 400 families involved!
- Evaluation frameworks to capture the impact of these
- Mentoring and professional development opportunities for Museum Educators
- Pedagogical training for early years practitioners across the county
- Participatory action research projects in collaboration with practitioners and families
  - publications in two peer-reviewed journals and chapters in edited volumes
  - Practice sharing and dissemination for practitioners in the early years and museum sectors

By understanding and being able to articulate the skills, knowledge, and connections that each of us were able to bring to these activities, we have been able to strengthen the areas of our overlapping expertise and extend and develop this in new ways. Learning gained through working in partnership is not confined to an evaluation report, but embodied by individual practitioners who are then able to build on their expanded expertise in their own work. This means that this process of interconnected knowledge exchange is held within the practice at the grassroots.

Image: Creative Families Course

At this stage of the partnership, the ripples of the work are being felt at a strategic level with the Museum's *Creative Families* course written into the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough *Best Start in Life* strategy and early years partnerships playing a key role in Museum learning and research programmes. What has facilitated this impact on organisation-level planning is my third piece of advice:

Have a shared vision

A shared goal is not just a shared outcome for an individual project, but a broader commitment to and aspiration for change. It is within this space that the missions, values, and practice of both organisations become intertwined and thus more powerful. In the case of the partnership described above, there is a clear commitment to social justice: for making things better for young children and those who care for them, particularly those facing the most disadvantage. Action research, that catalyses social change through activating the knowledge and skills of practitioners and participants is a key tool in moving towards this goal. The commitment to continual development is born from a shared understanding that experiences in the early years have an impact throughout the life course, and that investment in high quality services for young children and families at the earliest stages is the most efficient way to address social, health, and educational inequalities (García & Heckman, 2020; Marmot et al., 2020).

Our shared vision guides how we shape our research questions, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches as practitioners working in real time at the grassroots level and informed by hyperlocal contexts and agendas. As our partnership has developed, our collaborative programme has informed our research on early childhood as museums. The impact of this work has been recognised by the wider university and my Practitioner Research post is now funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF). An example of the knowledge generation aspect of our partnership is an academic article in which we reflect on the potential of the museum environment as a space of attentive nurturing care in which families are able to connect and flourish: The slow museum: the affordances of a university art museum as a nurturing and caring space for young children and families. This work was both precisely targeted to local issues and participants while at the same time holding resonance for wider contexts and settings. By continually holding our shared goal in our sights, the Museum and CambsEYC are able to generate new knowledge and insights into the impact of children's museum encounters.

Our partnership is a living phenomenon built on a praxeological approach (Pascal & Bertram, 2012). Reflection (through research and evaluation), action (through practice), an awareness of power structures and their influences, and shared ethical values, are intertwined to create a strong and sustainable partnership. Working directly at the site of practice means that our approach is flexible and agile, enabling us to adapt to changes in strategic direction and respond to new funding streams and opportunities as they arrive. Resolute commitment to our shared goal of improving children's lives requires transformational change. Our partnership shows that this can begin at the level of individual children, families, and practitioners, but with careful nurturing, systematic and rigorous approaches to research, and a shared commitment to enacting change through practice and knowledge exchange, this work can have far reaching impact:

> *'profound change should and does grow from experience to conceptualisation and not the other way round.'* (Pascal & Bertram, 2012: 484)

Author Biography

Nicola Wallis,
Practitioner Research Associate: Early Childhood & Collections, Fitzwilliam Museum

Having previously worked as a primary and nursery teacher, Nicola is now a Practitioner Researcher at the Fitzwilliam Museum at the University of Cambridge, focusing on Early Childhood. As a Museum Educator she developed innovative learning programmes and research projects involving babies, young children, and those who care for them. Nicola is studying for a PhD in young children's engagement with museum objects & spaces at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood. Her research draws on participatory methodologies to explore the role of early arts and cultural experiences in supporting democratic engagement and social justice through pedagogies of listening and care.

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The value of research collaboration in cultural policymaking

Anna Kime, Centre for Cultural Value
and **Pam Johnson, Leeds City Council**

The context for collaboration

Policy Leeds aims to strengthen the influence and impact of research from across the University of Leeds (UoL) on policy design, delivery and impact at the local, national and international levels. The Research England Policy Support Fund is facilitating researchers to better engage with policy professionals and with this support this has included collaboration with Leeds City Council (LCC) focused on Areas of Research Interest (ARI) projects.

In 2020, a review of collaborations between UoL and LCC was undertaken by Leeds Social Sciences Institute (LSSI). The resulting report – Unlocking the Potential of Civic Collaboration – made a series of recommendations on ways to improve collaboration between the two institutions, including identifying knowledge needs and co-design research priorities (Recommendation 10).

Workshops organised by LSSI in 2021 found broad interest across the University and Council in collaborating across all areas. To focus the work on strategic priorities, it was decided to adopt a needs-led approach and identify research priorities for key areas for policy development where the Council had current capacity to engage, using the Best City Ambition (LCC corporate strategy) as a guide.

