(re)defining the role of the ‘maker’ in placemaking:
A Framework for Creative Civic Engagement

Volume 1

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A Framework for Creative Civic Engagement

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the transformative potential of creative civic engagement in shaping place-based policy, practice, and identity, with a focus on post-industrial towns in northern England. Situated within creative placemaking, participatory art, and cultural policy, it explores how creative practices can enable meaningful, inclusive, and sustained civic engagement; how creative practitioners, policymakers, and communities collaborate as 'makers' of place and policy; and how a structured yet adaptable framework can support these processes.

The research adopts a practice-based, action-research methodology, integrating creative, design-led approaches. Through reflective analysis of my own creative practice and live projects, I developed and tested a **Framework for Creative Civic Engagement (CCE)**, a methodology that positions creative placemaking as an inclusive, collaborative, and sustainable approach to shaping places and influencing policy.

Empirical evidence is drawn from three longitudinal case studies - *Blackburn is Open*, *Glossop Creates*, and *The Maker's Mile* - each situated in towns with populations between 33,000 and 148,000. These demonstrate how creative civic engagement can operate effectively across scales: from institutional, council-led programmes to grassroots community initiatives and strategic policy interventions. The case studies show how creative practitioners act as catalysts, collaborators, and advocates, working alongside policymakers and communities to co-produce cultural, social, and economic change, influencing local decision-making and policy agendas.

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge, both theoretical and practical, by evidencing the CCE Framework as a robust, adaptable methodology that addresses gaps in evaluation models for culture-led, place-based initiatives. It demonstrates how creative civic engagement can inform local policy, shape cultural strategy, and contribute to regional devolution deals by embedding culture within broader socio-economic agendas.

By critically reflecting on my multifaceted role as practitioner-researcher, the thesis redefines the 'maker' in placemaking as a collective civic role enacted by diverse makers, offering insights and evidence to support more inclusive and sustainable communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This PhD journey, spanning nine years, has been shaped by the joys and challenges of being a working mother to two (now) teenagers. During this time, I have also been dedicated to initiating, establishing, and directing projects and companies aimed at achieving meaningful impact in communities in northern, post-industrial towns and neighbourhoods, amidst a backdrop of austerity, pandemics, and ongoing local and global uncertainty. Recognising the importance of action-research in these uncertain times, alongside the growing acknowledgment of community-driven change in policy and funding, is significant. No matter how long it takes, it is essential to develop compassionate and collaborative solutions to build a better world for our children and future generations.

I'd like to acknowledge that without the sponsorship support from Sheffield School of Architecture helping to cover the course fees, this opportunity would not have been possible for me.

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I want to acknowledge the impact of a recent collaboration with designer Jake Beddow. Working with Jake on the design brief for the CCE Framework allowed me to effectively communicate the core values, principles, and ambitions of the Framework. This collaboration was instrumental in helping me write the Methodology chapter. Moving forward, I aim to further develop this design ethos and partnership to create additional visual tools that will help disseminate and implement the Framework.

I believe every PhD researcher requires a furry companion to remain mindful and focussed. My daily dog walks with Willow were invaluable and provided perspective when I felt lost. And to my Mum, thank you for the temporary PhD office, making sure I was fed and always believing in me!

In memory of my Dad, who inspired me to be an entrepreneur, and continues to guide me to a brighter creative future.

Finally, and most importantly, to Richard, Riley, and Mabel, I dedicate this achievement to all of us. Go team Tymon!

Thank you all, for your love and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Term / Meaning
ACE	Arts Council England
AR	Action Research
AR/VR	Augmented Reality / Virtual Reality
ARC	Action-Research Collective
CCE	Creative Civic Engagement
CDF	Cultural Development Fund
CID	Cultural Innovation District
CLT	Community Land Trust
CPP	Creative People & Places
GCT	Glossop Creative Trust
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PAH	Participatory Action-Research
ToC	Theory of Change
UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
UR	Urban Room
URR	Urban Room Rochdale

GLOSSARY

Language plays a crucial role in creative civic engagement but is often a barrier to collaboration and understanding across disciplines, communities, and sectors. This glossary clarifies the language used in the thesis, offering definitions of key terms and concepts to support transparency, shared understanding, and accessibility. It reflects both commonly understood terminology and specific terms developed or adapted through the research - particularly those formalised in the Playbook (see Chapter 3).

Core Research Terms

Term	Definition
Action Research	A reflective process of problem-solving carried out collaboratively to improve strategies, practices, and knowledge.
Art production	The creation of artworks and cultural artefacts, often as a tangible output of creative practice, which can contribute to dialogue, identity, and place-making.
Art-making	The process of creating visual, spatial, or performative works as a means of expression, connection, and engagement with social, cultural, or personal contexts.
Civic Infrastructure	The systems, spaces, and networks that enable communities to engage actively in public life and collective decision-making.
Co-Creation	A collaborative process where diverse stakeholders jointly design, deliver, and evaluate initiatives, sharing power and decision-making.
Creative Civic Engagement	The use of creative practices, such as art, design, and cultural activity, to enable inclusive, participatory, and meaningful engagement in civic and policy processes.
Creative Placemaking	Multidisciplinary partnerships that reshape the social and physical character of places through arts and culture. This approach cultivates the creativity already present in communities, creating space for co-design, shared identity, and collective improvement.
Culture-led Regeneration	The integration of art and creativity into economic development, urban renewal, and policy, using creative activity to animate public space, tell local stories, enhance identity, and create more vibrant, resilient environments.

Curation	The practice of selecting, organising, and presenting creative work and experiences, often to tell a story, create space for dialogue, or shape understanding of a place, issue, or community.
Cultural Democracy	The principle that everyone has the right to participate in and contribute to cultural life, ensuring equitable access to cultural resources and opportunities.
Frameworks	A structure that serves as a support or guide, often expanded into a practical tool (e.g., logical frameworks, theory of change).
Makers	Individuals who engage in creative or craft-based practices - including artists, designers, and community members - who contribute to the shaping of places, policies, and cultural identity.
Making	The act of creating, whether objects, ideas, or social connections, as a means of contributing to and shaping place, culture, and community.
Multidisciplinary	For this research, multidisciplinary is used to describe approaches that bring together more than one discipline or specialism to address a topic or problem.
Participatory Design	Involving end-users or community members directly in the design process to ensure outcomes reflect their needs and aspirations.
Projects	Time-limited activities that require (1) a process, (2) a range of methods or tools, (3) a framework to structure and evaluate outcomes/change.
Radical Inclusivity	Actively seeking to include and value all voices, particularly those historically marginalised, in shaping decisions and outcomes.
Social Art Practice	An embedded, participatory art practice that commissions artists to work with and within communities, creating work responsive to the social and spatial context. Prioritises relationships, collective action, and shared agency.
Tools	Physical or digital instruments used to support engagement or communication (e.g., email, photographs).
Transformative Practice	Creative and critical actions aimed at generating deep, lasting change in individuals, communities, or systems.

Playbook Concepts (explained in detail in Chapter 3)

Term	Definition
People-Powered	Empowers communities by building confidence and ensuring benefits are shared equitably. Supports belonging and trust by including diverse voices and celebrating cultural backgrounds.
Place-Based	Recognises and values the unique histories, traditions, and identities of specific locales, nurtures belonging, social cohesion, and sustainable development.
Policy-Making	Facilitates cross-sector, cross-community dialogue that connects citizens, artists, and policymakers to co-create fair and inclusive solutions. Prioritises purpose over profit to achieve meaningful and sustainable change.
Creative Action	Disrupts the everyday through experimental, collaborative art and design interventions. Builds inclusive and engaged communities by developing spaces for creativity, expression, and dialogue.
Durational or Slow Art	Promotes positive change through thoughtful, sustained, collaborative action-research. Inspired by the Slow Art Movement, this approach values time, reflection, and relationship-building to ensure inclusive, sustainable outcomes.
Social Innovation	Applies creative and civic approaches, alongside sustainable business models, to enable collective well-being. Examples include community land trusts and cooperative housing that prioritise local needs over individual profit.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

A note from the researcher

Over the course of nine years, the overarching aims and purpose of this PhD project remained steadfast. Its primary objective has been to articulate and conceptualise my creative practice approach to civic engagement, as well as to provoke and address inquiries into the intrinsic value of art, design, and creativity in facilitating open, accessible places. Central to this endeavour has been a commitment to enhancing our understanding of a place - its history, its inhabitants, and its potential - as a means to improve living standards, nurture opportunities, bolster resilience against local and global shifts, and create happier, healthier communities.

Whilst the duration of the PhD journey was not initially anticipated to be as lengthy as it has turned out to be, it has provided a platform for experimentation, personal growth, and the cultivation of professional relationships and visibility of my practice. Throughout this period, I have observed and adapted to changes within my field and networks, whilst also reflecting on my own responses to societal shifts and personal circumstances. The PhD process has served as a form of live action-research, furnishing a framework for critical reflection, contextual exploration, peer collaboration, and ongoing professional development.

The fundamental purpose remains the provision of an anthropological narrative chronicling twelve years of engagement in creative community practice, particularly within the context of post-industrial northern (UK) towns undergoing significant political, social, and economic transformations, including the challenges posed by a global pandemic. My practice has evolved to interpret and devise systems and processes through art-based and creative actions. Primarily acting as a curator, producer, and director, underpinned with action-research[1] (my definition of these roles are listed below), the interconnectedness of these roles are what shape my creative practice. These roles inform how I work - be that to advocate, to disrupt, to lead or to act - simply what is required in order to help shape, improve and sustain the places I exist - for work, for living, for making. Thus, the primary outcome of this PhD is the emergence of a **Framework for Creative Civic Engagement** - a development unforeseen at the outset, yet welcomed as a valuable tool and practical

[1] This is described further in Chapter 3 Methodology, but part of my practice working in the creative industry sector and collaborating across other sectors is established in research, primarily action-research, constantly learning new terminology, new working practices, new policies and procedures, new social, political, cultural and economic contexts, and delivering work which stretches this knowledge and understanding to create a deeper understanding of place, relationships, methodologies etc.

application in my creative practice, which is about inviting others to participate in the co-creation of place-based engagement strategies (see Appendix P0.1-P0.3).

My role as a 'maker'

I often find myself describing what I do using a variety of job titles and descriptions, reflecting the variety of roles I undertake in order to fulfil my creative practice. Whilst I am quick to confirm I am not an artist, I believe I am a creative and a 'maker'. My aim here is to explain my definition of the different roles I undertake, whilst requesting they be approached with a sense of fluidity and interconnectedness. The context in which these roles are fulfilled is explained further in Chapter 2.

Curator - I select, organise and present creative work and experiences that tell stories, encourage dialogue and shape understanding of place, issues and communities. I work with artists, designers, makers, architects and other creative disciplines, drawing on my knowledge and experience to assemble multidisciplinary teams, commissions and cultural programmes. This enables me to identify and develop opportunities for place-based programmes, including commissions and creative labs.

Producer - A descriptor which has developed from project manager or project coordinator, but is essentially the role of someone who has oversight of the whole project (or it could be a specific element, eg. Technical Producer or Community Producer) and is responsible for the administrative and managerial requirements to deliver a project successfully. Responsibilities include recruitment/procurement, fundraising, budget management, health and safety, volunteer management, and clearing up after activities.

Director - Whilst I am an advocate for non-hierarchical structures, and have experience of implementing steps to achieve this within the organisations I have directed, I have been and currently am a Company Director. This role continues to provide me with the opportunity to build a team, implement policies and procedures I lead on designing, and instil values and principles at the core of my practice.

Action-researcher - My work is purpose-driven (this is explained further throughout the thesis) and is underpinned by a set of values, principles and a logical process, requiring documentation and evaluation in order to measure the success and evidence the change and/or impact of the work. The evidence-base (and storytelling) supports communications, attracting income and investment, development opportunities and recruitment.

INTRODUCTION

THE COTTON MILL

By an Operative

Hum, whirl, click, click, clatter,
Rolling, rumbling, moving matter;
Whizzing, hissing, hitting, missing,
Pushing, pulling, turning, twisting.

Buzz, bang, going, coming,
Standing, creeping, walking, running,
Piecing, breaking, starting, stopping,
Picking, mixing, fixing, copping

Push, rush, cleaning, oiling,
Slipping, sweating, screaming, toiling;
Fetching, taking, spoiling, making,
Saucing, swearing, bagging, bating.

Here, there, this way, that way,
Bad-end, nar-here, fur-on, up-there;
Break-it-out, wind-it-off, hurry piece-up,
Get-em-up, quick, or a'st ha' to stop.

Steam, dust, flyings choking,
Stripping, grinding, brushing, joking;
Full time, short time, no time – so that
Enough's in a mill without Surat!

Author, unknown.[2]

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[2] The Bolton Chronicle, September 1864 https://cottonfaminepoetry.exeter.ac.uk/database/poem.html?id=tbc_1864-09-24_unknown (accessed July 2024) The commentary provided alongside the poem describes how *'it moves from the sounds of the machines to the behaviour of the human operators, and the seamless transition of the shift of subject serves to conflate the inanimate and the animate in the reader's mind.*' This interpretation provides a useful analogy to how I consider the relationship between the industrial heritage innovations and contemporary placemaking practices.

Introduction: Background Context

This practice-based PhD interrogates how creativity, embedded at the intersection of people, place, and policy, can transform civic and policy processes into participatory, inclusive, and regenerative practices. It asks how creative methodologies, through art and design, can act as navigational and relational tools within complex placemaking systems.

Although concepts like cultural democracy, creative placemaking, and culture-led regeneration have gained prominence, there remains a gap: a formalised, longitudinal, practice-based framework integrating creativity into civic engagement and policy-making, particularly in post-industrial contexts. This research addresses that gap through the design and testing of the Framework for Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) - a structured yet adaptable model for embedding creative methods in placemaking.

Research Questions

- How can creative practices make meaningful, inclusive, and sustained civic engagement in placemaking?
- What roles do creative practitioners, policymakers, and communities play as ‘makers’ in shaping place and policy collaboratively?
- How can a structured yet adaptable framework support communities and stakeholders to co-produce sustainable and creative futures for their places?

The PhD provides an overview of my professional practice over the past two decades, tracing a dynamic exploration across diverse geographies, circumstances, relationships, and strategies, set against a backdrop of shifting political, social, and environmental landscapes. Central to this work is a focus on post-industrial towns and often-deprived neighbourhoods, many now designated as *Priority Places* by Arts Council England. These locations have been particularly significant in shaping my understanding of the challenges and opportunities of creative civic engagement. Geography and demographics - the uneven distribution of cultural infrastructure, social capital, and economic resilience - form an essential context for my practice and research.

As concepts such as community art, participatory art, public art, and social art practice have evolved within the creative civic discourse, they continue to present challenges for their advocacy and integration across sectors including health, education, and civic regeneration. My professional engagements span education, economic development, cultural initiatives, and, more recently, health and wellbeing, underscoring my long-standing commitment to place and community, and embedding creative processes at the heart of these endeavours.

Throughout my career in the public and community sectors, I have actively contributed to growing the creative industries, supporting freelance artists and creatives as well as small collectives in establishing sustainable practices. This often includes facilitating the creation of new social enterprises and advising on governance, strategy, and impact. I have held board positions with several charities, chaired community partnerships, and, since 2021, established my own creative business, Local Creative Project Ltd[3] (see Appendix P1.1 for an emerging business model illustrating this). Local Creative Project employs two staff members and collaborates with a network of freelance professionals including artists, designers, architects, and strategists. In addition, I serve as a strategic advisor to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, contributing to the development of Creative Improvement Districts and Creative Health strategies by bringing my lived experience and expertise to influence policy and strategic development.

The map in Figure 1.0 (below) visually locates the primary and secondary case study sites of this PhD research. The blue markers indicate the three main case studies - *Blackburn is Open*, *Glossop Creates*, and *The Maker's Mile* - explored in detail in Chapter 4. The pink markers indicate secondary, shorter-impact projects referenced in Chapter 5. Together, these sites reflect the place-based, situated nature of my creative civic engagement practice, rooted in the distinctive geographies and social contexts of post-industrial northern England.

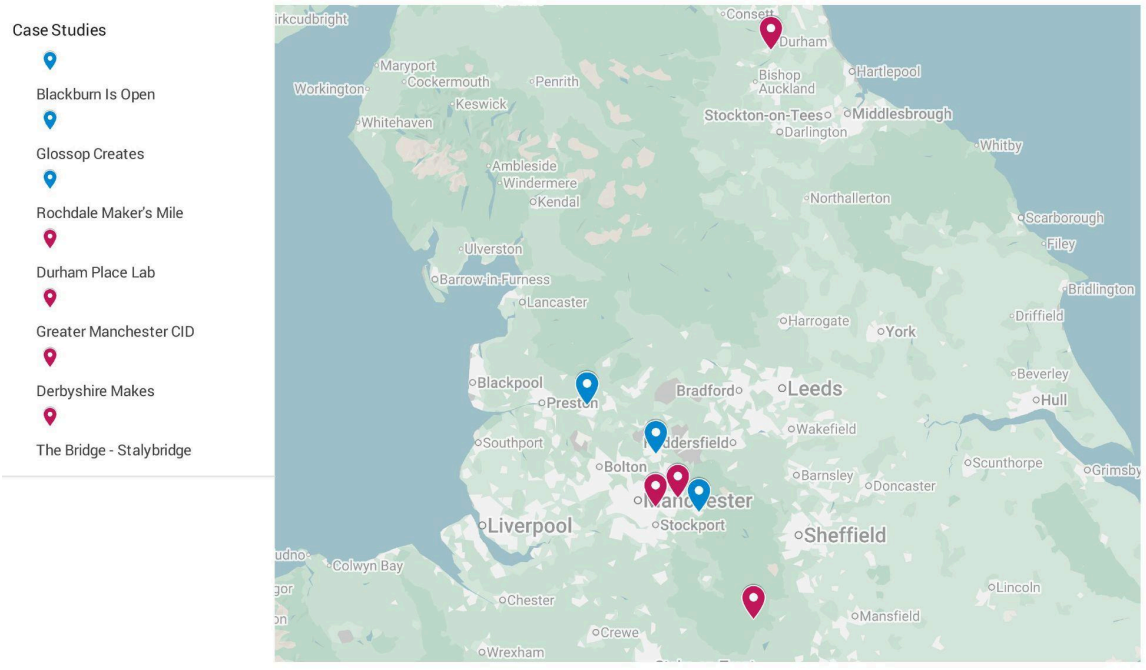

Fig. 1.0 Map of case study locations (expand)

[3] The website for my creative practice is https://www.wearelocal.org.uk/

A FRAMEWORK FOR CREATIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This practice-based PhD aims to elucidate a newly designed Framework for Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) (Fig. 1.2), developed collaboratively with participants, civic partners, and other practitioners. My initial intention was to recognise, evolve, formalise, and communicate my creative practice approach and through this process it has expanded into a sustainable, accessible, and useful model for implementing creative placemaking. The Framework is intended as a resource for local, national, and international actors working at the intersection of people, place, and policy-making.

The Framework offers a structured approach to civic engagement by embedding creativity into community interactions. It provides a public-facing, transparent method for testing and demonstrating themes that complement place-based strategies, while enabling creative, inclusive, sustainable, and agile approaches to policy-making. Its long-term ambition is to connect decision-makers, civil servants, and citizens through art, creativity, citizen science, and participatory design - delivered across both online and offline platforms.

Grounded in the realities of working in northern post-industrial towns, where the remnants of industrialisation and the influence of making and manufacturing remain prominent, the CCE Framework acknowledges the role of innovation, Industry 4.0, and circular economies in shaping creative engagement strategies. These contexts have informed my design thinking and innovative practices, illustrating how insights from manufacturing and technology sectors can inform more adaptive and responsive civic engagement.

By enabling participatory community and cultural involvement, the Framework allows local residents to actively shape their environments and feel a sense of ownership and pride. Adopting a longitudinal perspective, it supports radical co-creation and ensures all collaborators have a voice in decision-making, with inclusive spaces that respect diverse perspectives. It also embeds regenerative practices that enhance natural and social environments, contributing to long-term community well-being.

Finally, the Framework develops creative leadership by nurturing advocates who build a culture of creativity and innovation within communities, establishing environments where new ideas can take root. The CCE Framework consists of three interrelated components, each with distinct purposes, functions, and methodologies, designed to offer a simple, creative, and participatory strategy to navigate the complexity of creative placemaking:

1. CCE SYSTEMS - Observatory, Laboratory, Factory, Story
2. CCE LOGIC - Creative Economy, Creative Community Capacity, Creative Action & Innovation, Place Leadership, Place Narrative
3. CCE PLAYBOOK - Qualities, Values, and Principles

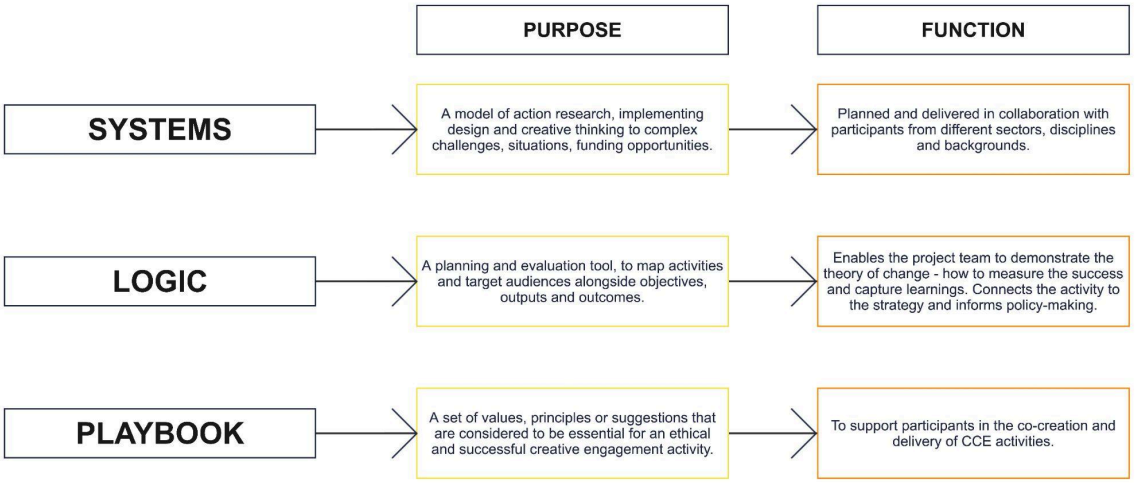

Fig. 1.1 CCE Framework component parts - purpose and functions explained (expand)

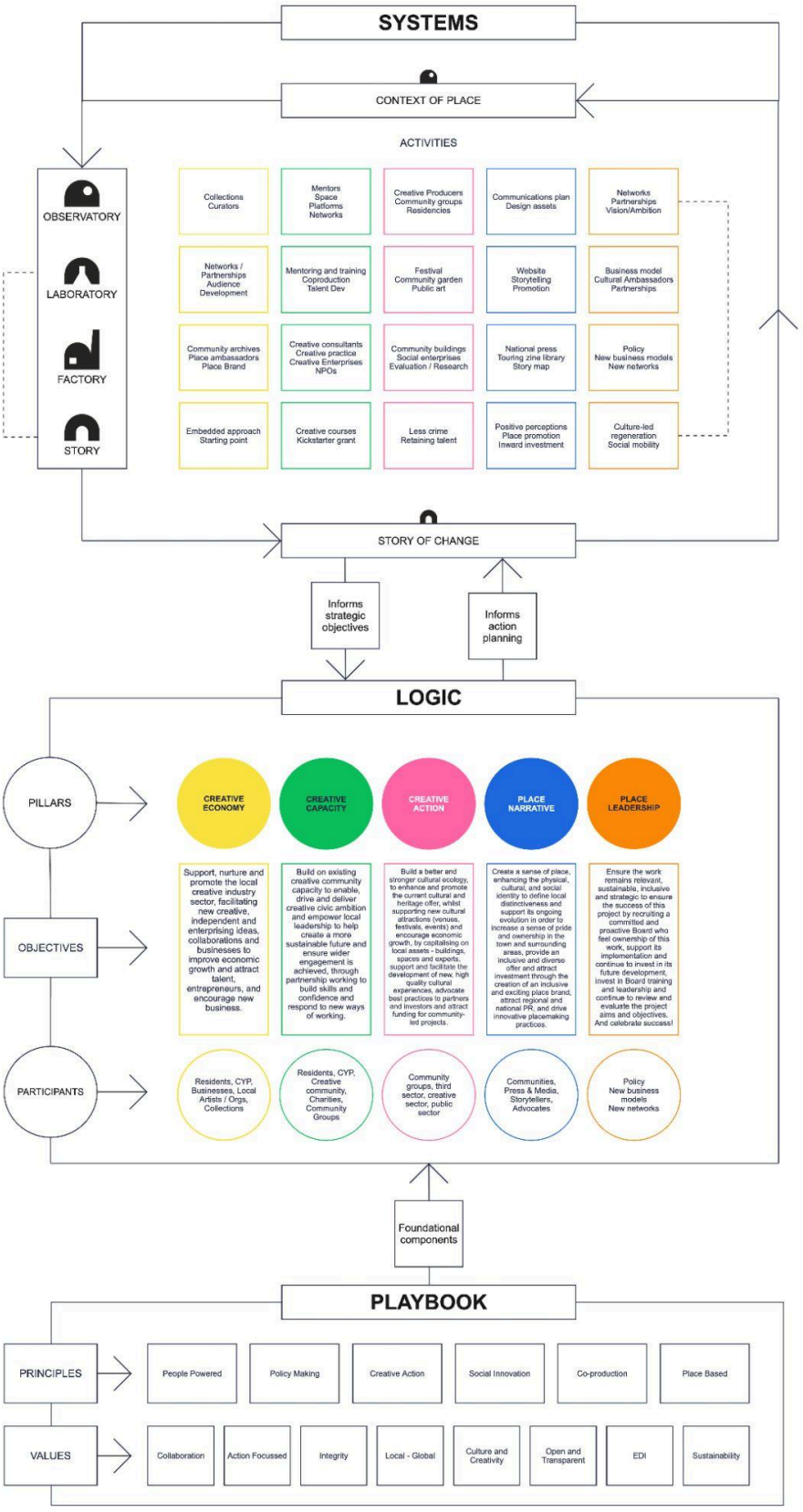

Fig. 1.2 A Framework for Creative Civic Engagement (expand)

Fig. 1.1 provides short descriptions for the **purpose** and **function** of each component part of the CCE Framework, whilst Fig. 1.2 illustrates the full Framework (which is explained in detail in Chapter 3). Utilising my skills and experience working with an action-research practice-based approach in the development of a long-term, embedded approach to creative placemaking, through the testing of creative community engagement methodologies, the PhD research is time-based (taking place over nine years) and evaluated through a series of case studies, both reflective and live action-research projects. The findings, learnings and impacts has enabled this publication of the Framework and demonstrates its implementation of creative civic engagement.