Four focus groups were held, covering Culture, Digital, Food, and Inclusive Growth respectively. These brought together policy leads from the Council with researchers with an understanding of the University's expertise in the identified areas, and were facilitated by LSSI, Horizons Institute and Policy Leeds. Working together, LCC colleagues identified their knowledge needs, and the researchers helped pull out the research questions. The outcomes were then written up as ARI documents.

The intention of developing ARIs was to clarify what existing research would be of interest and to highlight areas where LCC would have an interest in future research and collaborations. While this work originated from a collaboration between the two institutions, UoL remains mindful of the potential this approach has to draw in expertise from other research organisations in the city and region.

The ARIs were made possible by a longstanding relationship between LCC and the University, predating the collaborative review. As part of the review, a Steering Group was set up to oversee the work, involving senior members from across the University and Council and chaired by the Deputy VC for Research and Innovation.

Image: Light Night at the University of Leeds © University of Leeds

A Strategy Liaison Group was formed to oversee the actions agreed by the Steering Group, which again included both Council and University members. This governance structure facilitated generating the institutional buy-in from both organisations for this programme and the capacity to undertake it.

To stimulate the engagement of researchers with the ARIs, the Deputy VC for Research and Innovation sanctioned the University ringfencing some of the funding it received from the Research England policy support fund for projects addressing the LCC ARIs. LCC supported this work by agreeing that Council colleagues' time to be involved in the projects should counted as an in-kind contribution.

The programme, which has enabled over 20 policy research collaborations to date, created the conditions for Anna Kime, Centre for Cultural Value Policy Officer to embed within LCC's Culture Programmes team and contribute to shaping cultural investment and impact policies.

Image: Light Night at the University of Leeds © University of Leeds

A meeting of minds

In this paper, Anna and Pam Johnson, LCC Head of Culture Programmes reflect on their particular research collaboration – operating within the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council ARI collaboration framework – and on the value of policymakers and academics working together from their respective positions.

Anna Kime

Public policy decision-making is often seen as difficult to understand and inaccessible. The contexts for policymaking are various and multifaceted, taking place at local, regional and national levels. Gaining insight into the process for researchers and practitioners alike can, at times, be complex.

At the Centre for Cultural Value (the Centre), we believe cultural policymaking – in its many forms – should be underpinned by rigorous research and robust data. We also seek to demystify the policymaking process for our constituents. Yet, our research has shown a crisis with effectively harnessing and evaluating cultural data.

To explore some of the issues faced and how they might be overcome, I undertook a one-day-a-week six-month placement in 2023 with Pam Johnson, Head of Culture Programmes at Leeds City Council (LCC) and her team.

The research placement marked a significant step in the Centre's work towards bridging the gap between academia, policy and practice. It enabled regular and reflective conversations around cultural leadership and the team's operational environment, as well as strongly emphasising the practical development of a framework tailored to the primary requirement of local government,

to deliver benefit for its residents. This work included understanding more connected and people-centred evaluation practice and identifying cultural impacts demonstrating the value of LCC's longstanding investment in and commitment to supporting culture.

The collaboration was, in effect, a "meeting of minds". The Centre had co-created a set of principles to inform how evaluation of cultural activity needed to be people-centred, robust, connected and beneficial. Similarly, LCC's approach centred around, *"no decision without data and no data without stories"*.

Though the catalyst for the policy research collaboration related to the Cultural Impacts Framework, I was invited to join the team and contribute to related areas of the team's work. Through this, I gained an understanding of the experience and insight of the Culture Programmes team. I also witnessed the evolution of the set of priorities and principles co-produced with the creative sector to underpin the new Cultural Investment Programme and helped facilitate Beyond 23, a legacy discussion event with the city's creative sector.

Being embedded in the team provided a vital grounding to develop evaluation and data proposals informing the final outputs of the placement.

Developing a cultural impacts research partnership

Pam Johnson

The independent cultural sector in the city is an important part of "Team Leeds" and, alongside the Council's own directly delivered cultural services, makes a significant contribution to LCC's corporate objectives. How we tell this story is important across internal directorates, for elected members, to external stakeholders and for the benefit of the city's culture.

In 2022, a review of LCC's long-standing cultural funding programmes was launched to:

- align funded project outcomes with the Council's recently refreshed corporate strategy;
- provide a more flexible investment model to respond to the increasingly challenging financial climate and the implications of this for culture; and
- to prepare for the projected outcomes of LEEDS 2023 (the city's year of culture)

Associated with this, it was critical that the Culture Programmes team who led the cultural funding review, refreshed its approach to capturing impacts data aligned with Corporate Strategies and the work of teams across the Council. This shift would result in being able to measure the impacts and benefits of culture and use robust data sets to tell the city's story and that of its significant cultural sector.

Also in 2022, and in collaboration with the Centre for Cultural Value (the Centre), we developed a joint proposal to Policy Leeds to recruit a Policy Officer to the Centre's team whose role would include a placement with Culture Programmes to support the development of a Cultural Impacts Framework to underpin with the emerging Leeds Cultural Investment Programme.

The placement with the Council was integrated into the Policy Officer job description with the intention to support the Centre's policy objectives while supporting LCC's cultural development objectives. The Centre and LCC recruited to the role, Anna Kime was appointed, and the placement commenced in March 2023.

A shared mission and mindset

The value of having a researcher in situ delivered multiple mutual benefits, not least to help them understand how the research focus area was influenced by other areas of the team's work. The added value was remarkable, including augmenting our team's professional development by bringing research skills into our work environment.

Anna and I shared prior experiences of National Lottery funding roles, bringing insights regarding programme design, audience development and the form of policymaking funders undertake. Now representing different major institutions in Leeds, we recognised the range of organisational contexts being brought into view through the collaboration.

Working collegiately, rather than in isolation, gave each party confidence in being creative and adaptive. This opened the scope for a rich and iterative process. Looking back, the initial research brief was broad; perhaps too broad. However, this gave us space for full exploration of the most appropriate focus related to the significant factors in the Culture Programmes' scheme of work, which included the refresh of the Leeds Cultural Investment Programme, developing a Cultural Impacts Framework and development of the LEEDS 2023 legacy programme.

Importance of a people-centred, storytelling approach

Anna Kime

I worked with research colleagues at the Centre for Cultural Value to ensure the placement benefitted from robust research into evaluation and data analysis methodologies.

The outcomes of the Centre's 2021 national research project Making Data Work indicated that cultural datasets suffer from poor alignment and often do not fulfil their intended purposes. Consequently, the sector faces significant challenges in demonstrating the genuine value and impact of its endeavours. These data-related obstacles encompass a lack of standardised practices, notable gaps and inconsistencies in data collection methods, and gaps in evaluation and analysis skills. Addressing these issues necessitates strategic leadership and the development of enduring, collaborative solutions.

Employing the Centre for Cultural Value's Wheel of Change Framework and Evaluation Principles, I devised a tailored methodology to gauge the effectiveness of the new Cultural Investment Programme, aligning with the team's capacity and expertise. My approach championed a cyclical and iterative process, where funding priorities guided the route towards specific objectives, while accumulating vital baseline data during the programme's initial year of implementation.

I brought prior experience of public funding strategies, having been responsible for the distribution of National Lottery funds to develop audiences for film in Greater London and the North of England in previous roles. The significant development programme being undertaken by the Culture Programmes team prompted reflection about my role and the experience of fund managers as policymakers. This proved to be influential in my approach to evaluation recommendations and one that is supported by the Centre's commitment to our people-centred principle.

Offering an objective perspective, I was able to guide the team in acknowledging their expertise and experience in supporting the sector across the city. I identified opportunities for reflection

during the grant-making journey, fostering curiosity and a culture of open enquiry regarding the data. This was aimed at bolstering the team's confidence in their abilities and insight to contribute to sector development.

Fund managers constitute a critical aspect of the sector's ecosystem, serving as dedicated advocates for culture, yet frequently operating discreetly within institutions or facing challenges due to the demanding decision-making processes they must navigate. By integrating the evaluation process into the funding cycle, I aimed to underscore the pivotal role that the team takes in reaching the potential success of the investment programme.

With the Culture Programmes team at the heart of developing a cultural data strategy, I was able to work with them on the co-development of guiding principles for data collection. The focus of this work was to ensure that end users remained central to the emerging data framework, such as freelancers and cultural venues tasked with collecting and returning the data.

The Evaluation Principles demonstrate a vision for data gathering characterised by respect, equity and transparency. An emphasis on valuing diverse perspectives rather than favouring a single stakeholder's demands is a crucial aspect of this process.

Beyond continuing to embed placements in the Centre's policy work, I gained valuable personal and professional experience. The conversations with LCC's Inclusive Growth team have seeded an interest in the relationship between culture, the Social Progress Index and United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. I feel confident in championing iterative and collaborative approaches to project development and evaluation and privileged to have spent time with inspiring and thought-provoking council colleagues.

This initial partnership has led to the Centre's policy work continuing to be enriched by a placement-led approach. I am currently spending a day a week with West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Culture, Heritage and Sport team and I'm in conversation with other policymakers about placements in the future. The Centre recognises that local and regional government placements helps them to gain valuable insight into the political and practical challenges these organisations face and their ambitions for culture in their respective constituencies.

The Centre for Cultural Value plays a brokering, convening and synthesising role between research, practice and policy. The continuing opportunities to collaborate with local and regional authorities promise to enrich our insights even further. As partners, we will continue to champion a holistic approach to data and evidence gathering that is robust, connected, beneficial and people-centred.

Beyond the work programme itself, our collaboration has endured. We remain valuable sounding boards for each other and continue to reap the rewards of our time working together. When looking back on 2023, it was apparent different ways of working were introduced to both Culture Programmes and the Centre that felt refreshing and nourishing. The distinct spheres that laid the groundwork for the placement are critical here: two institutions prioritising dedicated funding, a research centre introducing a policy role, a Culture team keen to hear research-informed insight and two practitioners discovering a shared love of dialogue and broad-minded thinking in each other.

Pam

Though operating in a challenging financial climate and within limited resources, Anna's placement significantly enhanced capacity and maximised value including by providing a unique professional development experience for the Culture Programmes team. The collaboration has confirmed the Centre as a strategic partner and is already informing the direction for other cultural policy development areas.

This year, LCC will launch a new cultural impacts survey which will allow the us to better evidence the benefits of the Council's culture investment to Leeds and its residents, enable us to tell the story and will provide a crucial new baseline for future cultural developments in the city. We will draw on this collaboration to evaluate the Cultural Investment Programme.