In summary, my practice aims to redefine civic engagement as **creative civic engagement** by foregrounding art and creativity into the processes that connect people, place, and policy. This approach enhances community engagement but also deepens connection to place and promotes sustainable practices. By encouraging radical co-creation and empowering communities, we can create a more inclusive and sustainable future.

CONTEXTUALISING MY PRACTICE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE RESEARCH

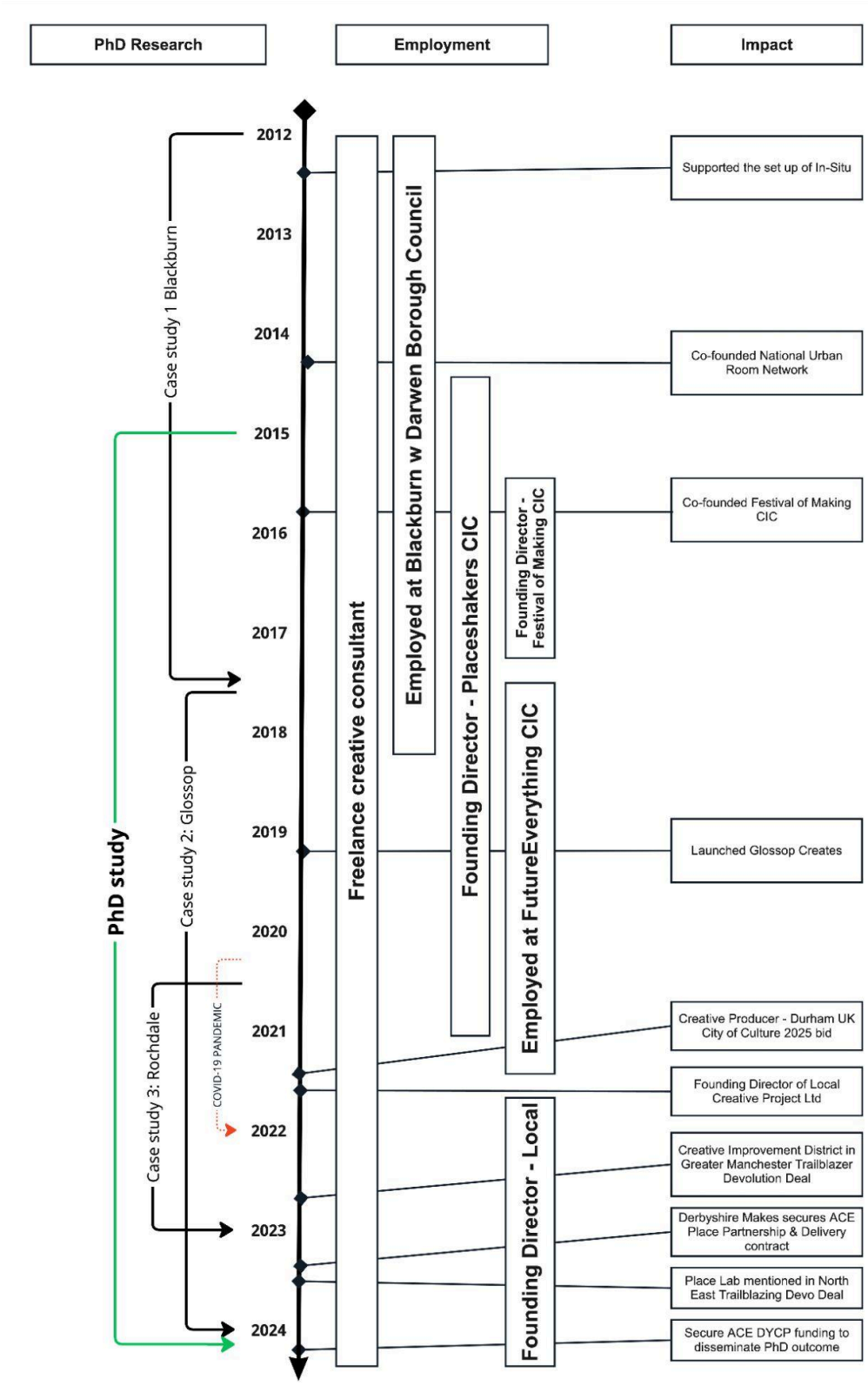

Fig. 1.3 My Practice & PhD Timeline (expand)

The Contextual Review in Chapter 2 explores in greater depth the nuances of approaches, priorities, and roles of 'makers' within the field of creative civic engagement. Figure 1.3 situates my creative practice and roles in relation to the PhD timeline. To contextualise how my practice has shaped this approach, I offer here a brief introduction to my research context.

From 2003 to 2006, I served as Visual Art Officer for Mid Pennine Arts, an arts charity based in Burnley, Lancashire, managing a gallery and curating public art projects with a focus on community engagement and socially engaged practice. Notable projects included *Talking Shop*[4], a photographic documentation of local independent shops and traders, and *Within Grove*[5] (Fig.1.4 below), a youth-led artist residency on a housing estate in Huncoat. These early experiences shaped my commitment to embedding creative processes within communities and using art as a platform for dialogue and inclusion[6].

Fig. 1.4 We Are Here - a social art project by Kerry Morrison, 2005

[4] *Talking Shop* was a series of photography projects I initiated whilst working as Visual Arts Officer at Mid Pennine Arts (Burnley, Lancashire) in 2004. The project engaged creative practitioners to work with independent businesses across Lancashire to document, celebrate and highlight their importance as hubs of the local community. The insights gained were shared with the local authority to support sustainable economic growth of high streets and independent businesses.
[5] *We Are Here* was an artist residency project by Kerry Morrison I curated and produced whilst working at Mid Pennine Arts in summer 2005. As part of a public art programme, *Land*, the brief involved creating a long-term plan to transform a neglected open space at Within Grove (near Accrington, Lancashire). The project results informed the Lancashire cycleway network developments.
[6] Both my undergraduate (2000) and Masters (2002) dissertations focussed on the role of public art in regeneration of place and community engagement.

Building on this, my role as Creative Community Engagement Manager at Elevate East Lancashire (2007–2010) profoundly influenced how I practice as a creative and social entrepreneur. Tasked with embedding creativity into the strategies and policies of Regenerate Pennine Lancashire and East Lancashire partnerships, I worked alongside local authorities, academia, and artists to develop multidisciplinary teams and engagement models[7]. The programme advocated for the integration of creativity into regeneration strategies, enabling new relationships, creative practices, award nominations, and published evaluations that still inform my work. When the programme ended abruptly due to government policy changes in 2010[8] I secured a seconded role to develop a cultural strategy for Pennine Lancashire, witnessing the fragility of place-based initiatives and prompting my interest in more resilient, democratic systems that empower communities.

It was against this backdrop that, in 2012, I became Cultural Planner for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. Tasked with transforming a disused church into an art centre, I faced the challenge of developing a new capital project in a declining town centre. This work evolved into establishing *A Town Centre of Excellence*[9], building a network of partners, advocates, and a creative vision for a more inclusive, community-led approach. Blackburn, and its town centre, remain significant touchstones in my practice, informing my understanding of how creative civic engagement can contribute to regeneration and resilience.

These experiences underpin my approach as a creative and social entrepreneur and informed the **Framework for Creative Civic Engagement** explored in this thesis. As a central case study, Blackburn is Open (2012–2017) illustrates achievements, challenges, and evaluations that emerged from the developing framework. Figures 1.5 and 1.6 visualise the transition created through the use of empty shops which acted as the initial central creative hub. This thesis presents an evidence-based narrative, drawing on case studies and unconventional approaches to placemaking. It also outlines the roles of 'makers' decision-maker, policy-maker, place-maker, designer-maker and argues for a more inclusive, equitable way to shape places creatively and collaboratively.

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[7] See Appendix P1.2 - case studies and Appendix P1.3 - final executive summary. Appendix P1.4 - Outputs of the Accrington Live Project 2006.
[8] Chapter 2 provides a timeline (Fig. 2.30) including milestones for place, culture and community policy-making.
[9] See Appendix P4.3a

Fig. 1.5 and 1.6 - Before and after images of the transformation of the Blackburn is Open pop-up art centre (1.6 image credit: Richard Tymon)

Through the development of the Blackburn is Open case study and reflecting on how its lessons have informed my subsequent work in new contexts, I began to design the Framework for Creative Civic Engagement as a way of documenting and sharing a nine-year process of research and practice. The Framework emerged as an accessible approach to help others navigate complex systems and processes inherent in creative placemaking. As I reflected on the work I initiated, the roles I undertook, and the decisions and approaches I adopted, the Framework matured through the scrutiny of case study appraisal and lived experience.

Once the Framework's structure became clear, I observed a shift in language and opportunity surrounding creative civic engagement within placemaking. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed both vulnerabilities and resilience in society[10], highlighting how town centres and high streets can serve as vital spaces for connection, community, and conversation[11]. Increasingly, art and culture are being recognised as transformative forces that can support communities, drive local economies, and inspire co-created futures[12]. Recent government funding streams, such as the Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund, Future High Streets Fund, Towns Fund, and Cultural Development Fund[13], now explicitly welcome culture-led regeneration and creative community engagement proposals[14].

My creative practice has often preempted policy by building multidisciplinary collaborations and experimenting with creative approaches to solving civic challenges. Alternatively, it could be argued that my practice, alongside contemporaries working in social innovation, has influenced place-based policy and strategy itself. Contextualising my research in this way makes it possible to foreground the values and ethics embedded in my work: radical co-creation, inclusivity, sustainability, and a deep commitment to place. These principles inform the research questions at the heart of this thesis: how do our diverse roles as makers - decision-makers, policy-makers, place-makers, designer-makers - contribute to sustainable and creative placemaking?

Central to my practice is the act of making (making decisions, making places, making culture, and making products) situated at the intersection of people, place, and policy. This

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[10] Local Government Association - Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal' (accessed January 2023)
[11] HemingwayDesign / Creative Tourist (Nov 2021) - The town centre is dead, long live the town centre (accessed May 2023)
[12] A recent evidence-base for this is the Greater Manchester Great Place evaluation programme, in which I was involved in the curation and delivery of the legacy webinar programme and website.
[13] These include Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Funding, Heritage Action Zone, Towns Fund, Future High Streets Fund and Cultural Development Fund. (accessed March 2024)
[14] These terms are now being referenced in UK Government funding guidelines.

framing informed the design of the Framework for Creative Civic Engagement, inspired partly by innovation and manufacturing processes. These industrial processes, though historically transformative, now demand regenerative practices to ensure they serve a sustainable, life-centred future.

The Framework is rooted in the belief that radical co-creation - redistributing power among collaborators - is essential for nurturing civic pride, cohesion, and more equitable engagement. My work embraces the distinctive qualities of each locality and aims to inspire communities to actively participate in shaping their environments while drawing on diverse global and local methodologies.

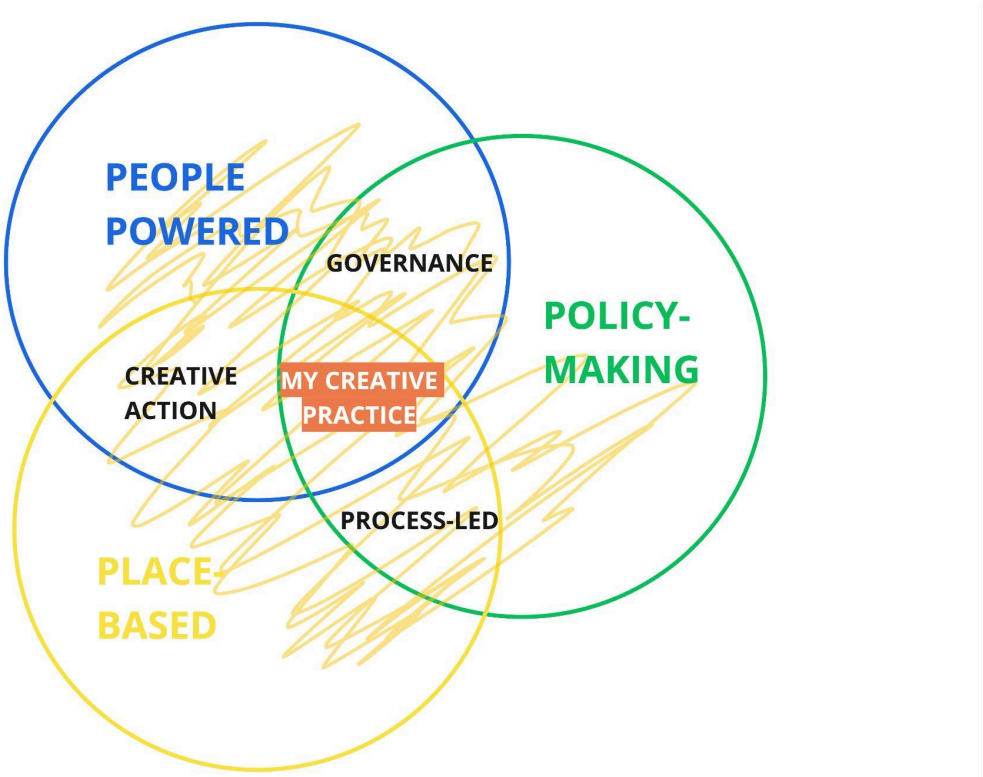

Fig. 1.7 My creative practice as a Venn diagram

Illustrating the three intersections of my practice - People, Place and Policy - whilst embedding creativity in my practice (the scribbly line). The structure of Chapter 2, the Contextual Review, is divided into three parts, to further contextualise the three intersections of my practice.

Over the years, I have described my practice using different terms - Social Art Practice, Culture-led Regeneration, Creative Placemaking, and more recently, Cultural Democracy - depending on the audience and context. Each term has shaped my perspective on creative practice and helped guide its evolution.

Social Art Practice emerged early in my career as a way to achieve cultural democracy, commissioning artists to embed themselves within communities and create work responsive to the social and spatial context. I have been influenced by figures such as Tom Finkelpearl, Tania Bruguera, Andy Abbott, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, as well as by the broader UK movement toward embedded and participatory art. Social practice prioritises relationships, collective action, and shared agency, although it continues to face challenges of scale, sustainability, and recognition within traditional arts hierarchies.

Moving into regeneration contexts, I began to frame my work as **Culture-led Regeneration**, integrating art and creativity into economic development, urban renewal, and policy. My experience in public art commissioning, membership of networks like IXIA and Public Art Forum, and the advocacy of thought leaders such as Nick Ewbank reinforced my belief that art can animate public space, tell local stories, enhance identity, and create safer, more vibrant environments[15]. Nonetheless, I observed the tension between short-term regeneration agendas and the need for long-term, community-driven processes.

Since 2018, I have adopted the term **Creative Placemaking**, as defined by Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus[16], to describe how multidisciplinary partnerships can reshape the social and physical character of places through arts and culture. This perspective, supported by contemporary research from the Centre for Cultural Value, Cara Courage, and others, emphasises cultivating the existing creativity of communities, creating space for co-design and collective improvement rather than imposing external visions.

Most recently, I have aligned my practice with the ethos of **Cultural Democracy**, advocating that everyone's cultural expression and heritage deserve recognition and support. This aligns with the principles of Arts Council England's *Let's Create* strategy and the philosophy articulated by 64 Million Artists: that art and culture are unbounded, made by, with, and for everyone[17]. Cultural democracy reframes culture as something we all shape together, strengthening its relevance and impact.

These evolving definitions reflect my ongoing interrogation of how creative practice can influence and intersect with policy and governance[18]. Understanding and articulating these terms, and the methodologies they imply, is critical to my PhD research, which seeks to

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[15] Ewbank, N. *Adventures in Regeneration*. NEA Publishing, June 2011
[16] https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/arts-culture/what-is-creative-placemaking/ (accessed June 2024)
[17] *Cultural Democracy in Practice*. 64 Million Artists. Arts Council of England. Sept 2018. p.2
[18] Since establishing my new creative practice, Local, in 2021, I have embraced the term cultural democracy (see Appendix 3.4 - A Local Engagement Flowchart as an example methodology to achieve this)

clarify how creative practitioners, working collaboratively, can influence policy, engage communities, and drive sustainable development. By examining these dynamics, the research offers insight into the potential of creative civic engagement to reshape placemaking in more inclusive, imaginative, and impactful ways.

PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

This PhD is a practice-based research project designed to create, test, and produce a product and policy recommendation for creative, community-led placemaking and civic engagement. The aim has been to develop an accessible and effective model enabling people within a defined locality to collectively implement change. Building on the lessons of past projects, the research identifies ways in which communities can become active citizens and engage meaningfully in decisions about their places by working collaboratively with the cultural and creative sectors.

To achieve this, the research employed a hybrid methodology combining reflective analysis of past projects, live action-research, and the design of a framework grounded in creative practice. Informed by practice-based research traditions, the methodology acknowledges creative practice as a form of knowledge production - one that is iterative, situated, and collaborative. My approach draws on creative action-research, co-production, participatory research, and creative pedagogy, merging creative, social science, and design-led methods.

The research outcome, the **Framework for Creative Civic Engagement**, was conceived as both a methodological and practical tool. It offers a structured, cyclical, and participatory approach to civic engagement, designed to help communities, practitioners, and policymakers navigate the complexities of placemaking. The framework embodies the values of radical co-creation, inclusivity, and sustainability, promoting collaboration between citizens and government, and positioning government as a platform for innovation and positive change.

This methodology also incorporates creative action learning as a pedagogical principle, foregrounding learning through doing. The Observatory, Laboratory, Factory, and Story stages of the Framework reflect this ethos, enabling cycles of observation, experimentation, reflection, and communication. The research thus positions creative civic engagement as both a methodology and an outcome, providing tools and practices that others can adopt, adapt, and expand.

In practice, my research process involved designing a logic framework[19] combining research, evaluation, and project planning, developed collaboratively with supervisors, peers, and community partners. This framework helped identify aims, objectives, activities, participants, and partners. The methodology is tested and demonstrated through three case studies detailed in Chapter 4: *Blackburn is Open* (2012–2017), *Glossop Creates* (2018–ongoing), and *The Maker's Mile* in Rochdale (2022–2023). Each case study applies the CCE Framework and provides evidence of its adaptability and impact.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology in full, detailing the development of the Framework, its application through creative and interdisciplinary methods, and its theoretical and practical contributions to placemaking, creative pedagogy, and civic innovation. The case studies in **Chapter 4** bring these principles to life, followed by a concluding discussion in **Chapter 5**. The thesis is accompanied by a 'Portfolio' of appendices, documenting the creative outputs of the research.[20]

Before turning to the methodology, however, the following chapter (**Chapter 2**) situates the research within its wider context, presenting a review of literature and diverse practices[21] that inform and frame this work within the fields of creative civic engagement, placemaking, and cultural policy.

[19] In 2007, whilst working at Elevate, the Housing Market Renewal pathfinder, I developed a logic framework that provides insight into the outputs and indicators of the ToC. This has since been developed into a project framework I use, refine and adapt for each new project, and provides an effective starting point for any project.
[20] The appendices offer a compilation of supplementary materials and primary evidence, including observation notes, selected documentation, transcripts and mind-maps detailing the creative process.
[21] Diverse is considered in terms of scales, geography, sector, governance and financial models.

CHAPTER 2 - CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

My creative practice draws inspiration from a diverse range of local and international practices, as well as from individuals with whom I have directly collaborated, or whose work I have closely followed. This chapter is structured around these inter-connections, divided into three distinct sections, each representing and exploring the core principles underpinning my creative practice: **Place-based**, **Creative Practice**, and **Policy-making**. As illustrated in Fig. 1.7 in the previous chapter, these principles overlap, highlighting the complexity of creative civic engagement and implementing collaborative, cross-sector work rooted in community and place.

To contextualise creative civic engagement and demonstrate its significance as a strategy for achieving sustainable creative placemaking, this chapter provides both a theoretical and contextual review. It begins with a dedicated section, *Theoretical Framing: Defining Creative Civic Engagement*, which sets out the main conceptual frameworks underpinning my practice and research. This section traces the development of my understanding of key terms and approaches and situates them within broader academic and policy discourses.

Following this theoretical framing, the chapter moves to a contextual review of practice, examining how these theories manifest in real-world contexts and how they intersect with my own creative civic engagement, research and creative work and demonstrate its significance as a strategy for achieving sustainable creative placemaking. This chapter provides a catalogue of grounded theory[22], presented through three lenses - **Place-based**, **Creative Practice**, and **Policy-making** - which structure the remainder of the chapter.

THEORETICAL FRAMING: DEFINING CREATIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In Chapter 1, I introduced several key concepts that underpin my understanding of creative civic engagement and outlined their relevance to my research questions and practice. These include **Social Art Practice**, **Culture-led Regeneration**, **Creative Placemaking**, and, most

[22] My approach, grounded theory, is a systematic methodology commonly applied to qualitative research conducted by social scientists. This methodology involves constructing hypotheses and theories through the collection and analysis of data.
https://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory/

recently, **Cultural Democracy**. Together, these frameworks have shaped both my creative practice and the theoretical contribution of this thesis.[23]

In this section, I expand on those initial definitions, situating each concept within its wider theoretical, historical, and policy contexts, and tracing how they have influenced the development of my approach over the past two decades. These concepts are presented in the order I encountered and applied them in my work, though they overlap and continue to evolve in conversation with one another.

Social Art Practice

My earliest orientation was toward what is often called *socially engaged art*, *social art practice*, or *participatory art*. Since 2003 I have sought to create conditions in which communities act as curators, participants, and co-creators of cultural experiences — an ethos aligned with what Mierle Laderman Ukeles called “maintenance art”[24] and what Tom Finkelpearl describes as “art that’s socially engaged, where the social interaction is at some level the art”[25]. Bishop critiques socially engaged art practices for often prioritising social outcomes (community building, participation, activism) over artistic quality or criticality, and for being instrumentalised by institutions and governments.[26]

Artists such as Ukeles, Tania Bruguera, and collectives like Fluxus and Cittadellarte have exemplified embedded, durational, and socially cooperative practices that dissolve the boundaries between art, activism, and everyday life. During a residency at Cittadellarte[27] in Biella (a laboratory for art and social transformation), artist Andy Abbott (a former Director of InSitu in Pendle, a company I supported in its inception in 2012) explores ‘embedded art’ practice,

> '*as artists… we can help reveal, understand and contribute to the new social and organisational forms that propagate in the shadows - the other ways of being and acting together based on co-production, collective agency, mutual aid, care, commoning - and offer alternative narratives to endless productivity and growth*.'[28]

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[23] To note - these terms are not listed in an art historical chronological order, but listed in the order in which I personally have encountered them or referred to my work in this context over time.
[24]Miranda, Caroline, *How the Art of Social Practice Is Changing the World, One Row House at a Time* April 7, 2014 ARTnews
[25] Ibid.
[26] Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship.* Verso, 2012.
[27] In 1999 Michelangelo Pistoletto founded Cittadellarte, established as a residency programme open to artists and professionals from all over the world. https://www.cittadellarte.it/unidee/
[28] Abbott, Andy, *UNIDEE Reflections on Embedded Arts Practice*. Corridor8, 2023

Social art practice has grown significantly in the UK, with dedicated university programmes, networks (e.g., Social Art Network[29]), and resources (e.g., Social Art Library[30]). Yet it remains contested: its temporary, small-scale, and activist tendencies often sit uneasily with aesthetic conventions and institutional structures, blurring distinctions between art and community organising. My own work continues to negotiate these tensions, advocating for social practice as a vehicle for cultural democracy and civic change.

Culture-led Regeneration

When I moved into roles within local government and housing regeneration, I began to articulate my work in terms of *culture-led regeneration*. This framework positions art and culture as integral to revitalising places undergoing social and economic change (Evans & Shaw, 2004; Miles & Paddison, 2005). My background in public art commissioning and my membership of networks such as IXIA[31] and Art & Place[32] exposed me to how creative strategies can enhance public space, animate heritage, and strengthen local identity.

While culture-led regeneration has become a recognised policy tool, championed by the Local Government Association[33] and exemplified in initiatives like the Civic Role of Arts Organisations[34]. It also raises critical questions about gentrification, sustainability, and who benefits from investment. Whilst several new reports, strategies and investment priorities advocate for the inclusion of creative and innovative placemaking methodologies (or projects) to encourage community buy-in[35], it is still a nuance practice and as it is not a statutory requirement of the planning law[36], it will continue to rely on community-driven projects and the 'agents of change', 'social artists' and the 'placeshakers', like myself, to push boundaries and question the status quo.

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[29] https://socialartnetwork.org/ (accessed March 2024)
[30] https://www.socialartlibrary.org/ (accessed March 2024)
[31] IXIA is a public art think tank - https://ixia-info.org/ It has also taken over the archive for Public Art Online - https://publicartonline.org.uk/index.html (both accessed April 2024)
[32] Arts and Place is a working group part of the Place Alliance, https://placealliance.org.uk/working-groups/arts-place/ (accessed April 2024)
[33] *Culture-led regeneration: achieving inclusive and sustainable growth*, Local Government Association, 05 Mar 2019.
[34] The Civic Role of Arts Organisations, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2016 https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/our-work/the-civic-role-of-arts-organisations/ (accessed April 2024)
[35] *"We must continue to put young people's voices at the heart of decision making and enable them to be part of the solution to reuniting communities in the aftermath of the crisis. The most common way that youth workers (37%) envisaged young people leading or having a voice in their community's response to COVID-19 was online, whether through campaigning, sharing information and connecting with others or generating creative online content."* (UK Youth report 2020)
[36] See UK Government guidelines: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-pre-decision-matters (accessed April 2024)

My work within this frame has sought to foreground community voice and ethical partnerships alongside creative intervention.

Creative Placemaking

Since 2018, I have consciously adopted the term *creative placemaking*, as first articulated by Markusen & Gadwa[37] and further developed by scholars and practitioners such as Cara Courage and the Centre for Cultural Value. Creative placemaking positions arts and culture as integral to shaping the physical and social character of places, emphasising the co-production of meaning and identity by building on existing cultural assets rather than imposing external narratives. This aligns with John Holden's[38] argument that culture should be "something we all own and make," and with the Scottish Government's more recent definition of creative placemaking as "a community-led approach that uses creative activity to support collective decision-making and positive change" (The Stove Network)[39].

However, despite its potential, creative placemaking faces significant structural challenges, notably the short-termism of government funding cycles. Application windows are often brief, and delivery timelines even more constrained, which risks projects prioritising speed and visibility over meaningful community engagement and genuine innovation. As scholars like Courage and McKeown argue, without sufficient time for deliberation, trust-building, and co-design, placemaking can become tokenistic, failing to disrupt entrenched power relations or achieve sustainable outcomes[40].

By actively involving communities in the design and delivery of place-based programmes and initiatives, creative placemaking provides a critical and strategic language for practices that strengthen local identity, embed co-design, and create shared spaces of belonging. These concerns - the tension between institutional pressures and participatory ideals - are central to my research and directly inform the development of the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework.

Cultural Democracy

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[37] Coined by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus for the National Endowment for the Arts in 2010, creative placemaking refers to the process in which '*partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighbourhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities*.' https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/arts-culture/what-is-creative-placemaking/ (accessed June 2024)

[38] Tiller, C, *Power Up - Creative People and Places report*. 2017

[39] Creative Placemaking report by The Stove, 2024

[40] Courage, C., & McKeown, A. (Eds.). *Creative Placemaking: Research, Theory and Practice.* Routledge Studies in Human Geography. London: Routledge, 2020.

Most recently, my approach has aligned closely with the principles of *cultural democracy*, which asserts that everyone's cultural expression and heritage is equally valid and deserving of resources (ACE/64 Million Artists, 2018). It challenges hierarchical and institutional definitions of culture, emphasising co-creation, inclusion, and agency over consumption. Cultural democracy underpins initiatives such as ACE's Creative People and Places programme and aligns with my own belief that culture extends beyond formal art forms to encompass values, traditions, and everyday practices.

As articulated by 64 Million Artists, cultural democracy is

> *'that art and culture is unbounded, and encapsulates all kinds of activities—from the personal to the collective, informal and formal, from grime to opera, knitting to line dancing, the West End to fringe to gardening, cooking and everything in between. Cultural Democracy underpins a culture that is debated, designed, made…by, with and for, everyone… it's an important and significant part of a much wider ecology of arts and culture in this country.*'[41]

This ethos informs my work as both a practitioner and a researcher, reinforcing creativity as a means of enabling civic engagement and collective imagination.

It is widely acknowledged that art enables us to look differently at the world and make sense of our place within it. I really appreciate the guide produced by 64 Million Artists, a summary is provided in Fig. 2.0 below, as it sets out quite clearly the difference between the democratisation of culture to cultural democracy. For example, from asking your audience or stakeholders for feedback on your ideas to facilitating the ideas of your stakeholders, or co-creating together.

Arlene Goldbard and François Matarasso, with invited guests and collaborators, discuss *'cultural democracy and community art, sharing experiences, ideas and possibilities, to inspire like-minded people*' in their monthly podcast series miaaw.net.[42] Commencing from 2018, the podcasts (and accompanying webinars) became a source of inspiration and connection for me during the Covid-19 pandemic, during my directorship at FutureEverything and the production of the ambitious participatory art project, *this place [of mine]*[43].

[41] Ibid. p.2
[42] https://miaaw.net/ (accessed March 2024)
[43] A detailed description of this project is provided in Chapter 3 of this thesis and also Appendix P3.3.

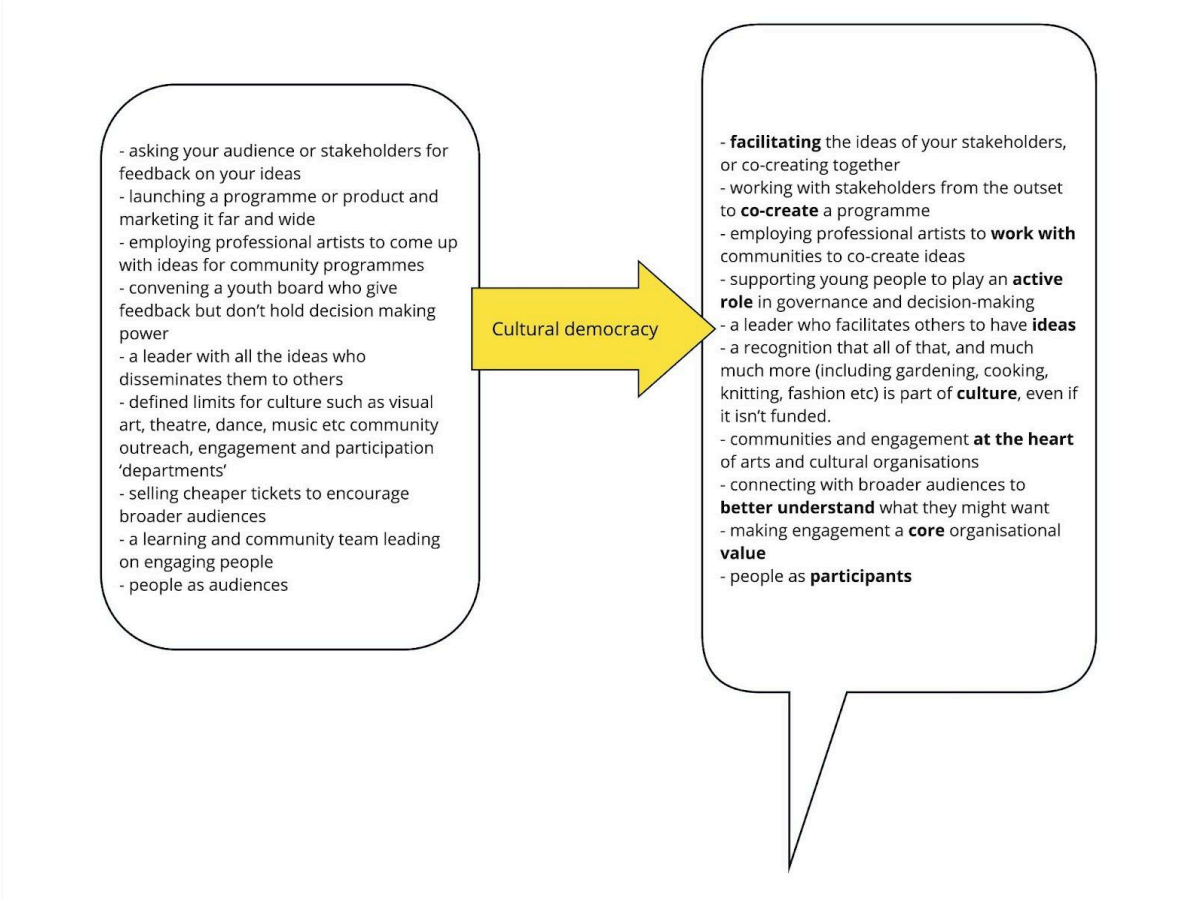

Fig. 2.0 A diagram to illustrate the differences between Cultural Democracy in Practice[44] (expand)

Conclusion of Theoretical Framing

Engaging critically with these theoretical frameworks has been essential to defining my position as both a practitioner and a researcher. Understanding and articulating the conceptual underpinnings of terms like *social art*, *culture-led regeneration*, *creative placemaking*, and *cultural democracy* has enabled me to situate my practice within a wider field of ideas, clarify its distinctiveness, and communicate its value across sectors and disciplines.

For practice-based researchers like myself, theoretical framing is not an abstract exercise but a vital foundation that informs how we design, implement, and evaluate creative interventions in place. It provides the language to negotiate different agendas, advocate for meaningful engagement, and contribute to policy and decision-making while remaining rooted in critical reflection.

[44] Ibid. p.4

This discussion builds on the introductory definitions in Chapter 1, establishing the conceptual base on which the next section - the contextual and practical review of practice - develops. It also reflects my commitment to creating research that bridges theory and practice, supporting not only my own work but also offering a resource for other practitioners navigating the complexities of creative civic engagement.

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW OF PRACTICE: THREE LENSES

The preceding section outlined the theoretical frameworks that underpin my understanding of creative civic engagement. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine how these theories manifest in real-world contexts and how they intersect with my own research and creative work.

This review is organised through three distinct but interconnected lenses: **Place-based**, **Creative Practice**, and **Policy-making**. Each lens begins with guiding questions derived from the overarching research questions, followed by a discussion of key concepts, case studies, and policies that have influenced or shaped my approach. These examples include practices and initiatives that I have contributed to, collaborated on, or observed closely, as well as others that provide useful parallels or contrasts.

To support this review, I have also developed Appendix P2, which provides a spreadsheet mapping a range of art- and architect-led social art practices (including social enterprise models) as examples of social innovation. This mapping expands beyond my direct experience to include a diverse set of practices, offering a useful tool for research and development, and establishing a library of strategies and approaches within this field. The examples in Appendix P2 include:

- Civic Square (Birmingham, UK)
- Creative Estuary (Thames Estuary, London, UK)
- Deveron Art Project – *The Town is the Venue* (Huntly, Aberdeenshire, UK)
- Dudley Creates (Dudley, Birmingham, UK)
- In-Situ (Pendle, Lancashire, UK)
- Folkestone Urban Room (Folkestone, UK)
- Homebaked – Jeanne van Heeswijk (Anfield, Liverpool, UK)
- Portland Inn Project (Stoke, UK)
- Project Row Houses – Rick Lowe (Texas, USA)
- Rebuild Foundation – Theaster Gates (Chicago, USA)
- R-Urban (London, Paris)
- The Stove (Dumfries, Scotland, UK)

This wider research has enabled me to position my practice and the design of the CCE Framework within an established and evolving body of knowledge, contributing new evidence and insight to the growing field of creative placemaking.

The following sections present these insights through the three lenses, each concluding with a set of *key take-aways* that illuminate how creative civic engagement can be understood, evaluated, and advanced within these contexts.

How to read this chapter

As previously noted, the chapter is split into three sections: Place-based, Creative Practice and Policy-making. Fig. 2.1 illustrates how each section contains a sub-section that provides a distinctive characteristic of my creative action-research. Each sub-section contains a small number of example concepts or policies which either impact on, or influence my research practice, or I simply cannot afford to exclude them as they are part of the context in which I work. And finally, I have provided a short summary at the end of each section to highlight and summarise the points I have picked up on, that support the PhD research questions, which I have called the key take-aways.

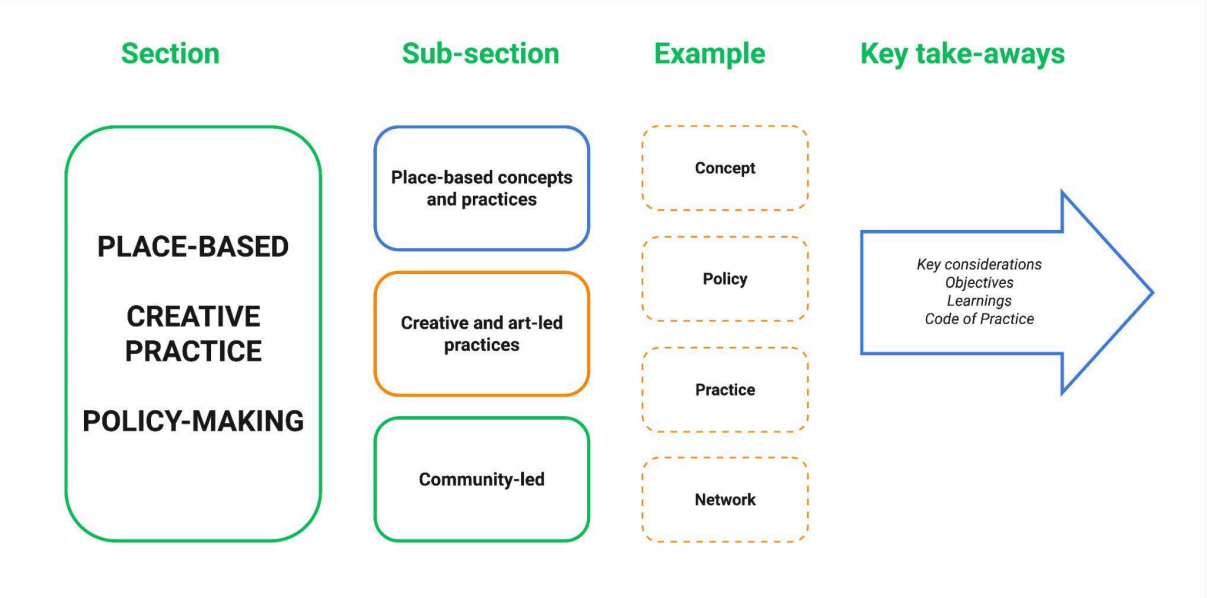

Fig. 2.1 A Structure for Chapter 2 Contextual Review

Each section starts with a diagram illustrating the sub-sections, examples and the key take-aways as a way of contextualising Creative Civic Engagement and summarising the inter-relational qualities that my work sits within, weaving through an ecology of principles, practices and policies.

I have mapped a series of questions and research areas to support me in the exploration of, and scoping of ideas, models, practices and policies in the Contextual Review, in Fig. 2.2 below.

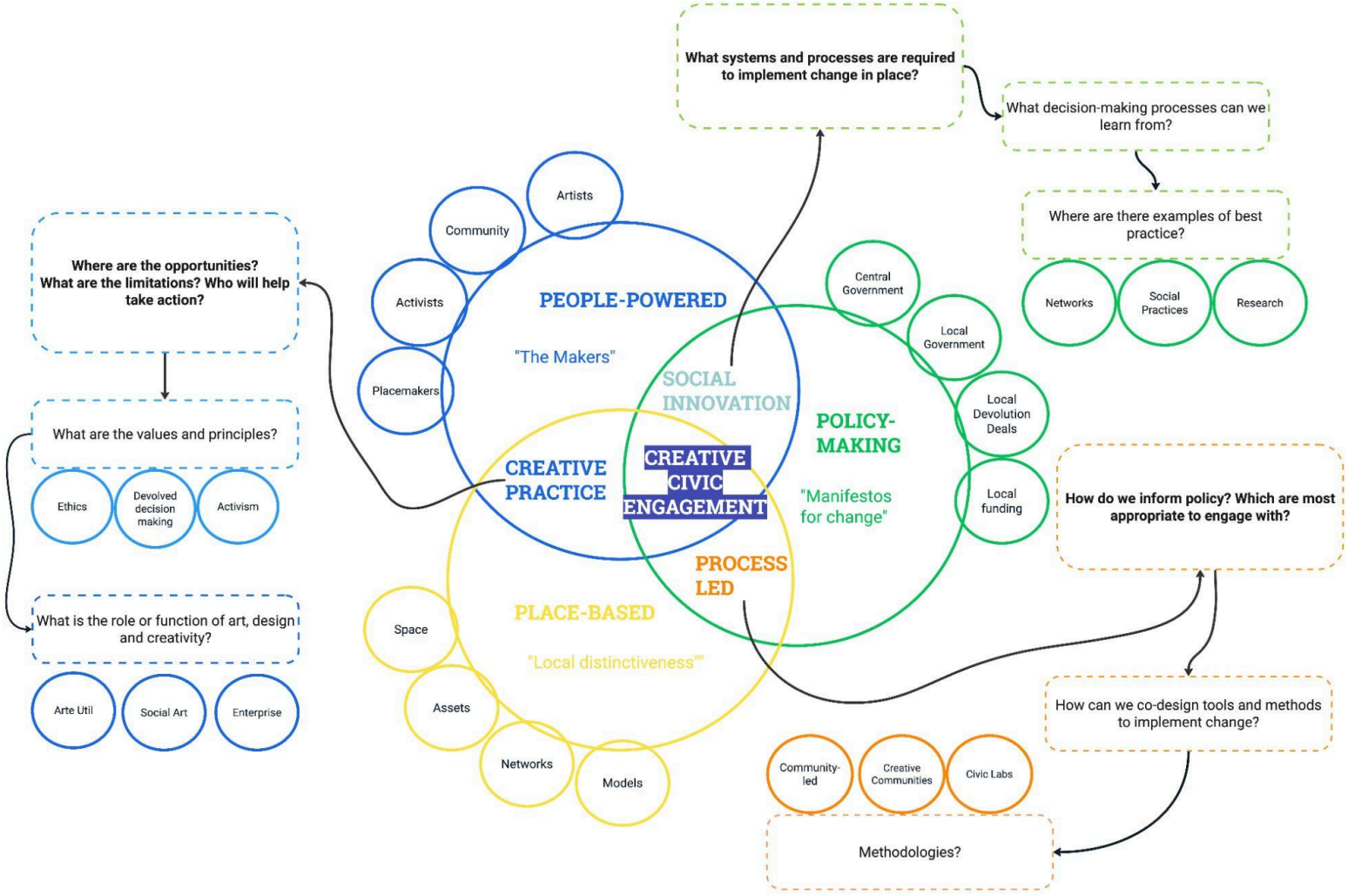

Fig. 2.2 Practising at the intersection of people, place and policy - mapping lines of enquiry to consider throughout the Contextual Review. (expand)

PART 1 - PLACE-BASED

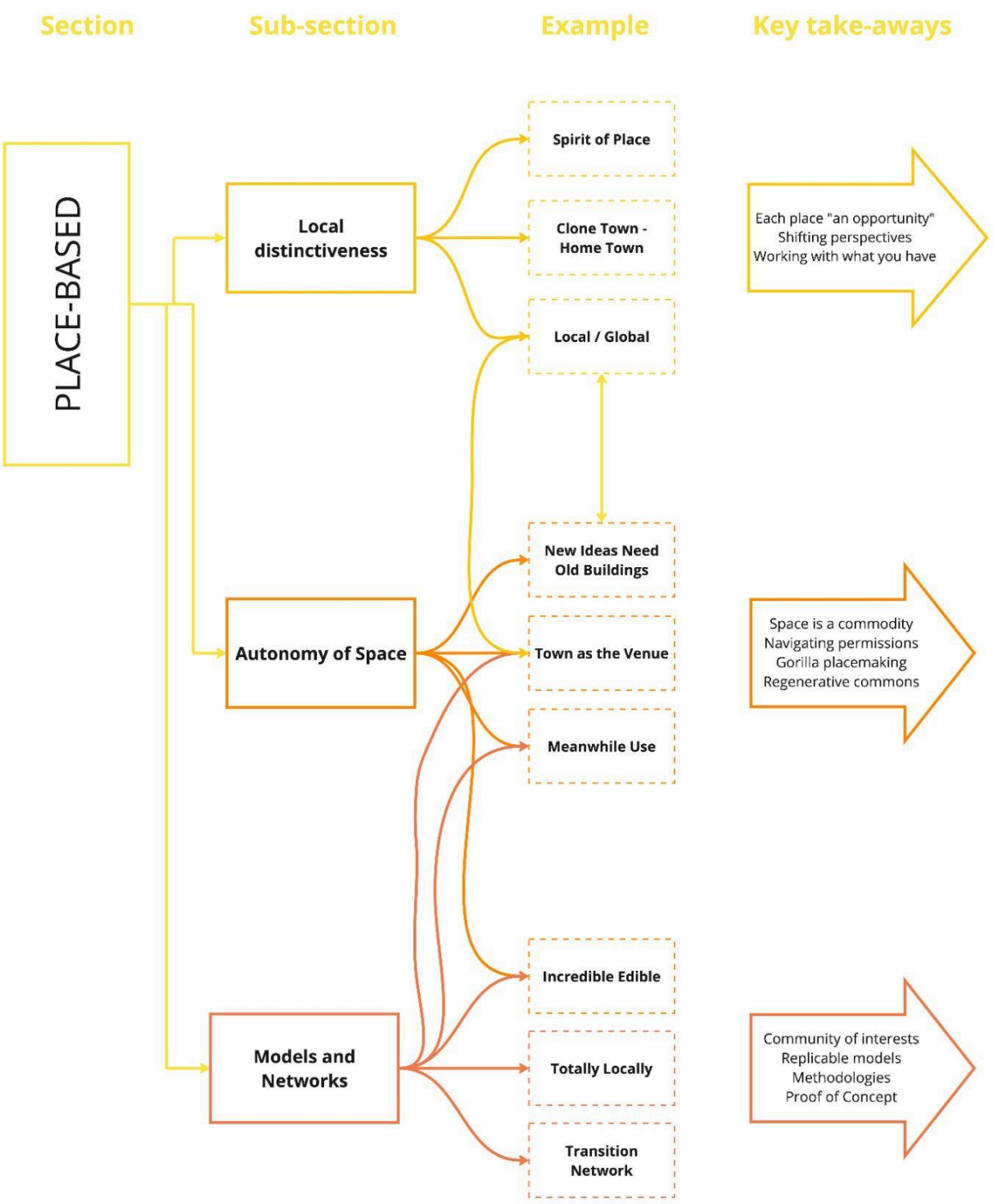

Fig. 2.3 Place-based contextualisation of Creative Civic Engagement (expand)

Introduction: Place-based

In 2015, the Institute of Research Innovation and Social Science published a report 'Place-Based Working' as a quick introduction to place-based approaches due to the growing interest in place-based approaches. The report uses a definition of place-based practice as '*a person-centred, bottom-up approach used to meet the unique needs of people in one given location by working together to use the best available resources and collaborate to gain local knowledge and insight*.'[45]

Place has long been a core element of artistic practice. My first encounter in working in a place-based way was when working as an administrator for the Irwell Sculpture Trail in 2002 where I learned the term 'site specific'[46] meaning the work of art was designed and created in direct response to where the work would be sited. Whilst this is slightly different to place-based, the concept of something being locally-rooted and distinctive to a place, remains a core principle in my work.

In a recent report by Counting What Counts (CWC), commissioned by ACE, it reviewed how to best support cultural organisations to evaluate their place-based work. They could not identify any existing toolkits explicitly designed for evaluating place-based work in the cultural sector.[47] The research produced throughout this PhD study and the development of the CCE Framework provides a solution for this gap, creating a toolkit for evaluating place-based work across a number of sectors.[48] CWC identifies an ongoing methodological debate about how to best monitor the effects of projects over a particular period of time in a particular area. For example, when the government published its 'Levelling Up White Paper' last year it issued a Technical Annex which discusses the indicators and challenges around measuring some of the White Paper's 'Mission', including those on improving well-being in every area of the UK, and Mission 9[49] focusing on pride in place and measuring people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community.[50] Yet

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[45] Pugalis L and Bentley G (2014) place-based development strategies: Possibilities, dilemmas and ongoing debates, Local Economy, 19, 561-572. Cited in Munro, F, 'Place-Based Working', IRISS 2015
[46] Tate provide a definition for site-specific work - https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/site-specific (accessed June 2024)
[47] *Evaluating Place-Based Work*, Counting What Counts, 2023
[48] At the time of writing, I am working with John Knell, author of the CWC report, and plan to discuss this opportunity further.
[49] *Levelling Up the United Kingdom: missions and metrics: Technical Annex*, HM Gov, Feb 2022. p.34-35
[50] The measures have been presented as a series of 'Place Specific Statements' in the appendices of the CWC Report 2023. p.32-35

there is no systematic treatment of how to measure and evaluate people's experiences of and engagement in particular place-based projects.

Local distinctiveness

Setting the theme for this sub-section has been inspired by UK-based arts organisation, Common Ground, and their exploration of the concept of 'local distinctiveness' since 1996 describing it as 'essentially about places and our relationship with them'. 'Local' implies neighbourhood or parish; 'Distinctiveness' is about particularity in the buildings and land shapes, the brooks and birds, trees and cheeses, places of worship and pieces of literature.[51] It is about history and nature jostling with each other, layers and fragments, old and new. The ephemeral and invisible are important too: customs, dialects, celebrations, names, recipes, spoken history, myths, legends and symbols. Between 1990 and 1993 Common Ground began work on 'An Exploratory Alphabet of Local Distinctiveness' which grew, with the help of designers and illustrators, into a poster of 'Rules for Local Distinctiveness' (see Fig.2.2).