ARIs — learning and legacy

Two cohorts of projects addressing the Leeds City Council ARIs have now been funded, running in 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively. As we reflected on our collaboration experience, we returned to Juliet Jopson at Policy Leeds to consider what has been learnt about the relationship and collaboration over this period. Julia said:

> "The first year yielded a lot of interest and ten projects that aligned to the LCC ARI were funded from the Research England policy support and participatory research funds. These had a range of involvement with the Council from placements and co-produced projects, to those of interest to the Council but where little engagement had taken place prior to the project proposal being submitted.
>
> Having so many projects running simultaneously had advantages in that it drew attention to the Areas of Research Interest, and provided a cohort who could support each other with the engagement. However, it stretched the Council's capacity to engage fully with all of the projects. For this reason, selection of projects for 2023-24 included assessing the involvement of Council colleagues in the development of the project to ensure only projects that were fully aligned with the Council needs were selected.
>
> The hope is that these projects will yield value in answering the identified areas of research interest, build foundations for future collaboration and position us ready to apply for larger external grant opportunities, as well as developing long term, mutually beneficial, and trusted relationships between Council colleagues and researchers at the University.
>
> Although the fund has been helpful in stimulating new research activity, it has been less successful at leveraging existing research knowledge to fulfil immediate knowledge needs at the Council. In addition, long-term funding is not guaranteed — Research England has only committed to providing policy support funding through to 2025 — so future activity may need to find alternative funding.
>
> Matching ambition and capacity remains a challenge, especially in the current financial context for local government, so will require further prioritisation of key areas for engagement moving forward."

Author Biographies:

Anna Kime, Policy Officer, Centre for Cultural Value

Anna builds relationships with external partners and policymakers on behalf of the Centre for Cultural Value. She works with the Centre's research and communications teams to engage stakeholders, academics and practitioners in the Centre's work, articulating its impact to a wide range of audiences. Anna has been a long-time champion of applied research and development. She has worked in senior Lottery funding positions, leading strategies for film culture in Greater London and the North of England. Anna is based in Sheffield where she maintains her artistic practice and freelance audience-facing work. She is a Trustee for RivelinCo in Hillsborough.

Pam Johnson, Head of Culture, Programmes Leeds City Council

Leeds born and raised, Pam's early career was as a contemporary dancer and choreographer until 1998, including work with DV8 Physical Theatre and Phoenix Dance Theatre. Following five years working in cultural education, she joined Arts Council England (ACE) working in the North West and Yorkshire regions before transferring to ACE London as Senior Relationship Manager (Strategic Partnerships) in 2013. In 2019 she joined Leeds City Council as a Principal Officer and became Head of Culture Programmes in 2021 in a role which includes oversight for cultural strategy and investment – and a role which regularly draws on every element of her diverse career and experience.

Creating the conditions for change

Rebecca Di Corpo, Bath Spa University)

For many years my work in administering higher education strategic initiatives has been informed by a certain degree of clarity about the key elements at play in successful cultural local authority and university collaborations. By this I mean partnerships that are formalised through joint strategic endeavours, fit-for-purpose governance structures, reach across local or regional networks and communities of interest, commitment of time and resources over a sustained period, evaluation frameworks, and a mechanism for how the work feeds into what happens next. Elements that create a heady mix of strategic intent and opportunism; and I use the word 'heady' for there is nothing passive or predictable about these situations. The high risk, high value atmosphere of these partnerships is palpable. Finite resource is directed to infinite societal outcomes, and this construct has one overarching aim — to create the conditions for change.

Understandably, the learning through sharing of good practice for university and local government partnership working has often placed an emphasis on individual projects. They are always interesting, tangible as presentable or experienced events, tantalisingly intangible as abstract concepts, deeply relatable and most certainly measurable (or refreshingly immeasurable depending on which way you want to look at it). But what can be missed through this lens is the incomprehensibly multitudinous, non-linear undertakings by many people and organisations to get to that point. This hidden, complex, relationships-based, long-term development work is as compelling as the projects themselves. It is this work, after all, that creates the environment for projects to take place within. The process is rarely a straight line from concept to execution. There are many twists and turns. A mix of goal setting, good working relationships and happenstance.

Image: Forest of Imagination is a partnership between Bath Spa University, Grant Associates, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios and House of Imagination. Lloyd Evans Photo x Living Tree-22

While there is a degree of commonality across these partnerships, context plays a significant part in how collaborative efforts play out. Each local authority, combined authority and university is unique; and the way in which they partner with one another even more so, despite several decades of doing so. I've spent the past fifteen years working with local authorities and universities across several countries, regions and localities, and it is the following characteristics that seem to me to be essential in enabling positive cultural public policy:

vision and mission: a senior leader in each institution represented wants it to happen and commits their time and energy to making it so.

pull and push: frequent analysis of need versus the leverage, influence and assets that can be brought to bear, with these two things pushing and nudging each other in a constant dynamic.

right people at the right time: people who really understand the issues at play for the audiences the strategy and partnership are set up to serve are involved from the outset.

partnership is a skill: it is somebody's role to 'think and do' relationship management, always bringing collaborative sensitivity, and co-creation and co-delivery practices to the situation.

investment in, investment out: an appropriate (at the very least) amount of time and resource is committed to the process.

coherent moving part: all actors play their part throughout, moving with the ebb and flow of the project cycle; avoiding the scenario of a strong vision with no one able to run with the process, or heavy on process with no one able to hold the vision.

reflection as reward: before drawing breath to recalibrate, those behind-the-scenes who've helped orchestrate this kind of work are usually already deep in deliberation about the shape and potential of the next initiative. The reward of this work lies in the ability to reflect, review and re-purpose.