In their book of essays for a conference in 1993, 'Local Distinctiveness: Place, Peculiarity and Identity', the Common Ground team decide to prelude the book with an excerpt from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, that starts *'If on arriving at Trude I had not read the city's name written in big letters, I would have thought I was landing at the same airport from which I had taken off*.'[52]

What makes a place distinctive is explored throughout this sub-section, alongside the concept of 'clone towns', a term coined by the New Economic Foundation[53] to describe the quantity measure of 'sameness' within a place, usually associated with retail brands found in every town or city, as opposed to a 'home town',

> *'A home town is a place that retains its individual character and is instantly recognisable and distinctive to the people who live there, as well as those who visit. A clone town is a place that has had the individuality of its high street shops replaced by a monochrome strip of global and national chains that means its retail heart could easily be mistaken for dozens of other bland town centres across the country.*'[54]

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[51] A full set of alphabet rules can be found here: https://www.commonground.org.uk/local-distinctiveness/ (accessed March 2024)
[52] Calvino, I. *Invisible Cities*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974. p.116
[53] Clone Town Britain New Economics Foundation 2007-8.
[54] Ibid. p.2

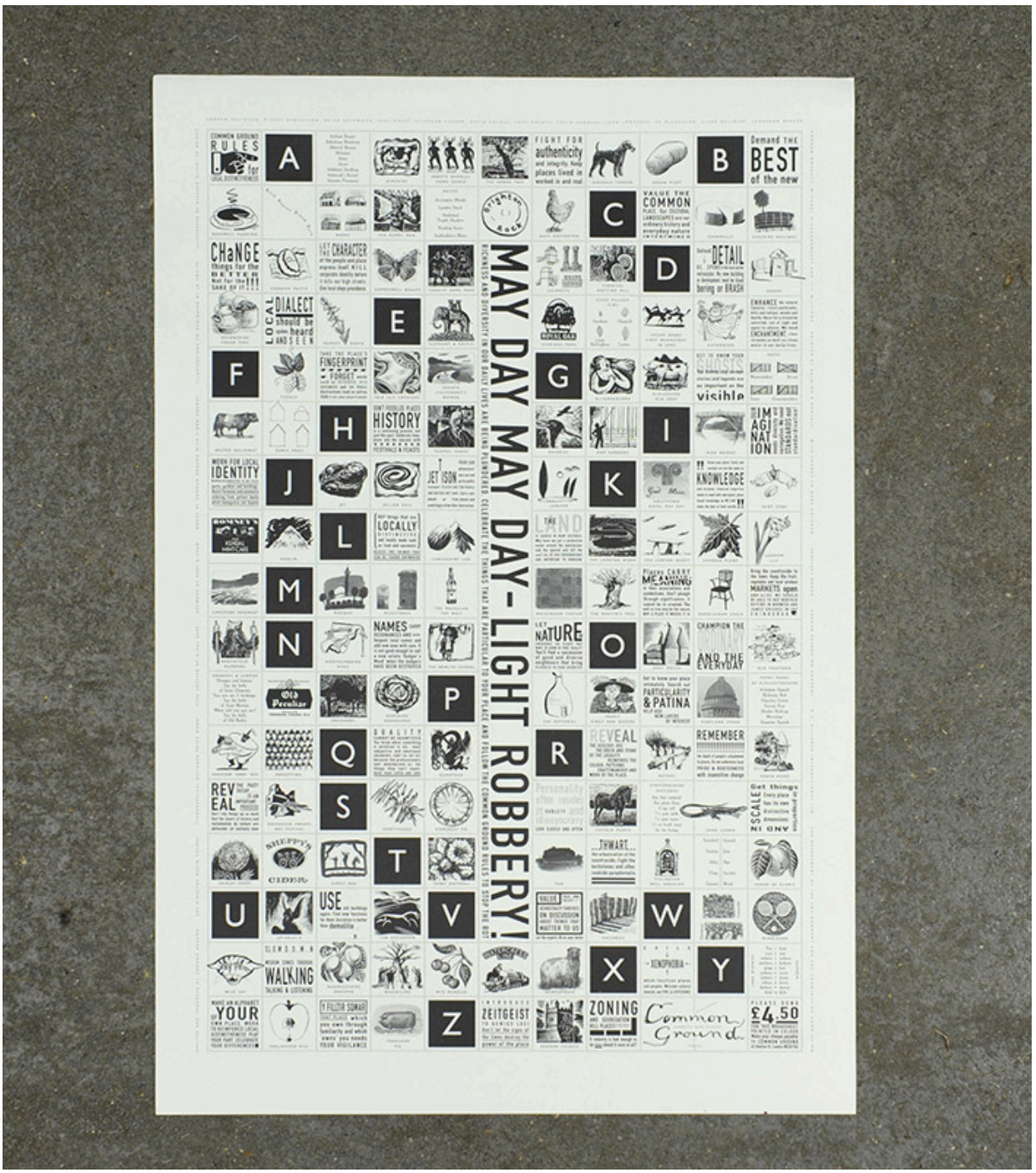

Fig. 2.4 Local Distinctiveness (Portrait) poster by Common Ground, 1992[55]

[55] Ways of looking at the rich mixture of things that are particular to your place and ideas for stopping the rot. 38 Ground Rules (such as 'Demand the Best of the New' and 'Value the Common Place') are combined with an ABC of the locally particular from Ayrshire Cows to Zennor Church demonstrating how you could create a local ABC.
https://www.commonground.org.uk/shop/local-distinctiveness-portrait-copy/ (accessed June 2024)

Spirit of Place

In 2013, the National Trust updated its 'Spirit of Place' policy and methodology, describing it as being 'at the heart of how people feel about and experience our properties and why they are relevant' and why each place we own is special'[56]. It captures what makes a place special and ultimately why people should love that place. Spirit of Place is used as a guiding principle in everything designed and delivered at the Trust. They believe this is the only way in which people's relationship with their properties when they visit and champion the idea that special places matter more widely than their own portfolio. However, in order to understand the spirit of the place we need to start with understanding significance and the people who come to our properties.

> *'Spirit of place (or genius loci) refers to the unique, distinctive and cherished aspects of a place. It is thus as much in the invisible weave of culture (stories, art, memories, beliefs, histories, etc.) as it is the tangible physical aspects of a place (monuments, rivers, woods, architectural style, pathways, views, and so on) or its interpersonal aspects (the presence of family, friends and kindred spirits).'* ICOMOS, Quebec Declaration on the preservation of the spirit of place, October 2008[57]

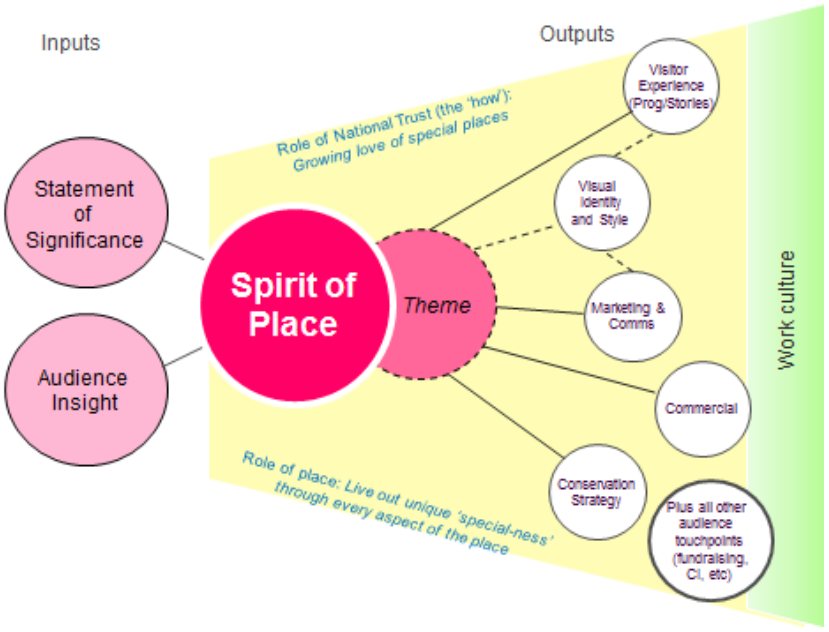

Fig. 2.5 National Trust 'Spirit of Place' diagram, 2013

[56] Staniforth, S, '*Spirit of Place*' report and guidance, National Trust, February 2013
[57] The quote is taken from the National Trust Spirit of Place guidance, authored by Sarah Staniforth, Museums and Collections Director in February 2013.

For this, the National Trust has developed and adopted a methodology and framework with four distinct phases, which are required to be undertaken in the correct order, and in which staff are trained in:

1. Gathering Inputs: Consultancy staff collect inputs; Conservation Consultants review significance; Marketing/Visitor Experience Consultant compiles Audience Insight.
2. Articulating Spirit of Place: Group process combining significance and Audience Insight, involving key representatives.
3. Articulating Working Theme (optional): Group process generating action ideas, leading to a guiding Theme.
4. Refining Spirit of Place and Theme (optional): Judging usefulness through structured research and key audience discussions.

Spirit of Place methodology is built by both its tangible qualities, such as its scenery, buildings, land-uses, colours, textures and smells, and also by intangible cultural elements including:

- Cultural values, including religious and spiritual significance
- Associations with past events or people, myths, etc
- Traditional activities, including language, performing arts, craftsmanship, rituals and festivals which help define local distinctiveness and in which people can participate;
- Aesthetic qualities: beauty, composition, design and quality (eg architecture), style, scale, naturalness, wildness, responses to seasons and climate, ecology;
- Awareness of by-gone times or ‘time depth’, i.e. its antiquity
- Emotions and spiritual qualities such as awe, delight, evocation of memories, closeness to nature, excitement, peace, inspiration, sense of involvement, tranquillity and so on.

In 2021, I was contracted as part of a team of cultural producers for the design and development of the County Durham UK City of Culture 2025 bid. As a specialist in creative cultural engagement, I initiated the concept of Place Lab - a network of labs situated in neighbourhoods and towns across the County. I learned about the Spirit of Place[58] methodology in 2022 whilst I was meeting The National Trust as part of my research for Place Lab. They had recently acquired Crook Hall, a new property in the city of Durham, and as we were discussing the development of the Place Lab principles, I was told about the methodology and how it could be implemented in an emerging Durham City Green Corridor

[58] Spirit of Place is included in the Framework for Creative Civic Engagement, as part of the CCE SYSTEMS - ‘Observatory’ methodology, further described in Chapter 3.

master plan. Place Lab has since become a strategic intervention, mentioned in the Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy and the North East Trailblazing Devolution Deal and will be discussed further in the Conclusion chapter.

Clone Town - Home Town

In 2002, the New Economics Foundation began publishing a series of groundbreaking Ghost Town Britain reports[59]. The reports revealed the extent to which, over the past two decades, the construction of large out-of-town shopping centres and waves of high- street bank-branch closures have driven many people away from town-centre shopping, creating ghost communities with few or no services left. When I commenced my work in Blackburn in 2012 (Chapter 4 case study), I came across the nef report, *Clone Town Britain: The survey results on the bland state of the nation*[60]. Although the report was published in 2005, I became intrigued in the labelling of towns as Crap Towns[61], Clone Towns and Home Towns.

Highlighting the 'death of diversity' in some of the UK's towns calculated by their survey, the survey studies the main high streets in each location and looks at the services available and puts each into one of 25 categories, this is then separated into either dependent or independent (dependent if it is part of a chain company and independent if it is one of a kind). In the original survey the result for each town is calculated at the end and then placed on a scale from 0-50 of Clone Town, Border Town and Home Town. A home town supposedly has a sense of place and is recognisable and distinctive whereas clone towns are seemingly placeless and indistinguishable.

Local / Global

Clone towns and home towns was a methodology which was implemented in the UK to assess how distinctive places are in the UK. However, my practice considers work and ideas from both within the UK and internationally, which brings me to the work of Patrick Geddes and the importance of the local - global perspective and the exchange required to understand the nuance of a place as well as its commonalities to help identify solutions with an international community.

In June 2020, I attended a webinar (one of many during Covid lockdowns - all of which are

[59] Simms,A, Kjell, P, Potts, R, *Clone Town Britain.* New Economics Foundation, 5 June 2007. p.1
[60] Ibid.
[61] https://craptowns.wordpress.com/?s=blackburn (accessed March 2023)

recorded in a Lockdown Learning Journal) by Deveron Projects that introduced me to the work of Patrick Geddes and his ‘Think Global, Act Local’ theory as a foundational concept in urban planning and sociology, emphasising the interplay between local environments and global processes. Patrick Geddes was a pioneering Scottish town planner and biologist, and developed the Local-Global theory in the late 19th and early 20th centuries[62]. His work has been used by Claudia Zeiske, Director of Deveron Projects until 2021, to help *'explore Deveron Projects’ long-term survival through the lenses of a range of theoretical frameworks provided by Scottish philosopher and community planner Patrick Geddes*'.[63]

Geddes stressed the importance of understanding cities and regions within their broader social, economic, and environmental contexts. His triad of 'Place, Work, Folk' is central to his theory. It emphasises that planning should consider:

- **Place**: The geographical and environmental context.
- **Work**: The economic activities and industries present.
- **Folk**: The social and cultural aspects of the population.

Fig 2.6 A screenshot of a webinar I attended in June 2020, Deveron Art/Projects

[62] Walter, S. *Think Global Act Local: Life and Legacy of Patrick Geddes*. Luath Press, 2015. p.11
[63] Zeiske, C, *Transformational Fieldwork Or: How might a sustainable cultural provision in the rural/small town context be framed?* PhD Thesis, 2022 p.13

Autonomy of Space

> *'At vacant sites, second hand spaces draw on the atmosphere, the traces, the remains, and the history of their previous uses. Their actors develop an individual aesthetic out of such sites, which stand out due to their simplicity and improvised quality.'*[64]

Autonomy of space refers to the concept of self-managed spaces—areas where non-capitalist, collective forms of politics, identity, and citizenship emerge through resistance, creation, and the challenging of dominant social norms and laws. These autonomous spaces thrive on the unique atmosphere, history, and remnants of their previous uses, developing distinct aesthetics characterised by simplicity and improvisation.

In urban environments, space is often treated as a commodity, prioritising economic impact over social value. Securing permissions to access and use vacant spaces and buildings presents significant challenges. However, these regenerative spaces are crucial for developing new ideas, as Jane Jacobs famously noted: 'New ideas need old buildings.'

Creating networks of communities with shared interests can lead to successful initiatives similar to Incredible Edible[65] and the Transition Network[66]. These movements demonstrate how place-based practices can leverage local distinctiveness for creative civic engagement, transforming vacant or abandoned spaces into vibrant hubs of interaction, participation, and start-ups.

> *'Second hand spaces evolve against the background of different demands of urban spaces and provide opportunities for interaction, participation, and start-ups at reasonable rents. They open up new courses of action for urban planning and at the same time make a lasting contribution to urban transformation.'*[67]

An example of this transformative potential is the Liverpool Biennial. My visit in 2002 to the second iteration of this art biennial, whilst working as a project manager for the Irwell Sculpture Trail, was inspirational. It showcased how art biennials could expand public understanding of art by utilising and drawing attention to derelict or abandoned spaces, creating a lasting impact on urban planning and cultural engagement.

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[64] Michael Ziehl, Sarah Oßwald, Oliver Hasemann, Daniel Schnier; *Second Hand Spaces: Über das Recyceln von Orten im städtischen Wandel / Recycling Sites Undergoing Urban Transformation;* JOVIS Verlag; Bilingual edition (2012). p.298
[65] https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/ (accessed January 2024)
[66] https://transitionnetwork.org/ (accessed January 2024)
[67] ibid.

New Ideas Need Old Buildings

'Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings.'
Jane Jacobs, The Death & Life of Great American Cities[68]

Adopting this as the title of the iconic report, 'New Ideas Need Old Buildings'[69] was produced by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (previously known as The Heritage Lottery Fund) in 2013, it summarises the results from the first ever, comprehensive research that has been undertaken on the business occupation of historic buildings in the UK. Published at the same time as when I commenced Blackburn is Open (detailed case study in Chapter 4), the report provided me with inspiration and structure for considering the significant number and diverse range of heritage vacant buildings in the town centre.

The report uses the work of Jane Jacobs, an influential urbanist, who argued over 40 years ago that innovation, new products, and economic growth fundamentally depend on cities having a good stock of old, distinctive buildings. Jacobs highlighted that old buildings are vital because they are adaptable, available in various sizes, quickly occupied, and cheaper than new constructions. This makes them attractive to start-ups and innovative businesses needing low costs. Additionally, old buildings provide character, enhancing the image of companies. US economist Richard Florida built on Jacobs' ideas, emphasising the importance of heritage districts and buildings for the creative economy.

> *'Our older industrial age cities are potentially cauldrons of creativity ... filled with just the sorts of warehouses, factories, and other buildings that can become the figurative garages where start-ups are incubated. We can only succeed if we look at them as opportunities and not blights. Such investments are win-win-win propositions: they reinvigorate our older centres, take the pressure off the new ones and result in a stronger system of cities overall.'*[70]

Florida discusses the potential of older industrial cities to become hubs of creativity, utilising their existing structures like warehouses and factories as spaces for start-ups and innovation. The emphasis is on viewing these areas as opportunities rather than blights, arguing that such investments can rejuvenate older urban centres, alleviate pressure on newer ones, and strengthen the overall urban system.

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[68] Jacobs, J. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Modern Library): 50th Anniversary Edition. Random House Inc, 2011. p.201
[69] '*New Ideas Need Old Buildings*'. Heritage Lottery Fund. 2013
[70] Florida, R, *The Rise of the Creative Class.* Basic Books; Illustrated edition. 2019. p.394

In summary, the argument for towns and cities to protect and utilise their historic buildings to attract growing businesses and drive economic recovery is compelling. whilst local governments, planners, developers, and communities, and in particular environmental experts acknowledge the importance of incorporating historic buildings in place of regeneration and place sustainability, there continues to be a need for more focused support. Empowering local communities and cultural organisations to access heritage buildings, reimagine their future uses, design and implement interim uses (further examples provided throughout this chapter), and provide broader access to enhance understanding of the care and challenges associated with historic buildings can boost confidence and stimulate new ideas for old buildings.

The Town is the Venue

As my work in Blackburn shifted from working in neighbourhoods to a town centre, I quickly became aware of the differences in community, business, governance, ownership and opportunities. I had some understanding of the purpose of a 'town centre' through the social art project Talking Shop[71], a photography documentation of the shopkeepers of independent businesses across East Lancashire (2004-2006), whilst celebrating the role and contribution of the shopkeeper to the wider community, the project also researched what the challenges were for small, independent businesses and sharing the research with the Economic Development officers at the local authority (in the hope to provide anecdotal evidence of need and demand).

A town as a defined place and includes retail, residential and leisure facilities. A town also includes nature and culture, high streets and public realm. All of which can embrace community and cultural engagement - through public art commissioning and cultural programmes.

Where a town may not have cultural infrastructure, as a curator, I can identify opportunities to utilise the town as a place for cultural production and consumption. Utilising a variety and diversity of spaces including buildings, walkways, walls, benches and signs, to programme and commission art and culture. Inviting artists and creatives, makers and designers to respond to and create new work, sometimes working with the community and businesses. I

[71] I produced in my role at Mid Pennine Arts, a project I have recently brought back to life in my 'Urban Room toolkit'

drew inspiration from a new online sharing platform, Pop Up City as well as Deveron Projects, whose framework for this way of working is called The Town is the Venue.

Fig. 2.7 The Town is the Venue venn diagram (Claudia Zeiske)[72]

Taken from Zeiske's PhD, *'Leaning on PRINCIPLE 3: town is the venue, we only look for a fitting venue – if needed at all - as the projects progress…. projects were happening in a car garage, the train station, at TESCOs, the bike shop and many more places in and around town. The Friday lunches of our HOME programme often take place at the venues where the speaker is based, for example at the church, the ski centre or the Castle.*

'Bringing new artists in every time allowed for a continuous refresher for the community that sits in the in-betweens of what is happening in a place normally. But to undertake this delicately balanced work, artists need to be carefully selected to fit with their artistic/aesthetic endeavours as well as their personal ability and interest to connect with the place, its communities and people under the 'town is the venue' umbrella.'[73]

Zeiske explains how the artists were recruited to the projects of Deveron Projects, simply *'reached through a continuously evolving network and selected according to a set of criteria.*

[72] Diagram taken from Deveron Projects website (accessed February 2024)
[73] Zeiske, C, *Transformational Fieldwork* PhD. p.20

Key considerations were: how they would take our small town context into consideration?; how they relate to the project's theme?; how well would they fit into the community?; how do they relate to our approach of curating/producing?'.[74]

Zeiske describes herself as an Anthro-producer[75] and I'm always intrigued about artist recruitment processes, and defining the role of the producer are important considerations when working in the context of place and community. For many years, I have been an admirer of In Certain Places, a creative practice based within the University of Central Lancashire and led by artist Charles Quick and researcher Elaine Speight. Their work is grounded in Preston, a place awarded city status in 2002, around the time In Certain Places was formed. Described as a public art research project, they co-create artworks that challenge how we understand and experience places and create long-term change by connecting institutions and communities.

Taking a similar approach to cultural Biennial, In Certain Places explore different spaces for cultural exploration, production and consumption across the city. Notable projects include John Newling's 'Preston Market Mystery Project' (2005-2006) - a project I was lucky to participate in that explored the history of Preston's Covered Markets exploring notions of transaction and exchange that defines markets and social exchange between people who work and shop in the spaces. Blast Theory's 'Can You See Me Now? (2007) - a chase game played simultaneously on the internet and across the city streets. The game exploited the impact that new technologies can have in a city and their potential to offer new experiences of the urban environment. And finally, 'In the Shops Now!', a month-long residency programme during which artists developed projects in vacant shops in a semi-open-air shopping centre, each artist situated in a specific shop developing installations and performances.

The Town is the Venue has since become an accessible and replicable concept that I have since witnessed being adopted by different places, for example, Salford's Place Partnership programme is called 'The City as the Venue'. Rather than one static, dedicated space to cultural programming, the concept provides permission to explore and take over spaces… to make, to platform, to programme, to engage. And in order to achieve this, a 'meanwhile use' approach is adopted.

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[74] Ibid. p.20

[75] Ibid. p.12 Zeiske describes her role as Anthro-producer in her PhD, Transformational Fieldwork. "*My position therefore comes from me as the constant in my combined role as community member as well as curator/producer, arts administrator, field researcher and socio-political activist*."

Meanwhile Use

'Meanwhile Use' is the temporary activation or programming of buildings, spaces, and places in the urban realm. The approach is popular as a method to instigate, test, or implement rapid, low cost and low risk change in the built environment to short-circuit or jump-start what can otherwise be a very slow and very expensive process. By lowering technical and capital requirements, meanwhile use projects provide opportunities for communities to engage at every stage, from design and construction to operations and use. Promote large-scale, slow-moving projects through temporary, small-scale interventions and programmes. This approach helps increase the value and popularity of a planned development or public infrastructure project before it is complete. Draw attention to overlooked places by creating new, exciting reasons for people to visit. This approach catalyses change and generates interest in underused areas before any long-term plans are proposed, unlocking places with great, unrealised potential.

My role has often consisted of shaping a project in collaboration with existing communities by creating a transitory landscape for engagement and dialogue. This approach can help create alignment between local and new stakeholders, which is key to implementing successful place-based programmes. The challenges can be significant, connecting with landlords, advocating for meanwhile use as a concept, temporary licences and business rate relief, and the unpredictability of timescales with the constant fear of being 'evicted'. Specialist support is increasing and toolkits and guides are being produced, and confidence in the concept of 'meanwhile use' or meanwhile spaces is increasing amongst local authorities and funders, accepting it as a less risky opportunity for testing ideas.

In the UK, examples include London-based social enterprise Meanwhile Space[76] was established in 2009 and promotes creating vibrant communities by bringing temporarily redundant space into productive use. Also Boxpark, a London-based enterprise using shipping container architecture to transform spaces, creating pop-up dining and shopping destinations since 2011. Manchester-based Castlefield Gallery's New Art Spaces[77] model enables the NPO[78] an opportunity to pop up in different towns and cities across the North West, supporting and curating local artists through contemporary art exhibitions in places which may not have an art gallery.

[76] https://www.meanwhilespace.com/about (accessed March 2024)
[77] https://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/associates/newartspaces/ (accessed March 2024)
[78] NPO - National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council of England, receives regular funding.

Internationally, a renowned social enterprise Renew Australia, founded by Marcus Westbury in 2013, following the success of Renew Newcastle. The Renew team is using its experiences and learnings that the ‘Renew’ idea cannot simply be replicated but must be tailored to the context of each town or community they work with to achieve successful outcomes. CultureMap, an online social network for people interested in sharing ideas about cultural planning and research and creative enterprise development based at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, has developed a toolkit and case studies for programming and utilising meanwhile uses in empty spaces[79].

In summary, the autonomy of space refers to self-managed areas where non-capitalist, collective forms of politics, identity, and citizenship thrive through resistance and creation. These spaces utilise the unique atmosphere and history of their previous uses, developing distinct aesthetics characterised by simplicity and improvisation.

In urban environments, space is often commodified, prioritising economic impact over social value. Securing permissions to use vacant spaces and buildings is challenging, yet regenerative spaces are crucial for enabling new ideas, as Jane Jacobs noted: 'New ideas need old buildings.' Initiatives like Incredible Edible and the Transition Network demonstrate how communities can leverage local distinctiveness for creative civic engagement, transforming vacant spaces into vibrant hubs of interaction, participation, and start-ups.

Second-hand spaces, evolving with urban demands, offer affordable opportunities for new ventures and contribute significantly to urban transformation. They facilitate public interaction with art and culture whilst highlighting underutilised areas. For example, the Liverpool Biennial showcases how art biennials can expand public understanding of art by utilising derelict spaces, creating a lasting impact on urban planning and cultural engagement.

Historic buildings are key assets in economic growth, supported by evidence from both the US and the UK. Towns and cities must protect and utilise these buildings to attract businesses and drive economic recovery, developing new ideas and community engagement.

Place-based models & networks

Place-based networks and groups, such as Incredible Edible, Totally Locally, and the Transition Network, play a crucial role in transforming towns and neighbourhoods into

[79] https://www.culturemap.org.au/emptyspaces_subdomain/page/about-empty-spaces.html (accessed June 2024)

healthier, happier, and more sustainable communities. These groups bring together community representatives and changemakers to work collectively towards shared goals and visions, enhancing community engagement and social cohesion.

By pooling resources, skills, and expertise, these networks enable efficient use of assets, reduce duplication of efforts, and drive innovation tailored to local needs. This collaborative approach supports sustainable development and economic growth by promoting environmentally friendly practices and stimulating local economies. Initiatives like Incredible Edible encourage local food production, improving health and well-being, whilst Totally Locally supports small businesses, boosting local economies.

These groups also empower local leaders to advocate for their communities, building resilience against economic, social, and environmental challenges. They enhance the quality of life by addressing key issues collectively, preserving local culture and heritage, and improving access to essential services and infrastructure.

Place-based networks demonstrate how collective action can create vibrant, attractive, and liveable communities, with a strong sense of belonging and mutual support amongst residents.

Incredible Edible

> *'Imagine helping yourself to a juicy cob of sweetcorn from the yard outside a police station. You might feel secretly pleased that nobody has come out to arrest you. You might be surprised to see the corn there in the first place. You'd get even more of a shock if you knew the police officer was watching you on CCTV with a huge grin on her face.*'[80]

In 2008, a year after I moved to Todmorden, West Yorkshire, Pam Warhurst, Mary Clear and a group of friends initiated Incredible Edible. The project aims to bring people together through actions around local food and community allotments, helping to change behaviour towards the environment and to build a kinder and more resilient world. In some cases, it also envisions having places become self-sufficient in food production, hence having all food being produced locally.

[80] Warhurst, P, Dobson, J, *Incredible! Plant Veg, Grow a Revolution*. Matador; UK ed. edition (2014) p.xiii

Totally Locally

Described as a philosophy, Totally Locally started out as a small idea in the North of England and has grown into a multi-award-winning worldwide movement. Utilising a Town Kit, groups of volunteers and trader associations in towns and areas are able to follow guidelines and use templates and a full event strategy, and use it to make their town a stronger, more vibrant and resilient place.

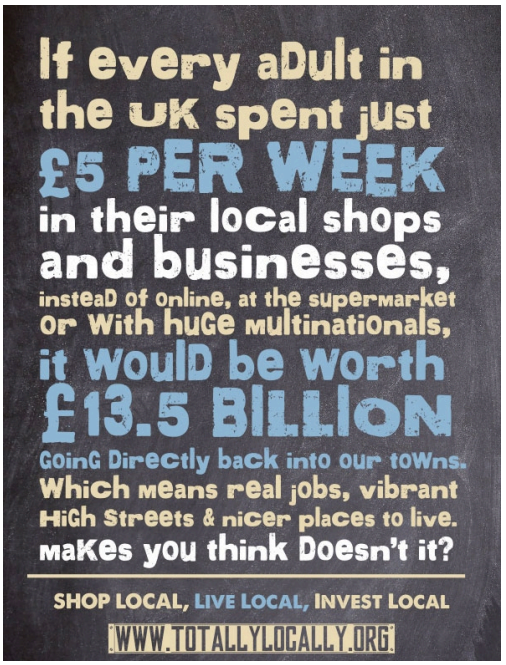

Fig. 2.8 Totally Locally campaign poster[81]

Creating catchy, accessible campaigns have become really useful tools and approaches for communities to embrace and provide place leadership with the help from toolkits, guides and case studies.

Transition Network

In July 2020, I attended a webinar (lockdown professional development) part of Wild Rumpus' Culture Sessions #19 with Rob Hopkins, author of 'From What Is to What If', host of the 'From What If to What Next' podcast and founder of the Transition movement. I then observed Rob in action at Timber in 2023, an intimate family-friendly festival hosted by the National Forest in South Derbyshire, and produced by Wild Rumpus. He hosted a talk series and a workshop, and I found myself in awe at his energy and commitment to his now

[81] https://totallylocally.org/ (accessed March 2024)

infamous question, What If?, as a way to engage participants to consider the future of possibilities. The power of asking good ‘What If…’ questions, and how they can unlock the fresh, bold audacious thinking the future demands of us. This also inspired the work of Moral Imaginations, which I discuss below.

I was delighted to discover a copy of ‘The Transition Companion’ at my local Oxfam bookshop. The book explores how communities are building a future that values local enterprises, embraces lower energy consumption, and prioritises cooperation, creativity, and resilience as the foundations of a new economy. Described as 'a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world’,[82] this growing network offers an alternative vision outlined in the newly published manifesto, The Ministry of Imagination (2024).[83] Curated by Hopkins, the collection presents innovative policies from a diverse group of contributors, including Brian Eno, Rutger Bregman, and Kate Raworth - alongside ecologists, renegade economists, artists, prison abolitionists, somatic trauma therapists, printmakers, politicians, disability activists, rewilding practitioners, and many others. For me, this array of perspectives redefines the role of makers, offering '*a taste of what policymaking underpinned by radical imagination looks like.*’[84]

Moral Imagination

Last year, I had been reading about an interesting approach being undertaken by Croydon Council, a methodology called Moral Imagination by Phoebe Trickle[85]. Inspired by Rob Hopkins’ ‘Transition Network’ philosophy and model. And it was whilst attending Timber Festival in Derbyshire in July 2023, I observed Trickle discuss with other young activists about the impact of climate anxiety and the power of collective action, strong communities and celebrating small changes. Hopkins also hosted a live podcast ‘*From What If to What Next’* with other social and climate activists. Moral Imagining is described as collective imagining to increase radical kinship with the human and more-than-human worlds, present, past and future. Bachelard states *‘imagination separates us from the past as well as reality, it faces the future. If we cannot imagine, we cannot foresee’*.[86]

[82] https://transitionnetwork.org/ (accessed June 2024)
[83] *Ministry of Imagination*, Transition Network, May 2024
[84] Blog post by Liza Jovanovska 21st May 2024. https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/ministry-of-imagination/ (accessed June 2024)
[85] https://www.moralimaginations.com/camden-imagines (accessed June 2024)
[86] Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Books 1958

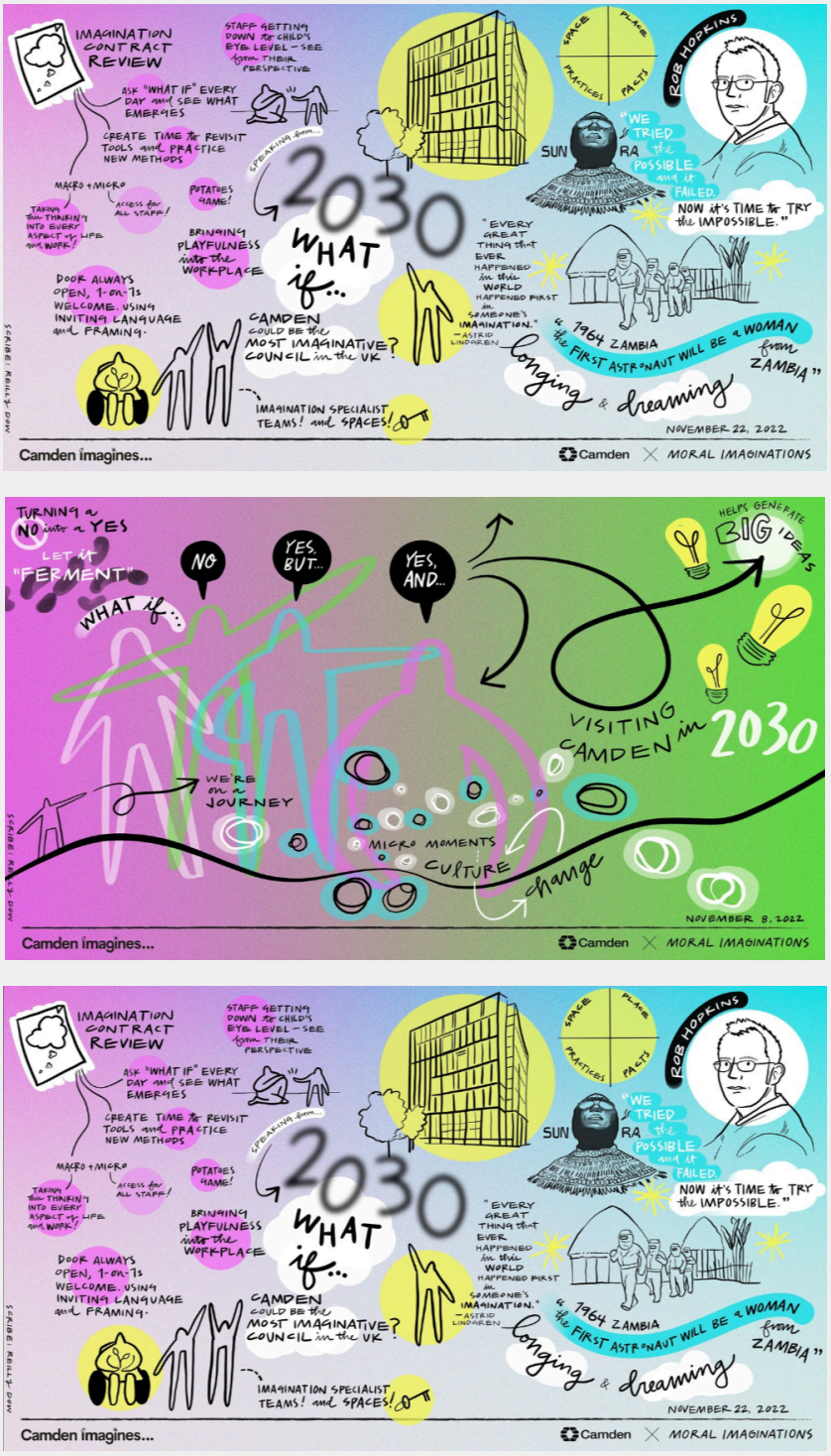

Fig. 2.9 - 2.11 - extracts of the visual documentation from 'Camden Imagines… Moral Imaginations' workshop series October to November 2022[87]

[87] Imagination Activism in Camden, Camden Imagines, Moral Imaginations, illustrations taken from https://www.moralimaginations.com/camden-imagines (accessed June 2024)

Summary: Place Based

The core aim of place-based practice is to identify what makes a place distinctive and to leverage this uniqueness for creative civic engagement. Connection to a place supports civic pride, belonging, and a sense of ownership, motivating communities to protect and sustain their environments. Recognizing that each place is unique, cultural interactions allow us to experience and interpret places differently, contributing to their evolving legacy and heritage.

Whilst Geddes' Local-Global theory continues to be influential in urban planning, environmental design, and regional development, his vision of integrating local characteristics with global processes continues to provide a framework for sustainable and inclusive urban growth.

Our perceptions of a place can shift based on experiences and perspectives, influencing how we view opportunities within it. The spaces within places profoundly shape our understanding and autonomy of place, a concept explored further in the next section.

Initiatives like Totally Locally, Incredible Edible, and the Transition Network exemplify how communities can harness local distinctiveness for creative civic engagement. Totally Locally promotes local businesses, encouraging people to shop locally and thereby strengthening the local economy. Incredible Edible transforms public spaces into community gardens, with local food production and community interaction. The Transition Network supports communities in building resilience and sustainability through local projects that address climate change and resource depletion.

These initiatives highlight how localised actions can inspire broader civic engagement, transforming perceptions and interactions within a place. Our experiences and perspectives shape how we view opportunities in our communities, influencing our autonomy and the collective legacy we build. The impact of spaces within places on our understanding and engagement is further explored in the next section.

PART 2 - CREATIVE (SOCIAL) PRACTICE

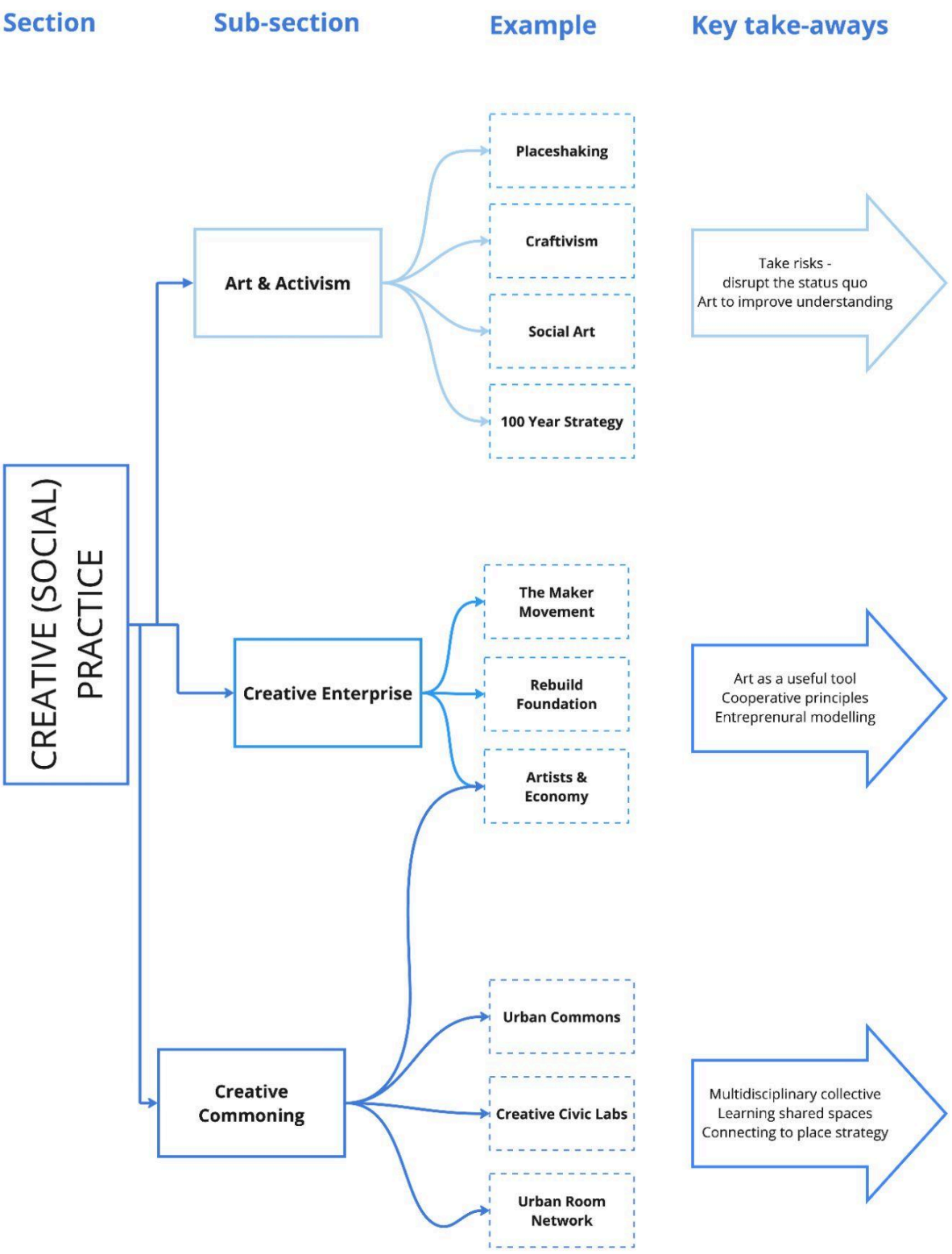

Fig 2.12 Creative (Social) Practice contextualisation of Creative Civic Engagement (expand)

Introduction: Creative (Social) Practice

Putting social innovation and social value at the centre of a creative practice, my work as a curator and a collaborator has established relationships with other creatives, artists, academics and designers, pooling skills, ideas, and experiences to develop place-based interventions or methodologies. I am committed to learning from the work of others who share my values and principles. Art and Activism considers a range of practices closely related to my practice. As a placemaker, my role is often one to disrupt the status quo - challenge notions of ‘normal’, seek opportunities, bring different disciplines and sectors together to question etc.

Creative Enterprise explores practices that have developed an entrepreneurial model, in order to sustain a social art practice. It also considers art practices that address and challenge economic models, inspired by The Whitworth’s recent exhibition ‘Economics the Blockbuster - It’s not Business as Usual’, which featured a range of artists addressing the question How can artists reimagine the economy? I took part in one of their workshops led by Kathrin Böhm and Kuba Szreder from the Centre for Plausible Economies.

And finally, Creative Commons, where I aim to better understand the power of convening and collective problem solving through creative methodologies and civic engagement. I have been an active member of the Urban Room Network, and an associate of Sheffield School of Architecture’s urban room, LiveWorks, whilst also observing the work of inspirational practices like Civic Square, R-Urban and models such as Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL).

Art & Activism

The Tate defines Activist art as 'art that is grounded in the act of 'doing' and addresses political or social issues'.[88] Similar to the previous section, and the identification of community movements, within art and creative practices, there has been a series of movements or moments where artists have collectively challenged society through artistic action.

Building on the definition of Social Art from the Introduction of this PhD, I have taken the opportunity to share my story of supporting the establishment of a social art practice, In-Situ, in Pendle, Lancashire, and how their work, alongside of others, has influenced a new wave of regularly funded artist-led organisations, working in a slow-art, hyper-local way, establishing long-term place-based change.

Over the past year or so, local creative projects, such as Dudley Creates and Portland Inn Project CIC have launched 100 year strategies, co-produced with the local community. And Croyden have employed the services of Moral Imagination to co-create an alternative way to embed creative engagement into the development of the local authorities place strategies. In an interview between Mary Jane Jacobs and Claudia Zeiske, Jacobs shares 'The world needs more artists, not more art!' is something that people heard me saying often - meaning that the physical output is less important than the process of collaboration.'[89]

My own personal objective of collaborating with artists is to ensure we are considering a dimension that feels more human-centred and interprets the world in another way to that of policies and procedures. Creating space for conversations, co-design workshopping, social interactions such as walking and knitting, are fundamental qualities for developing strong relationships and creating collective action - and possibly protest.

Placeshaking

Dan Thompson is an artist and author of the 'Empty Shops Workbook'[90] and 'Pop Up Businesses for Dummies'. As founder of Revolutionary Arts, Thompson's interest in the creation of social capital, in abandoned or underused spaces, and in DIY approaches to art, culture and social action has led him to initiate a range of transformational projects, including

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[88] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/activist-art (accessed March 2024)
[89] Zeiske, C, *Transformational Fieldwork* PhD p.19
[90] https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Community_Assets/Empty_Shops_Workbook.pdf (accessed March 2024)

the organisation of a major collective clean up after the riots. In 2013, Thompson presented a TedX Talk where he introduced the term ‘Placeshaking’[91],

> *'Everything we've done has been about placeshaking, taking places, jiggling them, shaking them, making them more interesting. And that can lead on to the placemaking… lead on to the formal stuff that can inform that but the placeshaking is the bit that really interests me. It's um, it's an evolutionary process. It's much more incremental. It's about taking small steps to do things. It's about trying it and testing it. It's about prototyping and will this work? Will it work who knows what till it's both work? Who knows, but let's try it and see what happens. And that's what placeshaking does.'*[92]

Thompson described the concept of ‘placeshaking’ as a five-step process:

1. Start with a conversation.
2. Get lost.
3. Reclaim spaces for public use.
4. Create new collaborations.
5. Test. Prototype. Try together.

Whilst researching the activation of empty shop models, I discovered Thompson’s work and its ‘revolutionary’ impact it was having in places, mainly in Bedford, Worthing and Margate. In 2014, I established my first social enterprise and, with Thompson’s blessing, I called it Placeshakers. Placeshakers CIC aimed to transform empty buildings and spaces into new uses for art and making, commencing with the feasibility study for The Making Rooms in Blackburn (more detail explained in the Blackburn case study).

Thompson’s creative (social) practice continues to inspire my own work and practice, with his ability to generate campaigns for social art and social justice, as Julie Riddiough (founder of A Brookes Art) quotes on his website, '*Dan’s art practice reflects social and cultural themes found by working with the local communities. The results are both democratic and critically challenging for audiences and participants alike.*'[93]

[91] Thompson, D. (2013, July 15). *Shake Up Your Place!* [Video]. YouTube.
[92] Ibid. Quote taken from a transcription of the TedX talk.
[93] https://mrdanthompson.wordpress.com/writer/ (accessed January 2023)

Craftivism

Craftivism, a portmanteau of 'craft' and 'activism,' refers to the practice of using handcrafts as a form of social or political activism. It merges traditional craft techniques, such as knitting, embroidery, and sewing, with messages of protest or social commentary to engage people in meaningful conversations and actions. The primary purpose of craftivism is to use the gentle, meditative act of crafting to address serious issues and inspire change. Craftivists aim to create thoughtful, beautiful pieces that convey messages about social justice, environmental issues, human rights, and other critical topics. This form of activism encourages people to reflect deeply on the issues at hand, creating a more personal and emotional connection to the causes they support.

Craftivism's roots can be traced back to various grassroots movements, but it gained prominence as a distinct concept in the early 2000s. Betsy Greer, a writer and activist, is credited with popularising the term 'craftivism' in 2003. She described it as a way to influence the world positively and meaningfully through handmade works. However, the concept of using craft for activism predates this term, with historical examples including the suffragette banners and quilts used to promote women's rights in the early 20th century.

Fig. 2.13 Banner Culture exhibition, Brierfield Mill, Pendle, 2019 (Image credit: Richard Tymon)

There is a heritage of place-based craftivism in banner-making, from Durham Miners Gala established in 1871 to Artichoke's PROCESSIONS project in 2018[94]. In 2019, arts organisation Super Slow Way with Mid Pennine Arts, an organisation I am a Trustee of, curated a significant exhibition in a derelict mill in Pendle, Brierfield Mill, 'Banner Culture' displaying 220 banners from a diversity of places and contexts, '*crowdsourced from heritage collections, campaign groups, artists and communities, it represented a kaleidoscopic view of a century of protest, belief and identity*'.[95] Craftivism combines the personal, hands-on nature of crafting with the principles of activism, creating a powerful tool for creative civic engagement. By making activism more inclusive, community-oriented, and reflective, craftivism plays a significant role in promoting social change and a sense of collective responsibility. Below I have aimed to capture the qualities that make craftivism and apply it to Creative Civic Engagement, as a way to connect the movement or application to the context of my research.

Relevance to Creative Civic Engagement: Craftivism is highly relevant to creative civic engagement for several reasons:

1. **Inclusivity**:
    - Craftivism makes activism accessible to a broader audience, including those who may not participate in traditional forms of protest. It invites people of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels to contribute to social change in a creative and non-confrontational way.
2. **Community Building**:
    - Craftivism often involves group projects or workshops that bring people together, creating a sense of community and collective purpose. These gatherings provide a platform for discussion, collaboration, and mutual support, strengthening social bonds and encouraging collective action.
3. **Slow Activism**:
    - The deliberate, slow nature of crafting allows for thoughtful reflection on the issues being addressed. This 'slow activism' contrasts with the fast-paced nature of digital activism, offering a more mindful approach to engaging with social and political issues.
4. **Public Engagement**:
    - Craftivist projects can be displayed in public spaces, drawing attention to important issues in a visually engaging way. Installations can provoke curiosity, spark conversations and raise awareness with diverse audiences.
5. **Empowerment**:
    - Craftivism empowers individuals by giving them a tangible way to express their values and contribute to social change. The act of creating something with one's hands can be deeply fulfilling and can help individuals feel more connected to the causes they care about.

[94] More information about PROCESSIONS: https://www.artichoke.uk.com/project/processions/ (accessed May 2024)
[95] *Banner Culture.* Mid Pennine Arts. Limited Edition. 2022

Social Art Practice

Building on the definition presented in the Introduction chapter, I would like to take this opportunity to explore the notion of time-based art, slow art[96] and the position of the artist in social art practice being situated in a place over a designated period of time. I will start with reflecting on the work from practices I'm familiar with, and reflect on my own work.

I have previously referenced the work of Deveron Projects, under the formidable leadership of Claudia Zeiske who recently completed her own PhD thesis, based on the 25 years of practice in the founding of the organisation. Zeiske describes herself as an Anthro-Producer, referring to the 'job combining art production with anthropological methods of fieldwork'[97].

> *'Engaging anthropological methods is not uncommon in participatory art related practices. However, there are few (in particular rural) places to be found where this has been carried out with a range of artists and socio-political topics over an extended period of time in one place. While the artists come in and out through time-fixed residencies, [...] My position, therefore, comes from me as the constant in my combined role as community member as well as curator/producer, arts administrator, field researcher and socio-political activist.'*[98]

The notion of a 'constant', playing the role of a slightly different type of maker, a resident-producer/curator, a familiar face that is proving dedication to the cause - the cause being the organisation, the campaign or the ethos in which the work is set in.

In Situ is a creative organisation based in Pendle, Lancashire. It was founded by three creative practitioners, Kerry Morrison, William Titley and Paul Hartley, in 2012. I had worked with all three practitioners during my work at both Mid Pennine Arts and Elevate East Lancashire between 2006 and 2010.