A platform for academic and cultural exchange, such as the one provided by NCACE, offers an important function in building much needed confidence back into place-based cultural partnerships. As ever, our large, long-standing organisations are thinking deeply and actively around new and inclusive ways of working. These forums allow us to move beyond competing forces and spaces so that we can remain committed to the promise of projects and power of transformative partnerships. I am hopeful that many if not all my assumptions and familiarity with partnership working will be teased apart. Never has the working environment felt so open and receptive to new ways of working.

Image: Textiles Recycling in Twerton — Vashti Mayne. Ruby Sant

It has been refreshing to work in a university where people at every level are asking how and where Bath Spa can be helpful, or do better, in contributing to culture, creativity and place. Considerable organisational and individual energy is being directed to people, spaces, projects and partnerships with sustainability, equity and inclusion at the heart of conversations, with all parties. The institution is one of a small number of British universities awarded the Social Enterprise Gold Mark. The process of understanding ourselves in this light has brought a fresh perspective to strategy, capability and process, helping us to ask a different set of questions, keeping people, place, planet front of mind.

Author Biography:

Rebecca di Corpo

Rebecca di Corpo has spent 20 years supporting higher education senior leaders in setting up strategic partnerships in a variety of city, region and international contexts. These multistakeholder endeavours have predominantly been concerned with cultural and creative industries, infrastructure for future cities, and environmental sustainability; and when the opportunity has arisen, a combination of all three. Rebecca is currently based at Bath Spa University where she has established the Centre for Humankinds, a centre for the applied humanities with a mission to 'place the humanities at the heart of decision-making'.

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Local authorities and cultural knowledge exchange between HEIs and other societal actors: an analysis of REF 2021 impact case studies

Dr Federica Rossi,
Universita' di Modena e Reggio Emilia and Birkbeck, University of London

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to investigate what roles local authorities play in cultural knowledge exchange between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other societal actors. There have been, so far, very few analyses of the role of local authorities in cultural knowledge exchange, despite many potential avenues for their involvement in cultural initiatives – for example, as funders, clients, hosts, collaborators. Here we rely on the impact case studies that UK HEIs have submitted to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 as our evidence base, in order to address questions such as:

- Which are the local authorities involved in cultural knowledge exchange?
- What collaborations do they enter in? how are these funded?
- What roles do local authorities play in these collaborations?
- What is their impact?

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is a major national assessment that is undertaken by UK-based HEIs every seven years. It is a system for measuring the quality of academic research, based on the evaluation of several elements: the quality of the HEI's publications, the quality of its research environment and, since 2014, the impact that the HEI's research has on 'the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia' (REF, 2011, p. 26). The REF impact case studies, which are available to download freely from the REF's website[66], are a very valuable source for analysing how academic research in the UK generates impact. The impact case studies provide a comprehensive resource to enable understanding of what kind of impact is generated by academic research, and how. It also provides the opportunity to delve into more specific questions about impact, including, questions relating to the involvement of local authorities in knowledge exchange with HEIs.

The general picture: Local authorities involved in REF 2021 impact case studies

In order to examine local authorities' involvement in cultural knowledge exchange, we first identified the local authorities that appeared as formal partners in all REF impact case studies, by searching for relevant keywords[67] in the 'Formal partners' field of the REF impact case studies database.

66 Available from the following link: https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact (last accessed 26 September 2022).

67 We used the following keywords: Council, Municipal*, Borough, Authority, City, Comune, Comuni*, Kommun*, Town, Metropol*, County, Administra*, Provin*, District.

After extracting the relevant organisations and eliminating duplicates and non-relevant items, we were left with a list of 387 organisations, which can be grouped into four main types:

- 228 are public bodies that perform local government functions – these include organisations such as councils, boroughs, municipalities, city authorities, metropolitan areas;
- 54 are local organisations that play some role in local policymaking and are often public (or private-public partnerships), but they are not politically elected. They include Local Enterprise Partnerships, regional development agencies, other local promotion agencies such as investment agencies, chambers of commerce;
- 28 are other local organisations that can have some degree of involvement with the public sector (they can be partially or fully publicly-owned, for example) but do not have policymaking powers. These include organisations like port authorities, national and local park management authorities, local heritage management organisations;
- 77 are public bodies that are part of central government, at the level of the nation state, devolved administrations, or at supra-national levels. These include various government departments in the UK and abroad, the UK's devolved parliaments, the European Commission.

Since in this report we intend to focus on the role of local authorities, we only consider organisations belonging to the first two categories, which leaves us with 282 organisations overall. Of these, 189 are based in the UK and the remaining 93 are based abroad. Of the 93 local authorities based abroad, the majority are in Europe, in countries like Italy (14), Germany (10), the Netherlands (7), Sweden (8), Greece (7), Norway (6), France (5), Denmark (5), Spain (4), Croatia (4), Slovenia (3), Belgium (3), Ireland (2), Switzerland (2) as well as Czechia, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro (one each). There are only six organisations not based in Europe (one in each of the following countries: Philippines, Korea, Japan, Mexico, Guyana and Gambia).

Considering the 189 local authorities based in the UK, the majority (163) are in England, followed by 13 in Scotland, 9 in Northern Ireland and 4 in Wales.

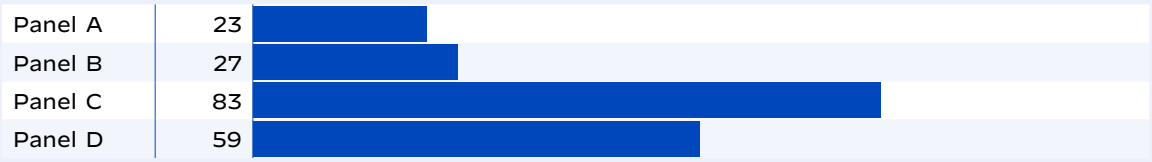
The 282 organisations participate in 192 different impact case studies. The minimum number of cases an organisation participates in is 1 and the maximum is 9. On average each organisation participates in 1.5 case studies, however, the majority (220 organisations) participate in just one case.

The 192 cases involving local authorities are distributed as follows across the four REF 2021 main panels:

- Main Panel A: Medicine, health and life sciences – 23 (12%)
- Main Panel B: Physical sciences, engineering and mathematics – 27 (14%)
- Main Panel C: Social sciences – 83 (43%)
- Main Panel D: Arts and humanities – 59 (31%)

Therefore, even though the majority of case studies involving local authorities are in Panel C (Social sciences), there is also a large share of cases submitted to Panel D (Arts and humanities).

Figure 1. Number of impact case studies involving local authorities, by REF main panel



Zooming in: Local authorities involved in cultural knowledge exchange

In order to focus on cultural knowledge exchange, we consider the involvement of local authorities in all the case studies submitted to Units of Assessments belonging to Panel D – Arts and Humanities. These include the following Units of Assessments:

25 — Area Studies
26 — Modern Languages and Linguistics
27 — English Language and Literature
28 — History
29 — Classics
30 — Philosophy
31 — Theology and Religious Studies
32 — Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
33 — Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies
34 — Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

Of course, this is just one of many possible ways in which we could have selected cases likely to involve cultural knowledge exchange. For example, we could have extracted cases based on keywords referring to arts and culture, which would have probably returned cases submitted to several Units of Assessment (although from previous analyses, we know that the majority of cases referring to cultural knowledge exchange are submitted to Panel D; see Kemp et al., 20234[68]). By focusing on the cases submitted to Panel D, we capture a set of cases involving academics in the arts and humanities. Not only are these academics particularly likely to engage in cultural knowledge exchange, but focusing on the arts and humanities allows us to tease out the specificities of local authorities' involvement in this research field, which is particularly under-researched when it comes to knowledge exchange.

In the following, we focus on the 59 cases submitted to Panel D, Arts and Humanities, which involve local authorities among the formal partners, and examine:

1. The type of collaborations that local authorities are involved in: which HEIs submit cases involving local authorities in cultural knowledge exchange? Which other organisations are involved in these cases? Who funds these collaborations?
2. The type of impact that collaborations involving local authorities in cultural knowledge exchange generate

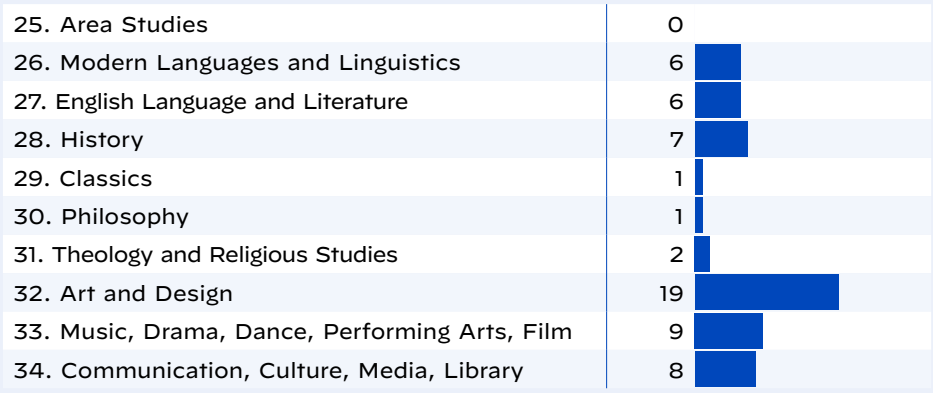
3.1 Collaborations involving local authorities in cultural knowledge exchange

The 59 cases submitted to panel D involve 102 different local authorities; most of these are involved in only one case study, but some of them are involved in two or three. The majority of

68 Kemp, L., Wilson, E., Rossi, F., Baines, N. (2023) REF 2021: Research Impact and the Arts and Culture Sectors, NCACE, https://ncace.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/NCACE-Ref-2021-Research-Impact-and-the-Arts-and-Culture-Sectors-2.pdf.

local authorities are based in the UK, except for 15 which are based abroad (in Germany, Italy, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Romania, Mexico, Japan, Australia). The majority of these cases have been submitted to Unit of Assessment 32 — Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory (19 cases), followed by 33 — Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies (9 cases), 34 — Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management (8 cases).