In brief… I met Kerry Morrison in 2003 when I commissioned her, sound artist Helmet Lemke and botanist Alicia Prowse to deliver 'Organic Reflections', one of my first public art

[96] Spearheaded by Chrysalis Arts Development, Exec Director Christine Keogh, quotes "*The Slow Art approach that we have evolved seems increasingly relevant at a time when we have to adapt to radical environmental and social change. Fundamentally, it's about ensuring that we make the best possible use of our creative resources and trying to achieve a lasting impact on the audiences, artists and places where we work.*" https://www.chrysalisarts.com/slow-art (accessed January 2023)
[97] Zeiske, C, *Transformational Fieldwork* PhD - p.11
[98] Ibid.

commissions in Longford Park, Manchester). In 2005, myself and Paul Hartley, the then youth coordinator for Hyndburn Council commissioned Kerry to work with us on a youth art project on a housing estate in Within Grove, Hyndburn in Lancashire. I was working at Mid Pennine Arts, identifying opportunities for creative engagement interventions across the Lancashire cycleway network. I commissioned artist Kerry Morrison to collaborate with myself, Paul and the youth worker, Sharon Connory, through an artist residency. The project, and the team, provided me with a framework in which to produce to the present day and influences how I develop relationships with a range of interdisciplinary partners and establish a code of practice at the start of each project.

During 2009, Kerry, William and Paul started to explore the idea of establishing a new creative (social) practice, building on their work in East Lancashire, in particular their individual projects with the Housing Market Renewal pathfinder programme. Following a visit to a conference in Amsterdam in 2009 or 2010, hearing about the work of Jeanne van Heeswijk in Liverpool (2up 2down) and Rick Lowe's Project Row Houses, the trio started to organise a visit to the Texas-based project to learn about the work being led by Rick Lowe.

In Situ was formally established in April 2012 as a social enterprise with three Directors, and an advisory board. A business model was drafted, and a programme structure devised underpinned by an interdisciplinary methodology which continues to guide their practice. As each of the Directors developed their own projects, the early work was a crossover of ecology and biodiversity, youth work and dialogical work in place, exploring subcultures and personal stories. This was achieved through an In-Residence programme, providing time and space for artists to immerse themselves in Pendle life and develop ideas alongside the In-Situ team.

In-Situ has since evolved as a changing non-hierarchical collective, working on projects that emphasise slow working and making a difference in the community by having an ear to the ground and building relationships in neighbourhoods. They also took our practice further afield, building links with projects in Texas (US) and Lahore (Pakistan). Reflecting on this work, William Titley contributed an article to their Thinking Out Loud blog series in March 2021. Titled 'Indwelling: Art in Everyday Life'[99],

> *'Social art practice is often utilised to affect social change through activist and pedagogical processes and In-Situ is no exception, being heavily inspired by Project*

[99] https://www.in-situ.org.uk/post/indwelling-art-in-everyday-life (accessed May 2024)

Row Houses in Houston, Texas, and its reciprocal way of working with community and place, and embedded in its community.'

Fig. 2.14 In-Situ visit to Project Row Houses 2011 (Image credit W.Titley 2011)

Founded by artist Rick Lowe in 1993, Project Row Houses (PRH) is an innovative community-based arts and cultural organisation located in Houston's Third Ward, one of the city's oldest African American neighbourhoods. PRH transformed 22 abandoned shotgun-style houses into a vibrant hub for art, culture, and community engagement. The project integrates art with social activism, creating spaces for art exhibitions, artist residencies, and community services, including affordable housing, educational programmes, and youth initiatives.

In an interview with Temporary, Rick Lowe is asked about PRH's housing program, and his thoughts about artists communities and about artists interacting with communities? I feel the distinction Lowe provides is an important one when exploring the definition of Social Art practice.

'There is a distinct difference between artist communities and artists that live in the community. In artist communities, the impact, or value, is between artist and art which is incredibly important for some artists and at different stages in their careers. While I

have a deep appreciation and respect for artist communities (I've been a part of them and I've started some, too), what we do at PRH is a little different. It's not an artist community – it's about artists within a community. What we are doing at PRH is much more about the relationship between the artists and the other residents that live in the neighbourhood."[100]

PRH's unique approach to regeneration through art has garnered international acclaim as a model for artist-led community revitalization. By leveraging the arts as a catalyst for social change, PRH demonstrates how cultural projects can build social capital, enhance community cohesion, and stimulate economic development. The project emphasises the importance of local culture and history, with a strong sense of identity and pride amongst residents, as illustrated in their model presented on the organisation's website (see Fig.2.15).

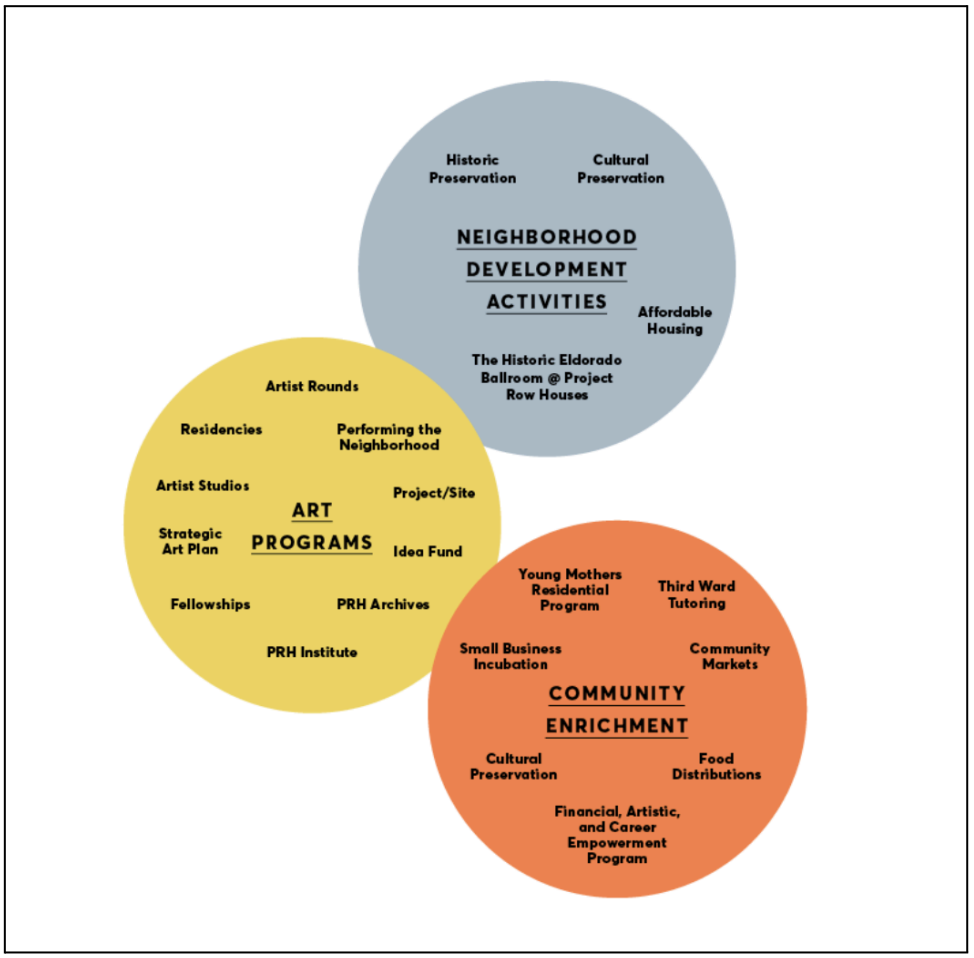

Fig. 2.15 Project Row Houses model for art and social engagement[101]

[100] https://temporaryartreview.com/project-row-houses-an-interview-with-rick-lowe/ (accessed June 2024)
[101] https://projectrowhouses.org/about/ (accessed June 2024)

PRH's success lies in its ability to blend creativity with social responsibility, inspiring similar initiatives globally. It showcases how artists can lead urban regeneration efforts, transforming neglected areas into thriving communities. Today, PRH stands as an exemplary case study in the field of creative placemaking, highlighting the transformative power of art in facilitating sustainable, inclusive, and resilient communities.

A 100 Year Strategy

Two organisations I have been observing for the past 12-18 months are Portland Inn CIC and CoLab Dudley, the initiators of Dudley Creates. Both organisations are taking an ambitious approach to developing regenerative futures for their local areas through the creation and delivery of a 100 year plan or cultural strategy. It is also worth noting here that both organisations I would put in the context of Social Art Practice, and adhere to the notion of being residents of the places in which they practise, reinforcing the constant presence and practice of a local anthro-producer/curator/artist. Therefore, when discussing the opportunity of a 100 year strategy with local residents and businesses, there will be trust in the process due to the commitment demonstrated by the facilitator and convenor who are also local residents and business owners.

As a short introduction to creative (social) practice, Portland Inn Project CIC (PiP), an artist-led social enterprise directed by Anna Francis and Rebecca Davies. With a similar experience to my own, in many ways, Francis talks of the impact of Housing Market Renewal on her own neighbourhood in Stoke-on-Trent,

> *'So in Stoke on Trent around 2005 and 2006 when I began the work that I've been doing ever since, I saw whole streets of terraced houses being demolished. [...] my work often responds to the context of the city where I live. So in 2006, I began to document the processes that I saw underway. [...] A lot of artists who work in public and social space aim to reframe our world through their work and invite people to look in the direction that they are looking and see something differently or something new. And this is how I aim to work as an artist too. I'm often looking at the gaps in the city and recognising where there might be overlooked resources and I often asked the people that I'm working with, What could happen here in this gap? Can we work together to make something different or better? rather than asking what works here and what needs work?'*[102]

[102] Francis, A. (2023, Feb 14). *A 100 year plan for our community.* Associate Professor Anna Francis [Video]. YouTube.

The 100-Year Plan seeks to encourage residents to think of their local ecology, community and development in the timespan of a century, which they hope will result in a more secure future for communities. *'One part of our work has been to think about how we make the work that we do together as a community sustainable, in all senses of the word. Our 100 year plan is really helping us with that. We started to make changes already in the neighbourhood to make our environment better for human or non human species. [...] We want longer term investment and support for all communities. Short term thinking doesn't work for people or planet.'*[103]

One of 15 projects supported by the Local Trust,[104] the PiP case study explores the 'optimum growing conditions' for growing a long-term vision for a greener, more biodiverse neighbourhood. For PIP, responsiveness has been the single most important growing condition for the 100-Year Plan, and their work during the pandemic more broadly. A core feature of this responsiveness has been being present on the street and the blurring of the boundary between resident and artist (Anna lives on Portland Street itself, and Rebecca nearby). This has allowed the PIP team to build a deep understanding of the neighbourhood through listening to residents, and their own lived experience.

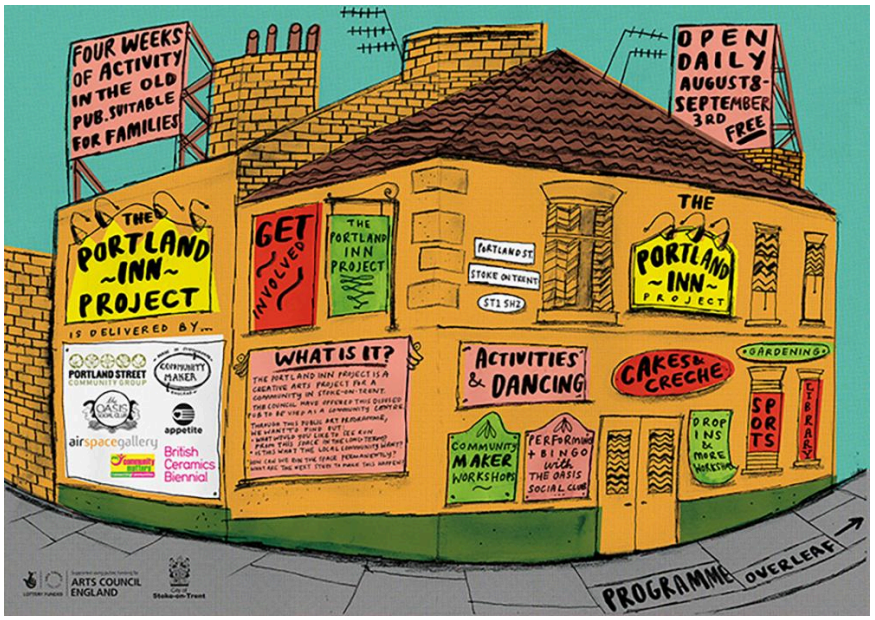

Fig. 2.16 Illustration by Portland Inn Project CIC[105]

[103] Ibid.
[104] More on Local's Creative Civic Change in the final part of this chapter, Policy Making.
[105] Image taken from https://www.airspacegallery.org/index.php/2020/public_entry/the_portland_inn_project (accessed May 2024)

Taking a similar approach, with their own methodology, is Dudley Creates, a project managed through Co-Lab Dudley, Dudley Creates is a growing collective of local people in Dudley borough who are co-creating projects that support communities to have thriving cultural lives by participating in creativity of all kinds. started as a way to get more people involved in culture and creativity in Dudley and, through ongoing experiments and research, it has developed into a movement where a collective of local people are supporting a cultural strategy in action. A 100 Year Cultural Strategy in Action 'What if… Dudley had a cultural strategy that considered future generations?'. Using Rob Hopkin's What if questions to help spark imagination and find solutions to the cultural emergency.

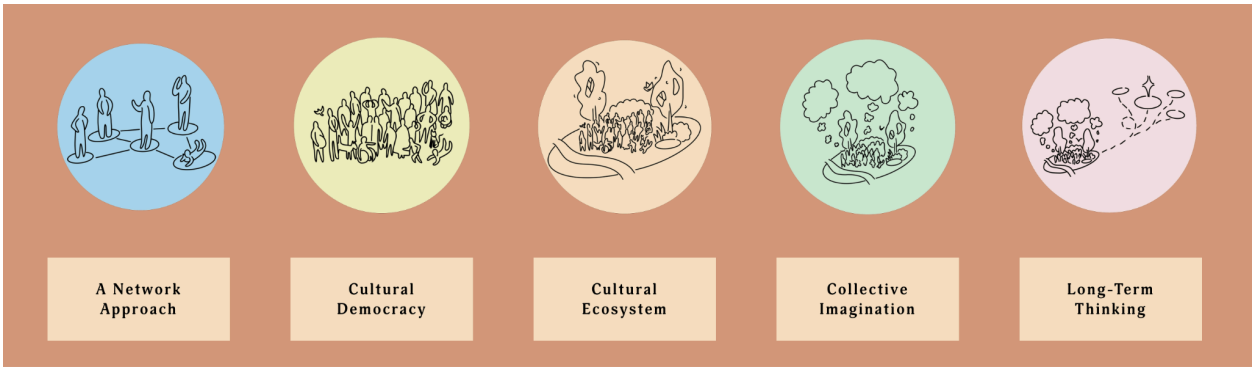

Fig. 2.17 Illustrating the five key ideas in Dudley Creates cultural strategy[106]

These five ideas offer powerful practices, tools and tactics which can be used to overcome barriers experienced by local people and communities who would like thriving cultural lives. They will help us to create the conditions that enable people to take cultural and creative action which contributes to regenerative futures and restoring our relationship with nature.

[106] Illustration taken from Dudley Creates website, July 2024. https://www.dudleycreates.net/cultural-strategy

Creative Enterprise

This chapter explores the intersection of Creative Civic Engagement and Creative Enterprise, focusing on the concept of DIY and maker cultures, and its impact on community development and social innovation. The central theme revolves around how individuals and groups harness creativity to generate income, community action, and develop sustainable enterprises. DIY Culture, characterised by the creation and commercialization of 'home-made' or site-specific products, reflects a hands-on approach to learning and applying manufacturing processes. This often includes making a living through product design, selling creative services, or organising events to raise funds for community initiatives.

A key objective of this discussion is to demonstrate how creative enterprise can serve as a vehicle for social innovation and entrepreneurship, benefiting both the creators and the broader community. By examining case studies like Homebaked Anfield (Appendix P2.2), a community bakery in Liverpool, the chapter illustrates how local initiatives can leverage creative skills to address social issues, provide economic opportunities, and strengthen community ties. Homebaked Anfield, for instance, not only offers baked goods but also acts as a community hub, reinvesting profits into local projects and providing a model for how creative businesses can operate sustainably.

The section will also explore the role of creative enterprise in generating income for community projects, emphasising the importance of innovative business models that align with community values and needs. It will highlight the challenges and opportunities inherent in such endeavours, offering insights into best practices for those looking to embark on similar ventures. By delving into these themes, the chapter aims to underscore the transformative potential of creative enterprise as a catalyst for community empowerment and social change.

The Maker Movement & Power of Making

In June 2014, I attended the Creative Lancashire BIG (BIG Conference is designed and presented by Creative Lancashire, a service provided by Lancashire County Council, in association with Design Council and Liverpool International Festival of Business (IFB 2014) where curator and product designer, Daniel Charny, introduced the concept of ‘The Maker Movement’.

> *'Making is the most powerful way that we solve problems, express ideas and shape our world. What and how we make defines who we are, and communicates who we*

want to be. For many people, making is critical for survival. For others, it is a chosen vocation: a way of thinking, inventing and innovating. And for some, it is simply a delight to be able to shape a material and say 'I made that'. The power of making is that it fulfils each of these essential human needs. [...] But making is something that everyone can do. The knowledge of how to make - both everyday objects and highly skilled creations - is one of humanity's most precious resources.'[107]

Power of Making was the title of an exhibition in which Charny curated, a partnership between the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Crafts Council in September 2011, coinciding with the London Design Festival 2011. The exhibition included work by Thomas Heatherwick and shoe designer Marloes ten Bhömer. Over 100 hand-made curiosities on show range from surgical equipment to musical instruments to art objects.

Charny was quoted in Dazeen: '*This exhibition will celebrate the importance of traditional and time-honoured ways of making but also highlight the extraordinary innovation taking place around the world. We aim to show how the act of making in its various forms [..] unites us globally.*'[108]

Charney provided a national perspective and provided me with the inspiration and advocacy to consider a wider and more diverse range of making processes and partnerships, not only with manufacturing networks and advocacy forums, but also with the Crafts Council, who would later become an integral part of the National Festival of Making, in which I founded (see Blackburn case study for further synopsis). I was also introduced to the RSA's Making and Manufacturing programme[109] in 2015,

'The 20th century was defined by consumption. Production left the household and became concentrated in distant factories, a throwaway culture took hold that did away with notions of mending and fixing objects, and our identity came to be shaped not just by what we did but by what we bought. Our belief is that the 21st century can and should be different. Thanks to the advent of new technologies, it is increasingly feasible for individuals to play a part in creating objects they once only consumed, and for communities as a whole to develop more localised models of manufacturing.'[110]

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[107] Creative Lancashire, BIG Conference brochure 2013
[108] https://www.dezeen.com/2011/09/07/power-of-making-at-the-va/ (accessed March 2023)
[109] Dellot, B. *Ours to Master: How makerspaces can help us master technology for a more human end.* RSA. November 2015. p.6
[110] https://www.thersa.org/projects/archive/economy/making-and-manufacturing/about (accessed March 2023)

The Maker Movement Manifesto

Make.

Making is fundamental to what it means to be human. We must make, create and express ourselves to feel whole. There is something unique about making physical things. These things are like little pieces of us and seem to embody portions of our souls.

Share.

Sharing what you have made and what you know about making with others is the method by which a maker's feeling of wholeness is achieved. You cannot make and not share.

Give.

There are few things more selfless and satisfying than giving away something you have made. Acts of Making puts a small piece of you in the object. Giving that to someone else is like giving someone a small piece of yourself. Such things are often the most cherished items we possess.

Learn.

You must learn to make you must always seek to learn more about your making. You may become a journeyman, or master craftsman. You will still learn to learn and push yourself to learn new techniques, materials and processes. Building a lifelong learning path ensures a rich and rewarding making life and importantly, enables one to share.

Tool Up.

You must have access to the right tools for the project at hand. Invest in and develop local access to the tools you need to do the making you want to do the tools of making have never been cheaper, easier to use or more powerful.

Play.

Be playful with what you are making and you will be surprised, excited and proud of what you discover.

Participate.

Join the maker movements and reach out to those around you who are discovering the joy of making, hold seminars, parties, events, maker days, fairs, expos classes, and dinners with and for the other makers in your community.

Support.

This is a movement and it requires emotional, intellectual, financial, political and institutional support. The best hope for improving the world is us and we are responsible for making a better future.

Change.

Embrace the change that will naturally occur as you go through your maker journey. Since making a fundamental to what it means to be human, you will become a more complete version of you as you make.

Fig. 2.18 The Maker Movement Manifesto. Mark Hatch CEO, Techshop

Rebuild Foundation

Rebuild Foundation is described as ‘an artist-led, community-based platform for art, cultural development, and neighbourhood transformation’. Initiated by artist Theaster Gates in Chicago in 2010, Rebuild operates a constellation of sites on the South Side of Chicago including the Stony Island Arts Bank, Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative, Kenwood Gardens, and an arts incubator at the former St. Laurence Elementary School. Rebuild Foundation is grounded in and enriched by three core values: Black people matter, Black spaces matter, and Black objects matter.

Dorchester Industries is a manufacturing platform that creates furniture, objects, and spaces using exceptional but often overlooked materials sourced throughout the City of Chicago. Explained as having a dual mission: to create beautiful things well and to train our employees to pursue careers in the building trades and creative industries. The objects produced through the collaborative creative process are sold under the Dorchester Industries brand, with proceeds supporting the mission to promote culture-based, artist-led, neighbourhood-driven community revitalization. In an interview with Carol Becker and Gates, presented in the Phaidon publication, Becker questions the scale of the project to rethink urbanisation in the UK is enormous, and that models are required to reimagine ways to address this complexity, in new ways. Gates responds,

> *'Because of my training, the city is my medium. If the city is ill, then I have a subject, I have a patient. And that’s exciting. [...] That’s one set of tools. Then there’s clay. I love clay. I have the craftsman’s belief that you should be excellent at something [...] I want to be a good craftsman as much as I want to be a good leader and I don’t think I have to choose between leadership and craftsmanship.*'[111]

In March 2022, Theaster Gates is discussing his work as both an artist and designer, and explaining the motivation behind initiatives like the Experimental Design Lab to amplify and support talented designers of colour who may lack access to certain platforms and resources.

'For so much of my career, there's the work that I do as an artist, and then there's the rest of the work that I do that would probably qualify as design, small d. I'm building structures. I'm renovating buildings. I'm creating spaces for culture. And then sometimes I'm making

[111] Becker, C, *Theaster Gates:* Phaidon Contemporary Series. 2015 p. 17

products, if you want to call them that [...] I'm leading groups of creative people and their ability to make things that go out into the world. Most of the time when I'm doing that work, I'm looking at 90% to 95% white people, folk that are like, amazing at their craft, killing it in their field. They've had all this training, and maybe they've had generational knowledge and access to platforms that would allow them to take their one table and turn it into 20 tables, [...] into 2000 tables, and then the marketing necessary, the distribution necessary, [...] because they have the platforms that will allow them to go from one place to another. I want to help build those platforms that look at great local talent, look at people of colour and say, this has tremendous promise, but we need to refine it. [..] This has tremendous promise, but we need the resources behind it and the people talking about it so that more people want to sit in your chair, wear your dress, wear your rings, and I think the experimental design lab is trying to be part of the constellation of spaces and platforms that are amplifying people of colours design intentions."[112]

Gates aims to demonstrate the power of new collectives in creating meaningful and impactful opportunities for creative people to thrive. Social projects creating products produced as an output of an engagement process and sold in order to provide an alternative source of income for the enterprise are taking place across a number of organisations, and I have recently commissioned a shop for my own creative (social) practice website to support locally produced work and attract investment to my own enterprise.

Artists & Economy

Kathrin Böhm initiated Company Drinks[113] in 2014 under the umbrella of her collective, Myvillages, originally commissioned by Create London[114]. This project explores the intersection of art, community, and commerce, engaging residents in London to harvest, produce, and sell beverages. The initiative formally became a Community Interest Company (CIC) in June 2015, emphasising its commitment to benefiting the community. Company Drinks serves as a creative platform for social interaction and economic activity, blurring the lines between art and everyday life whilst promoting local engagement and entrepreneurship.[115]

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[112] This quote was taken from a short film posted on the Dorchester_Industries instagram feed on 31 March 2022 by Theaster Gates, explaining the concept of the new Experimental Design Lab.
[113] https://companydrinks.info/ (accessed May 2024)
[114] https://createlondon.org/event/company-movements-deals-and-drinks/ (accessed May 2024)
[115] Böhm, K., & Pope, M. (Eds.). *Company: Movements, Deals and Drinks.* Jap Sam Books, 2020.