Figure 2. Number of impact case studies involving local authorities, by REF Unit of Assessment



The 59 cases in main Panel D involving local authorities have been submitted by 36 different HEIs, each of which submitted on average 1.6 cases (minimum 1, maximum 3). The HEIs that submitted these cases are, for the most part, not specialist arts institutions. Among the 36, in fact, we find three HEIs that specialise in the arts (Royal Northern College of Music, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, and University for the Creative Arts), which together submitted 4 of the cases present in this pool. The other HEIs submitting cases to main Panel D which involved local authorities as partners, are either research-intensive Russell Group universities (Birmingham, Exeter, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Queen's University of Belfast, Warwick, York) or more teaching-oriented HEIs. The full list of 36 universities that submitted the 59 cases is reported in the following table.

Table 1. HEIs that submitted cases to main Panel D which involved local authorities as partners

HEIs	(N)	HEIs	(N)
Bath Spa University	1	The University of Leeds	2
Coventry University	3	The University of Liverpool	3
Liverpool Hope University	1	The University of Manchester	1
Liverpool John Moores University	1	The University of Warwick	1
Manchester Metropolitan University	3	University for the Creative Arts	2
Queen's University of Belfast	1	University of Aberdeen	3
Robert Gordon University	1	University of Brighton	1
Roehampton University	2	University of Central Lancashire	1
Royal Northern College of Music	1	University of Chester	1
Staffordshire University	1	University of Exeter	2
Teesside University	1	University of Greenwich	1
The Open University	1	University of Keele	1
The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama	1	University of Newcastle upon Tyne	2
The University of Birmingham	1	University of Nottingham, The	3
The University of East Anglia	2	University of Stirling	2
The University of Huddersfield	1	University of the West of England, Bristol	2
The University of Hull	1	University of Ulster	2
The University of Lancaster	3	University of York	3
		Grand Total	**59**

Therefore, it appears that local authorities collaborate in cultural knowledge exchange either with highly research intensive HEIs that enjoy a reputation of research excellence, also internationally, or with HEIs that are more oriented towards training local students and often appear to have a network of local relationships. They also collaborate with several small specialist arts institutions.

The differences in the research profiles of the HEIs that collaborate with local authorities is evident from their REF scores on research outputs. On average, the units from 'Russell Group' HEIs had 33% of their output rated as 4* and 44.5% rated as 3*, and they submitted 99% of their staff. The units from the three HEIs specialised in arts had 43% of their output rated as 4* and 32% rated as 3*, and submitted 74% of their staff. The units from the remaining HEIs had 34% of their output rated as 4* and 39% rated as 3*, but they submitted only 62.5% of their staff – meaning that almost 40% of their staff is not research-active.

The size of the submitting units is very varied; on average, the units submitting these cases employ about 36 FTE staff, with a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 115.

Each case involved, on average, 2.2 academics, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 8. There is a positive correlation between the number of academics involved and the number of formal partners, as well as between the number of academics involved and the number of local authorities involved as formal partners.

When it comes to the partnerships that local authorities are involved in, the 59 cases mention, on average, 12.3 formal partners, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 54. The most frequent types of partners are universities, followed by companies and cultural institutions (such as museums, archives, libraries, historic buildings).

The following table summarises the types of formal partners involved in the 59 cases (overall number and average number per impact case). By 'public sector organisations' we mean public agencies of various kinds but also the police, the NHS, hospitals, schools, housing trusts, public transport networks. By 'arts organisations' we mean organisations that perform and coordinate cultural and artistic work, such as theatre companies, orchestras and ensembles, dance companies, as well as festivals, and arts and crafts centres. By 'local organisations' we mean organisations, often charities, that have a local development and regeneration mission. Finally, 'other charities' are charities that do not have a local development and regeneration mission, for example religious organisations, charities working for patients, disabled people, older people, and so on. The 'other' category includes a few organisations that we were not able to assign to the other categories.

Table 2. Types of formal partner organisations involved in the 59 cases submitted to Panel D that involve local authorities

Type	Number	Average number per impact case study
Local authority	102	1.73
Other government	31	0.53
University	142	2.41
Company	128	2.17
Cultural institution	107	1.81
Public sector organisations	36	0.61
Arts organisation	69	1.17
Local organisation	29	0.49
Other charity	62	1.05
Other	15	0.25

In terms of funders, the 59 cases list 166 funders, which correspond to 74 different funding bodies (on average, each case mentions 2.9 funders). The most frequent funding body is the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) which features in 39 impact case studies. The second most frequent funding body is the European Commission (15 cases) followed by Arts Council England (12 cases). Less frequent, but still prominent, funders are the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) (5 cases), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (6 cases), InnovateUK/UKRI (9 cases), Research England (5 cases), Lottery funding (8 cases), as well as various research trusts (British Academy, Leverhulme, Wellcome – 7 cases). In addition to these, we find a variety of other funders such as foundations of various kinds, cultural institutions (museums, libraries, archives), national and international government departments, universities. Local authorities themselves do not often appear as funders, in cases which feature local authorities as formal partners. We only find four local authorities as funders in the 59 cases. When they do appear as funders, they generally do so in combination with other funding sources, such as funding from research councils, arts councils, foundations, lottery funding and university funding.