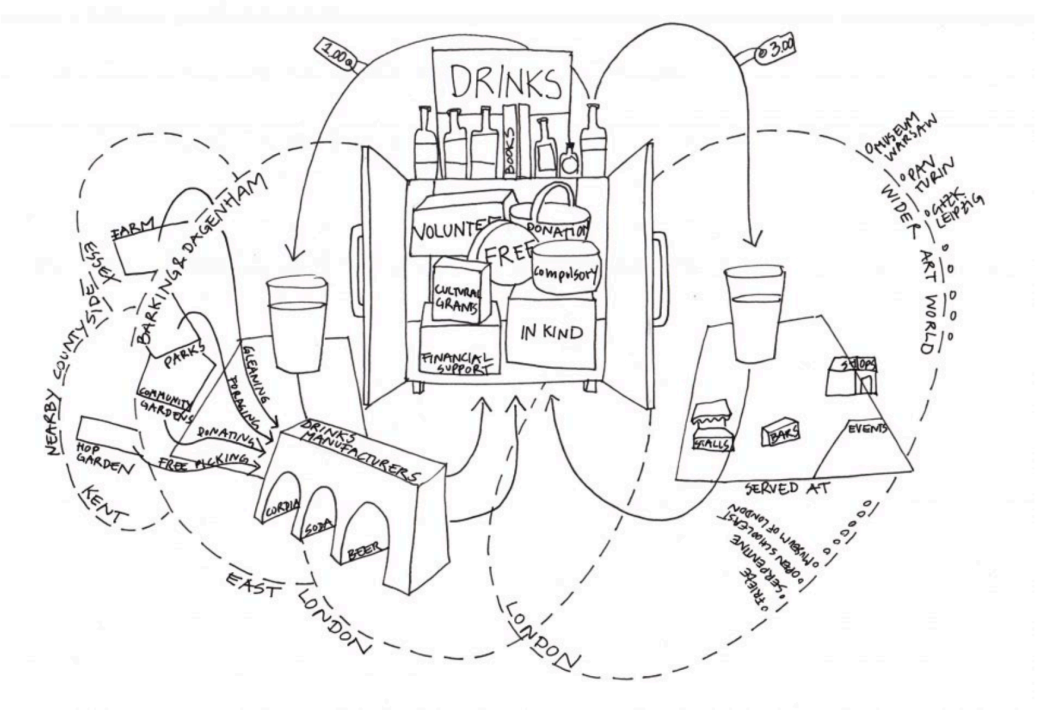

Fig. 2.19 1/18 Company Drinks explained. Drawing by Kathrin Böhm[116]

COMPANY DRINKS SET OF VALUES

- Be inclusive, our space and workshops are accessible to all, and we welcome everyone.
- Be transparent, we are open and visible with the inner workings of how we run things.
- Be anti – oppression, we are supportive of all marginalised groups, whether this affects race, age, gender or ability.
- Give more than we take – we want people to leave us with more than they came to us with, this could be knowledge, food, drink or social interaction.
- We are all teachers and learners – and respect everyone's knowledge.
- Being flexible – to change, we want to learn and grow as a community company and are open to changes to help us grow.
- Promote positive community collaboration – we want people to work together collaboratively and in supportive environments.
- Sharing healthy food and growing knowledge, giving people information and hand-on opportunities for healthier food choices.
- Practice an economy that cares about the well-being of our minds, bodies and planet.

Last reviewed 03 December 2020[117]

[116] https://companydrinks.info/about/ (accessed May 2024)
[117] Ibid.

Böhm's work was recently included as part of '*Economics the Blockbuster – It's not Business as Usual'*[118]*,* an exhibition curated by the Whitworth Art Gallery. A group exhibition about art, economy and community action, it brought together ten art projects by artists, collectives and art organisations that demonstrate art as real-world economic systems. Together they proposed new ways of 'doing business', driven by the needs and concerns of the communities in which they are created.

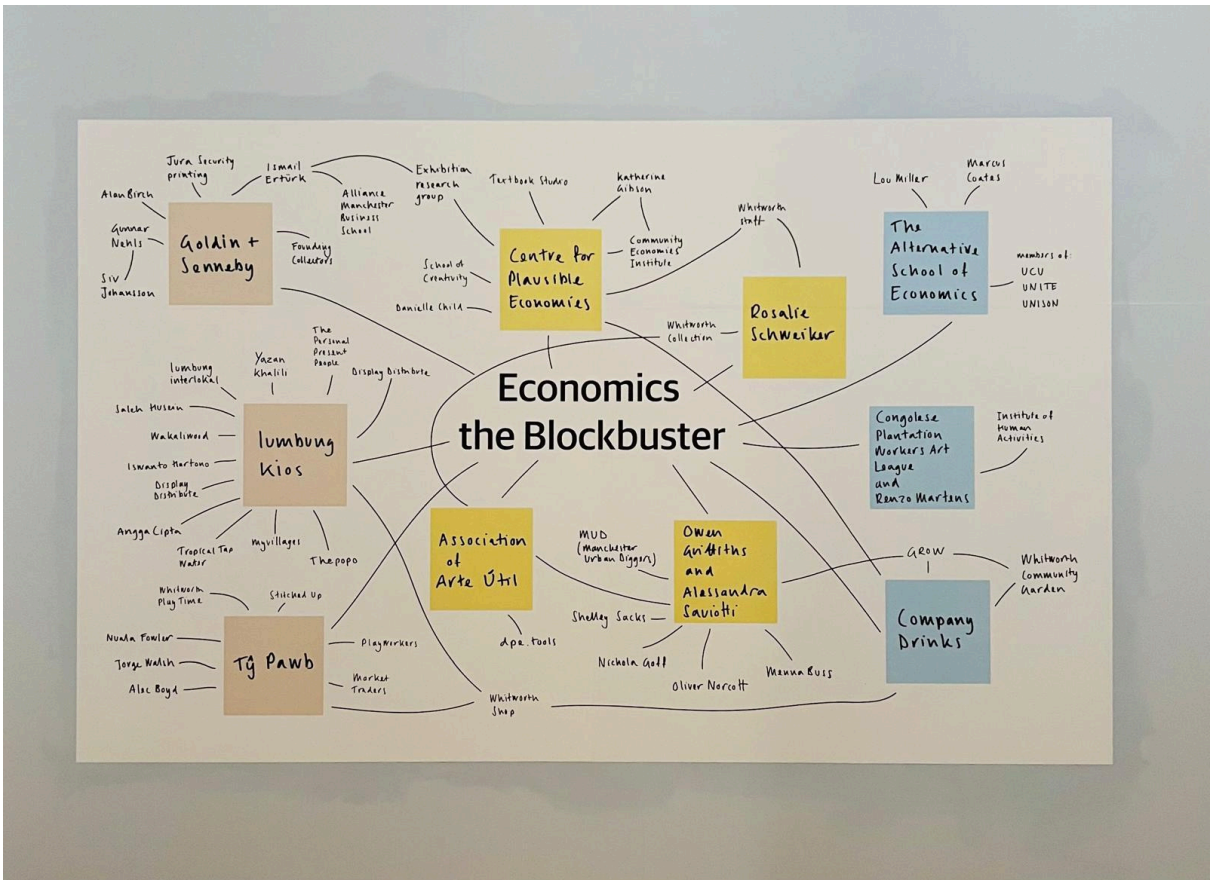

Fig. 2.20 A mind map of creative (social) practices included in the exhibition, '*Economics the Blockbuster – It's not Business as Usual'* (Sept 2023)

I attended a workshop around IDT (Interdependent Art Worlds), a manifesto developed to outline a set of principles that guide more equitable art world practices. The seven 'Penfold Principles' offer an ethical and practical compass for navigating Governance, Artworld(s), Aesthetics, Economy, Ecologies, Community and Politics. Böhm and Kuba Szreder (Centre

[118] An exhibition by The Whitworth, part of Manchester International Festival MIF 23 (30 June – 22 October 2023). The exhibition presented work by: Association de Arte Útil, Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) and Renzo Martens, Company Drinks, Goldin+Senneby, Kathrin Böhm and Kuba Szreder (Centre for Plausible Economies), lumbung Kios, Owen Griffiths and Alessandra Saviotti, Rosalie Schweiker, The Alternative School of Economics (Ruth Beale and Amy Feneck) and Tŷ Pawb.

for Plausible Economies) led a discussion along with a Redrawing Session on how to use these principles, which I participated in.

Fig. 2.21 Kathrin Bohm and Kuba Szreder (Centre for Plausible Economies) at The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (Sept 2023)

Another contributing creative enterprise in the exhibition was Tŷ Pawb, a multi-award winning, cultural community resource, bringing together arts and markets within the same footprint. This coexistence celebrates the significance of markets within Wrexham's cultural heritage and identity. Tŷ Pawb offers space for dialogue around subjects including social and civic issues, the environment, health, cultural identity, sustainability and education and presents a contemporary programme of welcoming and inclusive exhibitions, socially engaged projects and live performance. The programme emphasises skills and craft, working with emerging and established artists from all backgrounds.

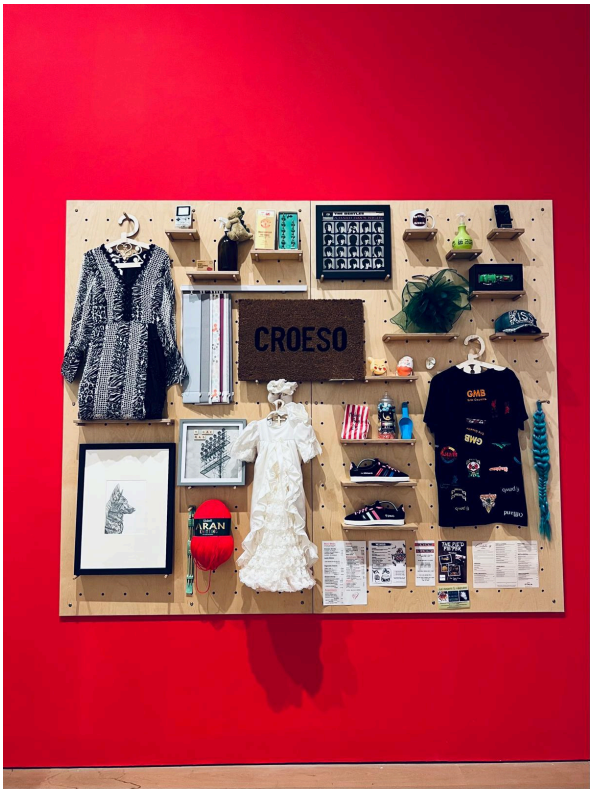

Fig. 2.22 Tŷ Pawb installation as part of '*Economics the Blockbuster – It's not Business as Usual'* (Sept 2023)

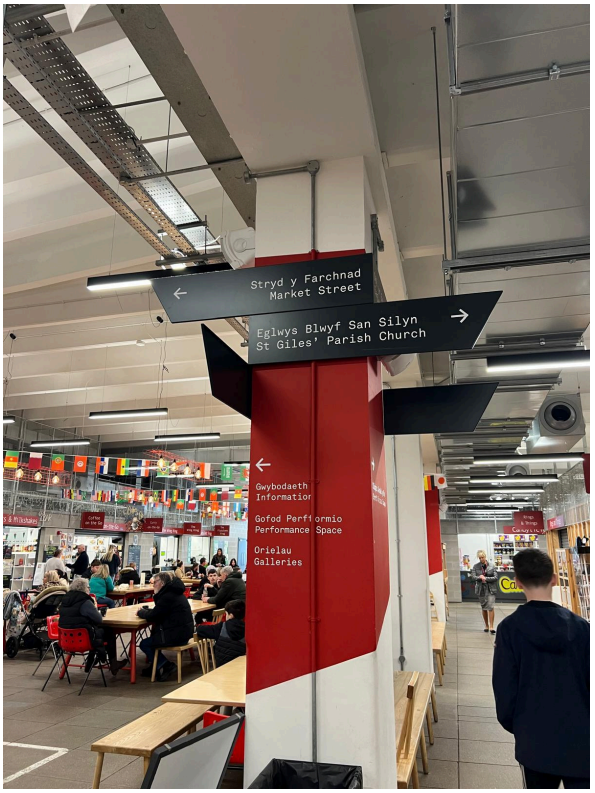

Fig. 2.23 Image inside Tŷ Pawb, Wrexham (April 2023)

There is a strong connection between the curatorial direction of Blockbuster Economics, Documenta 15[119] and the Arte Útil[120] in which the principles of proposing new uses for art within society, use artistic thinking to challenge the field within which it operates. The Whitworth promotes itself as a useful museum and responding to current urgent issues are the foundation of the museum's practice. Decentralising Political Economies or DPE[121] is a shared and open-source research platform developed as a partnership between The Whitworth (The University of Manchester, UK), The Institute of Art and Technology at Liverpool John Moores University's School of Art and Design (Liverpool, UK) and The Association of Arte Útil. The project aims to produce a series of online and offline toolkits by

[119] ruangrupa is the Artistic Direction of the fifteenth edition of documenta. The Jakarta-based artists' collective has built the foundation of their documenta fifteen on the core values and ideas of lumbung (Indonesian term for a communal rice barn). lumbung as an artistic and economic model is rooted in principles such as collectivity, communal resource sharing, and equal allocation, and is embodied in all parts of the collaboration and the exhibition.
[120] https://www.arte-util.org/about/colophon/ (accessed January 2024)
[121] https://dpe.tools/info (accessed January 2024)

which both the physical (and virtual) Office of Useful Art and the Archive of The Association of Arte Útil can be used as resources for social, economic and political change through the uses of art.

As this sub-section has explored the dynamic interplay between Creative Civic Engagement and Creative Enterprise, emphasising the DIY and maker cultures' roles in community development and social innovation. It highlighted how individuals and groups leverage creativity to generate income, community action, and develop sustainable enterprises through product design, creative services, and event organisation. By examining examples like Company Drinks and Rebuild Foundation, the chapter demonstrated how local initiatives could address social issues and enhance economic opportunities, all whilst reinforcing community ties.

The analysis underscored the importance of creative enterprises in supporting community projects and emphasised innovative business models that align with local values and needs. The chapter also identified the challenges and opportunities inherent in these endeavours, providing practical insights for those pursuing similar ventures. Ultimately, it affirmed the transformative potential of creative enterprise as a catalyst for community empowerment and social change, offering a compelling case for integrating artistic and entrepreneurial practices into local development strategies.

Creative Commons

This section, Creative Commons, delves into the principles and practices of collective management, action, and the creation of shared spaces for conversation, collaboration, and co-production. It explores how these elements contribute to building an ecology of sustainable infrastructures and the testing of new ideas. At the heart of commoning processes are inclusivity and diversity, ensuring that all voices are represented and valued. I also examine the role of self-organised collectives in convening and placemaking, highlighting their influence on policy-making and research. It features case studies from initiatives like City Lab, Civic Lab, Civic Square, and Urban Rooms, illustrating how these collectives prioritise community engagement and contribute to urban regeneration. Through these examples, the chapter provides insights into the complexities and potential of commoning in contemporary urban contexts.

Urban Commons

The term *urban commons* refers to resources in urban areas that are shared and collectively managed by a community. These can include physical spaces like parks, gardens, and community centres, as well as digital and cultural resources. The concept is rooted in the idea that certain resources should be accessible to all members of a community, enabling collaboration, social interaction, and sustainable management. Urban commons are constituted by 3 elements: A pool of common resources, a community that uses and reproduces these resources, and a set of values, protocols and norms for collaboration, sharing and care that the community agrees upon.[122]

Collective Management: Communities or groups manage the resources collaboratively, often through participatory decision-making processes.

- Accessibility and Inclusivity: These resources are intended to be accessible to all members of the community, promoting inclusivity and equity.
- Sustainability: The focus is on sustainable use and preservation of resources for future generations.

Commons are not only about governance, but also about relationships[123]. Researchers exploring this concept include Dr. Torange Khonsari who explores the relationship between

[122] Urban Commons Research Collective, *Urban Commons Handbook*. DPR BARCELONA, 2022. p.18
[123] Ibid. p.19

the state and civil society in city making and how the physical wealth produced can be shared as a valuable and communal resource. In a recent Ted Talk, Khonsari discusses social inequalities, *'The Commons are what we hold as our wealth, our common wealth, be it land, be it natural resources, be it even money or knowledge or culture. So these are resources, and how do we design systems around which we can share equally, share these resources, manage them, use them and make decisions about them?*'[124]

'The Urban Commons Handbook' has provided me with inspiration in the later stages of this PhD research and the design of the CCE Framework. Produced by the Urban Commons Research Collective, led by the University of Sheffield, the Handbook presents a framework under seven themes that characterise the urban commons in their multiplicity and diversity: Economies, Ecologies, Infrastructures, Knowledge, Socialities, Localities and Governance.[125]

In order to illustrate and explain the themes, they are presented through a definition and then through a case study, as urban commons are *always situated and in-the-making*. One such case study is **R-Urban**, an innovative urban regeneration initiative designed to demonstrate sustainable living practices within city environments. It was developed by the architecture and design collective Public Works, in collaboration with atelier d'architecture autogérée (aaa) who are a member of the Urban Commons Research Collective. The project aims to create a network of locally managed facilities that enable urban residents to engage in sustainable practices, such as urban agriculture, recycling, and eco-construction.[126]

The concept behind R-Urban revolves around the idea of urban commons, where resources are collectively managed and utilised to benefit the community. By promoting self-sufficiency and resilience, the initiative seeks to address the environmental and social challenges faced by urban areas. Key components of R-Urban include the establishment of community hubs that support activities like composting, rainwater harvesting, and the creation of green spaces.

Public Works, a London-based collective, brings its expertise in participatory design and community engagement to the project. Their approach emphasises collaboration with local residents to co-create spaces that reflect the community's needs and aspirations.

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[124] Khonsari.T. (2019, May 16). *Harnessing The Power Of The Civic Commons* | TEDxTottenham [Video]. YouTube.
[125] Urban Commons Research Collective, *Urban Commons Handbook.* DPR BARCELONA, 2022. p.25
[126] Petrescu, D., Petcou, C., & Baibarac, C. *Co-producing commons-based resilience: lessons from R-Urban. Building Research & Information,* 44(7), 717-736, 2016.

Meanwhile, aaa, under the leadership of Doina Petrescu, contributes its extensive experience in ecological and self-managed architectural projects. aaa's work focuses on empowering communities to take an active role in shaping their urban environment, modelling a sense of ownership and collective responsibility.

R-Urban's pilot projects in France, such as the AgroCité and Recyclab hubs, serve as exemplary models of how urban commons can be effectively integrated into city life. These projects not only provide practical benefits, such as fresh produce and recycled materials but also create opportunities for social interaction and skill-sharing amongst residents.
In summary, R-Urban, through the collaboration of Public Works and aaa, demonstrates the potential of urban commons to transform cities into more sustainable and resilient communities. By integrating ecological practices into everyday urban life, R-Urban offers a scalable model for other cities looking to enhance their sustainability and community engagement. (See Appendix P2.4 for a summary of R-Urban's practice)

Civic Square

Civic Square is a pioneering initiative in Ladywood, Birmingham, focusing on creating neighbourhood-scale civic infrastructure to support social and ecological transitions. The project emphasises the role of urban commons and civic engagement, advocating for the community-led design, ownership, and governance of local spaces. Their work revolves around three main components: the Neighbourhood Doughnut, which provides a framework for creating ecologically sustainable and socially equitable neighbourhoods; Neighbourhood Transitions, demonstrating practical carbon, energy, and ecological transitions in the built environment; and the Neighbourhood Public Square, which democratises access to spaces, tools, and resources, embedding a collective and regenerative transition.

Civic Square's approach underscores the importance of participatory, systemic solutions for climate resilience and urban transformation, engaging residents in meaningful and tangible ways. Civic Square is generously working with partners, such as WeCanMake and The Portland Inn Project to deliver workshop programmes and pop-up trade schools at festivals, which we recently experienced at Timber Festival 2024. With a packed workshop programme, demonstrations, talks and resources, 'Here is Hope' schedule provided inspiration, advocacy and an opportunity to build a support network for participatory placemaking.

Fig. 2.24 - 2.27 Images taken at the Here is Hope Trade School at Timber Festival, Derbyshire in July 2024 (image credit: Richard Tymon)

Creative Civic Labs

Liverpool City Lab, led by John Byrne, focuses on harnessing art's potential to facilitate civic engagement and social responsibility within urban and creative commons. The Lab serves as a space for sharing knowledge and resources, promoting student engagement and education. It aims to build new forms of citizenship through creativity, encouraging the re-imagination of architecture, art, design, fashion, and urbanism.[127] The Lab's research explores hybrid and transdisciplinary practices, seeking to impact the social, political, economic, and cultural infrastructure of the city positively. By engaging with various stakeholders, including students, the City Lab strives to create sustainable and real-world solutions that enhance the urban experience and contribute to a more inclusive society. City Lab currently has five key areas of research activity including architecture, city planning, policy, urban design, and history.

Byrne has been collaborating with Whitworth Art Gallery and the Association of Arte Util on the development of the project/platform 'Decentralizing Political Economies' (referenced earlier in the Artists & Economy example) which will launch in the autumn of 2020.Via The City Lab, and The Decentralizing Political Economies research platform, Byrne is committed to growing and developing the Association of Arte Útil network as a worldwide constituency of artists, designers, activists, and makers who wish to explore ways in which we can use art as a ground-up tool for imagining ourselves otherwise.[128]

Another University-based Lab to briefly reference is CivicLAB, based at the University of Derby, that plays a pivotal role in civic engagement within the UNESCO City of Lifelong Learning. Led by Dr. Rhiannon Jones, the lab supports interdisciplinary collaboration amongst academics, creative professionals, and the community, focusing on place-based knowledge generation. CivicLAB aligns with the University's academic themes, particularly in Cultural and Creative Industries, and participates in many of Derby's and Derbyshire's regeneration and civic engagement programmes. Since its establishment in 2020, it has engaged over 7,000 participants through research sessions, projects, and symposiums, promoting civic practice and addressing social issues. Through its conference programme, chaired by Dr. Cara Courage, CivicLAB facilitates collaboration across academia and industry, driving positive change and community capacity building.

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127 https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/research/centres-and-institutes/institute-of-art-and-technology/expertise/city-lab (accessed January 2024)

128 https://www.transartinstitute.org/people/john-byrne (accessed January 2024)

Urban Room

The Urban Room Network comprises individuals and organisations across the UK, including members from arts, planning, architecture, education, heritage, community, and local government sectors. The network promotes best practices in engaging local communities in placemaking, as recommended by the 2013 Farrell Review. The review advocated for Urban Rooms *'Every town and city should have a physical space where people can go to understand, debate and get involved in the past, present and future of where they live, work and play.'*[129]

Established in 2015, following the launch of the first Urban Room in Blackburn, the National Urban Room Network aims to make connections between people and places. It uses creative engagement methods to encourage active participation in urban development discussions. The Network's principles emphasise inclusivity, focusing on public spaces and encouraging the participation of underrepresented groups. It advocates for Urban Rooms to be 'on-site,' located within the areas they serve, '*The purpose of these Urban Rooms is to foster meaningful connections between people and place, using creative methods of engagement to encourage active participation in the future of our buildings, streets and neighbourhoods'.*[130]

The Network collaborates with the Place Alliance[131] and provides resources through its website, including a toolkit for establishing Urban Rooms, which I was involved in designing and curating in 2022. Two notable examples include Sheffield University's Live Works and Urban Room Folkestone. Live Works engages with Sheffield's urban regeneration through exhibitions and projects like the Levelling Up programme, whilst Urban Room Folkestone, led by Diane Dever and Folkestone Fringe, facilitates civic discussions and hosts exhibitions that explore the town's history and contemporary issues. These initiatives exemplify the Urban Room concept by creating spaces for dialogue, learning, and community engagement, highlighting the potential of Urban Rooms to influence positive urban change.

[129] Farrell, T. *The Farrell Review of Architecture + the Built Environment.* Department for Culture, Media & Sport. 2014
[130] https://urbanroomsnetwork.org/ (accessed January 2024)
[131] https://placealliance.org.uk/ (accessed January 2024)

Fig. 2.28 Playful and participatory installation as part of Folkestone Urban Room, for the 2017 Folkestone Triennial, (Image credit: The Decorators 2017)[132]

Summary: Creative (Social) Practice

In conclusion, the integration of creative (social) practices into community and civic engagement has proven to be a powerful catalyst for social change and economic innovation. The exploration of diverse methodologies, from placemaking and activist art to social enterprises and urban commons, has highlighted the transformative potential of these practices. By curating collaboration amongst artists, designers, academics, and local communities, these initiatives challenge conventional norms and create inclusive, human-centred approaches to addressing complex societal issues. The emphasis on collective action, inclusivity, and sustainability underscores the importance of shared spaces and resources in building resilient and equitable communities.

The case studies and examples presented throughout the chapters, such as Project Row Houses, In Situ, and Civic Square, demonstrate how creative (social) practices can serve as a means of empowering communities and facilitating long-term, meaningful engagement. These initiatives illustrate the value of slow, sustained efforts in deepening understanding of

[132] https://the-decorators.net/Urban-Room-Folkestone (accessed May 2024)

local contexts and in building trust amongst residents. By prioritising the process of collaboration over the mere production of art, these projects highlight the role of artists as vital contributors to social and civic life, capable of reimagining economic models and advocating for social justice.

Creative Commons has explored the vital role of collective management and action in the development of inclusive and diverse urban environments. By examining the principles and practices of urban commons, it has highlighted the importance of shared spaces for conversation, collaboration, and co-production. Through the work of initiatives like City Lab, Civic Lab, and Urban Rooms, this section has demonstrated how self-organised collectives can effectively engage in placemaking and influence both policymaking and research.

Ultimately, the convergence of creative (social) practice, civic engagement, and entrepreneurial spirit offers a compelling framework for future community development. By embracing the principles of creative commons, DIY cultures, and the maker movement, these practices encourage experimentation, innovation, and a shared sense of ownership. The examples provided serve as inspiring models for other cities and organisations looking to implement similar strategies for sustainable and inclusive urban development. The ongoing work of these creative practitioners serves as a testament to the power of art and design in shaping not only physical spaces but also the social and cultural fabric of our communities. As we look ahead, it is crucial to continue supporting and expanding these efforts, ensuring that creative (social) practices remain at the forefront of civic and social transformation.