Given that local authorities are unlikely to feature as funders in cases where they appear as formal partners, what roles do they play?

The roles of local authorities in collaborations with HEIs, and the impacts achieved

By analysing the summary and descriptions of the impacts of the 59 case studies, we identified a number of recurring roles played by local authorities.

The local authority and researchers collaborated on bid for award/funding (6 cases): in these cases, the local authority relied on the expertise of the researchers in order to develop a bid for a prestigious award or large scale funding – these include bids for UK City of Culture, UNESCO City of Music and UNESCO City of Film. In terms of impact, these awards increased the city's visibility and prestige, allowed the city to attract further events and investments, with spillover benefits to the local economy.

The local authority commissioned researchers to carry out a study on a specific topic of interest (8 cases). In these cases, the researchers were asked to produce a report or another form of evidence collection which could then be used to improve the local authority's own practices and policies. Examples include reports on dementia care, use of green spaces, digital exclusion, local religious communities. In other cases, the local authority commissioned the researchers to produce, based on their research, a more tangible outcome, such as a website, app, toolkit, guided tour or piece of public art (5 cases). The local authority then used the outcome in question in order to improve the delivery of its services (for example, a tool monitoring library use), and/or to increase the appeal of the locality to residents and visitors (for example, visual tour of a Cathedral, or a guided tour of the city inspired by female writers).

In a few cases (4), the local authority's role seems to have been to facilitate the access of researchers to people and organisations that were the target of a piece of research. For example, the local authority helped researchers to gain access to local schools, to care homes, to indigenous communities. The research in turn would benefit those specific communities – for example, this was the case of a project about the preservation of indigenous languages, or one about using visual arts to help people with dementia. In these cases, although the local authority was fundamental for the success of the research, its role was generally not explained very clearly.

In numerous cases (17), the local authority played the role of host to a festival, exhibition, workshop, or other event, to which the researchers were invited to contribute – either as co-organisers, curators, exhibitors, or trainers. These activities were designed to benefit the participants and audiences, delivering cultural benefits to the participants as well as, sometimes, economic benefits to the organisations delivering them. Also in this case, the role of the local authority was often not explained very clearly and had to be inferred from the description.

Another substantial set of cases (12) involved the local authority and the researchers collaborating to test and/or implement a model or approach developed by the researchers. Examples include collaborations to test and implement approaches to city planning, or approaches to the integration of minorities in the local community, or strategies to improve mobility using electric transportation. In these cases, the collaboration between local authority and researchers was particularly close and the role of the local authority was usually described clearly. These collaborations were designed to directly improve the practices, and sometimes policies, implemented by the local authority, and the benefits of these interventions usually spilled over to the local communities.

Finally, a number of cases (7) mentioned one or more local authorities among their formal partners, but did not clearly explain what the role of the local authority was in the collaboration, and it could not be inferred even from the 'details of the impact' field.

Conclusion

Local authorities are involved in a variety of forms of research collaborations with UK HEIs in the field of cultural knowledge exchange. When they are mentioned as formal partners in the collaborations, they do not usually fund these collaborations but take on other roles, which we have described as being:

Collaborator in bid/award development: the local authority relied on the expertise of the researchers in order to develop a bid for a prestigious award or large scale funding

- Research commissioner: the local authority commissioned researchers to carry out a study on a specific topic of interest
- Access facilitator: the local authority facilitated the access of researchers to people and organisations that were the target of a piece of research
- Host to cultural event: the local authority played the role of host to a festival, exhibition, workshop, or other event
- Collaborator in implementing research outcome: the local authority and the researchers collaborating to test and/or implement a model or approach developed by the researchers

The role of the local authority was often not described very clearly, and had to be inferred from reading the documents; when described, it was not described prominently in the summary of the impact but it was presented only in the details of the impact section. This could be explained as a consequence of the fact that the partners were not the main focus of the case study, which was instead focused on describing the impact of the research. However, it could also indicate that often the HEIs did not perceive local authorities as key partners, particularly when their role was that of helping the researchers to gain access to specific research targets, or when they organised activities which the researchers contributed to. This is something that could be explored further – in particular, whether local authorities can improve their effectiveness in collaborating with researchers so that their contribution is more readily acknowledged; and where there may be other, currently underexploited, avenues for collaboration between HEIs and local authorities in cultural knowledge exchange.

The more research-intensive approach to the collaboration (where the local authority was involved closely as partner of the HEI, or when it commissioned the researcher to produce a study or object) was more likely to occur when the partner was a research-intensive, 'Russell Group' HEIs. While collaborations where the local authority played another role, such as hosting an activity, or collaborating on a bid, were equally likely to involve research-intensive or more teaching-oriented HEIs.

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