PART 3 - POLICY-MAKING

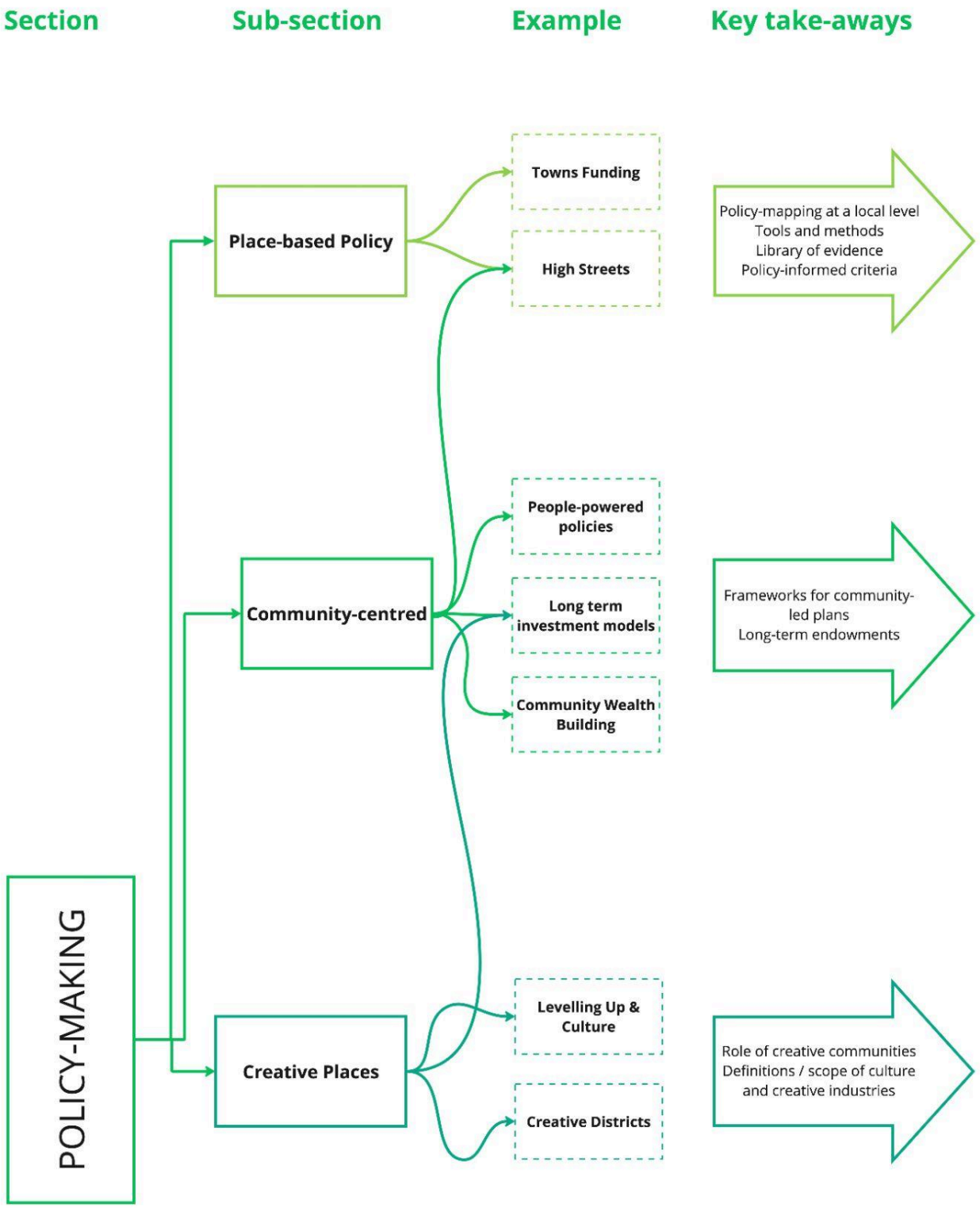

Fig 2.29 Policy-making contextualisation of Creative Civic Engagement (expand)

Introduction: Policy-Making

I have always believed that, to make fundamental change happen, it needs to have informed policy and strategy. And the change needs to be championed by policy-makers, or at least those who are able to influence those who make the strategies and policies. Without being able to provide sufficient evidence or implement demonstrable improvements, then the differences we make are short-term, and not sustainable. Therefore, questioning value for money and what the measures of success are.

In order to understand the political, social, economic and cultural landscape, I actively observe and stay connected with current policy and research trends. I would normally start any research project, business plan or strategy (like many other practitioners) by mapping the strategic objectives of policy makers, investors and funders. With the UK Government's push to devolve decision-making and spending powers to combined and local authorities, alongside the introduction of the 'Levelling Up' agenda, local areas now have increased opportunities to seek support and investment for place-based projects. These funds can be used to implement regeneration and capital programmes that support the recovery of the creative and cultural sectors, whilst also unlocking broader socio-economic benefits for communities.

When considering a city or town as an experimental setting, it is crucial to use effective tools to ensure community inclusion in diverse placemaking projects. Key aspects include creating a supportive civic environment and working conditions that promote collaboration. Embracing the circular economy can guide sustainable development. To ensure that citizens' voices, especially those of young people, are central in decision-making, participatory methods must be prioritised. Deciding implementation at a community or local government level depends on project scale and impact. Additionally, aligning with existing procurement policies or creating new frameworks is essential for successful execution.

In the final section of this chapter, and to position my research and practice within a policy context, I have loosely acknowledged a range of government White papers[133] and Bills which are central to my work as a creative placemaker and creative director. But equally important is understanding the historic practices are inspiring new democratic ways of working and learning from tried and tested models. Who are included in these processes and how can we

[133] White papers are policy documents produced by the UK Government that set out their proposals for future legislation. White Papers are often published as Command Papers and may include a draft version of a Bill that is being planned.

ensure artists and creative sector practitioners are included and considered? And how do we better understand how decisions are made about place*? (planning, landscape, architecture, conservation, engineering) In order to understand how the community can influence, engage in and sometimes lead the decision-making processes.

Place-based policies

Place-based policymaking is a strategic approach that tailors public policies and investments to the specific needs and potential of distinct geographic areas. This approach aligns with the UK's 'Levelling Up' agenda, articulated in the Levelling Up White Paper, which aims to reduce regional disparities and empower local communities. Key initiatives include the Long Term Plan for Towns, Towns Fund, Community Renewal Fund, and Community Ownership Fund, all designed to revitalise local economies and enhance community assets. Additionally, the Northern Powerhouse initiative seeks to boost economic growth in the North of England through investments in infrastructure, education, and innovation.

Key policy timeline - Community & Culture

A policy timeline mapping place-based policies and recent place-based investment has been produced in Fig. 2.30 to illustrate the progression on culture and community in place-based policy-making, which is further explained later in this chapter. I have only included recent investment opportunities that have impacted the work I have initiated and delivered throughout the PhD study.

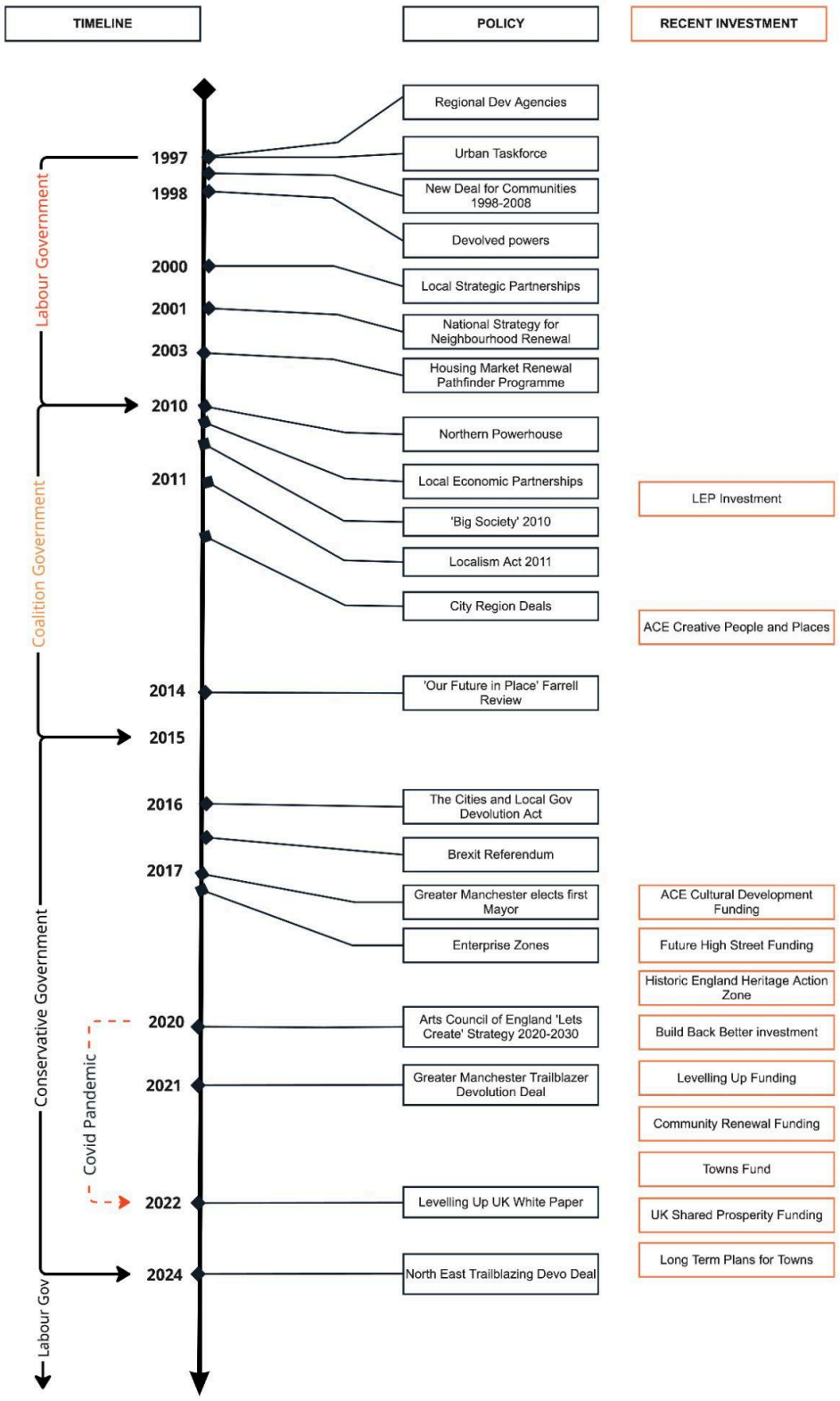

Fig. 2.30 - Timeline mapping various government policies and funding programmes - regeneration (place), culture, and community since 1997[134] (expand)

[134] Data sources include Institute for Government, Arts Council of England and Turley - links in Bibliography.

Towns-based Funding

Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund and Long Term Plan for Towns are all recent investment opportunities, supported by the Levelling Up agenda, to invest in town centres. In September 2023, the Conservative Government announced their 'Long-Term Plan for Towns' programme, a core part of the government's levelling-up programme, which identified 55 towns across the country, (including Oldham where my creative practice has been delivering Urban Room engagement programme) that will benefit from up to £20m 'endowment style' funding for investment in local priorities over a 10-year period. The UK's long-term policy for towns focuses on revitalising and supporting local economies, infrastructure, and communities. Central to this strategy is the 'Levelling Up' agenda[135], which aims to reduce regional inequalities and boost economic opportunities across the country. Key initiatives include:

1. **Investment in Infrastructure**: Enhancing transportation links, digital connectivity, and sustainable energy solutions to improve accessibility and attract businesses.
2. **Economic Support**: Providing grants and loans to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), cultivating innovation hubs, and supporting high street regeneration to stimulate local economies.
3. **Housing and Urban Development**: Building affordable homes and upgrading existing housing stock to ensure adequate living conditions and support population growth.
4. **Community and Culture**: Funding for local cultural projects, community centres, and green spaces to enhance quality of life and nurture social cohesion.

These initiatives collectively aim to create thriving, resilient towns that are well-equipped to meet future challenges. The benefits of these long-term plans include significant economic growth through improved infrastructure and business support, which stimulate local economic activity and job creation. They also reduce inequality by directing targeted investments to bridge the gap between affluent and less prosperous areas. These plans enhance the quality of life by improving housing, cultural projects, and community services, contributing to healthier and more vibrant communities. Furthermore, they emphasise sustainability, ensuring environmental preservation alongside economic progress, promoting a balanced and responsible approach to development.

[135] At the time of writing this, the UK has a new Labour Government and the term Levelling Up has since been removed from the title of the Department of Housing, Communities and (now) Local Government. It is still unclear what the future of the term Levelling Up will be defined as or even used.

High Street

A particular focus has been on high streets, concentrating on improvements to signage, way-finding, public realm and vacant shop units. During my PhD journey, my focus had moved from working in neighbourhoods to the town centre, and the high street in particular in Blackburn. Reading Julian Dobson's *'How to Save Our Town Centres: A Radical Agenda for the Future of High Streets'* was of particular inspiration and provided important context in my work in 2012. Based at Sheffield Hallam University, Dobson has also recently established a High Street Research Network.[136] The project aims to build a network to maximise knowledge around the opportunities and challenges high streets and town centres present, and mobilise that knowledge to support universities' civic impact and net zero ambitions.

The High Streets Task Force (HSTF)[137] is an alliance of placemaking experts working to redefine the high street. Run by the Institute of Place Management on behalf of the government, the Task Force brings together a range of expert organisations on reinventing and restructuring places. It provides guidance, tools and skills to help communities, partnerships and local government transform their high streets. The Task Force was commissioned by the government in 2019 as part of its Plan for the High Street and set-up to strengthen local leadership in high streets and town centres in England.

Power to Change[138] has produced a report 'Take Back the High Street'[139] setting out the case for the greater involvement of communities in the oversight and revitalisation of their high streets. They claim that over three decades of decline is due to the growth of out-of-town retail, the rise of megastores, and more recently a seismic shift towards online shopping, leaving the high street vulnerable. With an over reliance on retail, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the decline and claims we are perilously close to losing these community spaces that are vital to local economies, community cohesion, civic pride, cultural identity, and local distinctiveness.

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[136] For more information: https://www.shu.ac.uk/centre-regional-economic-social-research/projects/all-projects/high-streets-research-network (accessed May 2024)
[137] For more information and access to the resource library: https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/ (accessed January 2024)
[138] Power to Change was set up in 2015 with a £150m endowment from The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF) and was due to close in 2022. Responding to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a realisation that community businesses needed us more than ever. Power to Change received a further £20m from NLCF which enabled us to set out a new five-year strategy to continue supporting the sector. https://www.powertochange.org.uk/ (accessed January 2024)
[139] 'Community-powered high streets: how community businesses will build town centres fit for the future' Power to Change, May 2023.

Place-based policies are crucial for sustaining creative civic engagement and building sustainable communities. By tailoring public policies and investments to the unique needs of specific areas, these policies help revitalise local economies and enhance community assets. Initiatives like the High Streets Task Force and local government support focus on transforming high streets and town centres, promoting economic growth, and reducing inequalities. Through investments in infrastructure, housing, and cultural projects, these strategies improve the quality of life and ensure sustainable development. This approach empowers local communities, advocates inclusivity and collaboration, essential for addressing long-standing social and economic challenges.

Community-centred strategies and approaches

Policy mapping is a strategic process used to analyse and visualise the interplay of various policies, stakeholders, and community needs within a specific geographical area. This approach facilitates the identification of gaps, overlaps, and synergies in policy implementation, enabling more coherent and effective decision-making. In the UK, community-led policy mapping has become increasingly significant, reflecting a shift towards empowering local communities to take active roles in shaping their futures. This introduction will explore several key initiatives and concepts that embody this trend: Localism/The Big Society, the Voluntary/Third Sector, Community-led Housing, Community Asset Transfer, Social Prescribing, and Community Wealth Building, notably through the Preston Model.

People-powered policies

The Localism Act of 2011 and the Big Society agenda marked significant milestones in the UK's move towards decentralising power from central government to local communities. Localism encourages local authorities and communities to have greater control over planning, housing, and public services, creating an environment where decisions are made closer to the people they affect. The Big Society aimed to empower communities, encouraging volunteerism and civic engagement to solve local problems collaboratively. The shift in policy aimed to support the principle that local people are best placed to understand and address their own needs. With a new Labour Government, there is now a drive for the Community Power Act,[140] advocated by Locality, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and Power to Change, to name a few.

Community-led housing projects empower local residents to play a direct role in addressing housing needs. These initiatives often involve cooperatives, community land trusts, and self-build schemes. By prioritising affordability, sustainability, and local control, community-led housing can enhance the quality and availability of housing, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of the community.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) enables local authorities to transfer the ownership or management of public assets, such as libraries, community centres, and parks, to community organisations. This process not only preserves valuable local resources but also supports community engagement and empowerment by giving residents a stake in their local infrastructure. An example of a solution for creative industries is Creative Land Trust, a

[140] An emerging campaign for a renewed policy to decentralise power to communities. https://www.right-here.org/why-a-community-power-act/ (accessed July 2024)

London-based charity who secure affordable workspace that otherwise wouldn't exist for artists and makers, and make it available for studio providers to rent. Another example is Midsteeple Quarter in Dumfries, Scotland (further information provided in Appendix P2.7).

And finally, social prescribing is an innovative approach that connects individuals to non-clinical services within the community to improve their health and well-being. This might include activities like volunteering, arts participation, or joining social clubs. By addressing social determinants of health, social prescribing can reduce pressure on medical services and enhance community cohesion. The role of art and creativity in social prescribing, and creative health in general, is a growing area for policy-makers, particularly those working in the combined authorities. My work has helped evaluate the Greater Manchester creative health programme, and supported in securing £2m investment for the next three years of place-based action-research, implementing innovative system changes through pilot projects.

Long-term investment models

In October 2020, Power to Change published a paper to explore the emerging concept of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), defined as bodies which provide opportunities for community stakeholders to participate in operational and strategic decision-making for their neighbourhoods. The paper provides a really useful context and history of the concept of community participation and CIDs, the policy landscape and the mechanisms that support participation. Terms are defined and the paper considers various potential models for CIDs using existing and new structures.

The pilot programme for Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) has since been implemented and tested in seven locations in England. The aim of this pilot work is to explore exactly what a CID might be when the theory is translated into practice, how CIDs develop and operate, how they overcome barriers and challenges, and how the idea of CIDs fits within the national policy context. A report was published in March 2023 and summarises emerging learning from the first phase of the CID programme, and outlines key questions for the next phase of research.

Big Local[141] is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and managed by Local Trust and has provided at least £1m to each of 150 communities in England. Designed from the

[141] https://localtrust.org.uk/big-local/about-big-local/ (accessed January 2024)

outset to be radically different from other funding programmes, at the heart of Big Local is a vision of empowered, resilient, dynamic, asset-rich communities making their own decisions on what is best for their area. In contrast to conventional top down, time-limited, project-led funding, the funding awarded to each Big Local area was provided on the basis that it can be spent over 10-15 years at the communities' own chosen pace, and on their own plans and priorities.

Big Local was established with a number of core key features that make it different from other programmes:

- Long term – providing certainty and continuity, over 10-15 years
- Resident-led – working directly with individuals living, working, studying and playing in areas rather than through organisations; building confidence and capacity amongst those wanting to make a difference to their community and their local area
- Non-prescriptive – enabling residents to spend on their own terms and in their own time, on the projects they judge to be most important to them
- Patient and non-judgemental – giving communities the time and opportunity to learn, make mistakes, resolve disagreements and overcome challenges for themselves, on their way to achieving their ambitions
- Accompanied by flexible and responsive support – to help communities to build the confidence and capability to make the most of the opportunities available to them, whilst not constraining their own ambition and initiative.

Also delivered by Big Local was 'Creative Civic Change', an experimental funding programme to support 15 communities across England to shape, lead and commission arts and creative interventions, to make positive social change where they lived. Fig. 2.31 provides an accessible visual illustration of the programme's objectives, key strands and challenges. This illustration has been used as a tool in the design of the CCE Framework and I will reflect on how we build in this visual data sharing.

Fig. 2.31 Creative Civic Change poster[142]

[142] https://localtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CCC-Poster.pdf (accessed January 2024)

Community Wealth Building

A policy and initiative championed by CLES, Community Wealth Building (CWB)[143] is defined as '*an approach to economic development that changes the way that our economies function, retaining more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people*'[144] and offers an opportunity for local people to take back control, to ensure that the benefits of local growth are invested in their local areas, are used to support investment in productive economic activities and that people and their local institutions can work together on an agenda of shared benefit. Whilst the principles of community wealth building can be applied in any city or locality, it is important to acknowledge that because the context of a place is very different across areas, issues, politics, resources and opportunities, the principles will differ from place to place.

The Preston Model[145] is a pioneering example of Community Wealth Building, focusing on harnessing local resources to generate economic prosperity. By redirecting public spending towards local businesses and cooperatives, and encouraging anchor institutions (such as hospitals and universities) to procure locally, the Preston Model demonstrates inclusive economic growth. This approach not only supports local enterprises but also ensures that wealth generated within the community stays within the community, promoting long-term sustainability.

In summary, the initiatives outlined above represent a broad spectrum of community-led approaches that form the foundation of contemporary policy mapping in the UK. By placing communities at the heart of decision-making, these strategies aim to build resilient, empowered, and sustainable localities. Through comprehensive policy mapping, stakeholders can better understand and navigate the complex landscape of local governance, ensuring that policies are effectively aligned with community needs and aspirations.

[143] CWB is led by CLES, the is the national organisation for local economies https://cles.org.uk/community-wealth-building/what-is-community-wealth-building/ (accessed February 2024)
[144] https://cles.org.uk/the-community-wealth-building-centre-of-excellence/ (accessed February 2024)

[145] https://www.preston.gov.uk/article/1339/What-is-Preston-Model (accessed February 2024)

Creative Places

The section 'Creative Places' explores the concept of cultural democracy and its significance in place-based policy-making. Cultural democracy emphasises the coexistence of diverse cultural traditions and the need to avoid the dominance of any single 'official culture.' It advocates for a cultural life in which everyone can freely participate and asserts that cultural development should be guided by democratic principles. This aligns with the goals of initiatives like ‘Levelling Up for Culture’, which aim to promote inclusive cultural engagement and support the regeneration of communities through creative districts and culture-led projects. By democratising access to cultural resources and decision-making, these strategies seek to empower communities and ensure that cultural development reflects the diverse voices and needs of the population.

Levelling Up & Culture

In a recent report published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, ‘*Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda’,* states cultural placemaking refers to the role of arts, culture and heritage in shaping the places where we live. It quotes, ‘*Place-based approaches to culture can be locally-led and engaging, deliver direct and indirect benefits and support education, pride in place, health and wellbeing, and therefore support the government deliver on the missions set out in its Levelling Up agenda.*’[146]

The report highlights a number of approaches. The first is, in order to achieve cultural placemaking is to take a people-based approach to cultural policy. They have found evidence of persistently poor levels of social mobility and inclusivity within the cultural sector, as well as the ongoing national skills shortage across the creative industries. These issues have been impacted by wide issues including poor working conditions and detrimental changes to education policy. And secondly, the report also examines the government’s efforts to support local decision-making, recommending a continuation of the UK Government and Arts Council England’s ‘cultural compacts’[147] initiative, which aims to bring together local cross-sector stakeholders in pilot areas to enable better engagement and strategic planning.

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[146] *Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda*, DCMS 2022
[147] Arts Council of England, Review of Culture Compacts - https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/review-cultural-compacts-initiative (accessed July 2024)

Arts Council England's policy on cultural democracy and Levelling Up for Culture focuses on making high-quality cultural experiences accessible to all, particularly in areas with historically low cultural investment and engagement, in line with the UK's broader 'Levelling Up' agenda, which aims to address regional disparities.

Let's Create starts with a 10-year strategy describing the change they want to see. The Arts Council emphasises the importance of cultural democracy, aiming to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in and contribute to cultural life. This involves supporting local communities in co-creating cultural activities and recognizing diverse cultural expressions. The initiative encourages a bottom-up approach, where local communities have a say in cultural funding and projects, ensuring that cultural activities reflect their unique identities and needs. This is the main objective of the Creative People and Places programme.

The Arts Council has identified 109 'Levelling Up for Culture Places', focusing additional resources and support on these areas to redress past imbalances in cultural funding. The aim is to boost local cultural infrastructure, enhance cultural opportunities, and develop economic growth through culture. The Council plans to increase its investment in these places by 95% during the 2023–26 period, significantly expanding the number of supported cultural organisations and projects outside London.

The policy also integrates with broader government efforts, such as the Levelling Up Fund and partnerships with local authorities, to ensure that cultural investment contributes to wider social, economic, and cultural benefits. Bristow quotes in his article,

> '*The power of local and national alignment is critical. Local government and the Arts Council mutually recognise the value of their partnership. The LGA and the Arts Council have agreed a Shared Statement of Purpose which sets out the differing but complementary contributions that each bring to the health of the cultural sector. The task ahead is to adapt that partnership within the new context being shaped by devolution. How can we rewire the system so that the national, the regional and the local work in partnership to deliver better outcomes in more places?*'[148]

148 https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/culture-and-devolution-series-think-pieces/arts-council (accessed June 2024)

Heritage democracy and placemaking

Heritage is integral to creative placemaking. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) seeks a democratic approach to funding, aiming for long-term investments in local heritage. The strategy 'Heritage 2033' focuses on four principles: saving heritage, protecting the environment, inclusion and participation, and organisational sustainability. NLHF plans to invest in communities and build partnerships with governments and local authorities. This approach ensures broader benefits for people, places, and the natural environment, with decisions informed by local knowledge from regional committees.

Creative Districts

Creative districts have evolved significantly over time, becoming central to urban regeneration and cultural policy. Initially, creative districts emerged in response to the need for affordable spaces where artists and cultural practitioners could live and work, often revitalising derelict urban areas. These districts harnessed the power of culture to drive economic growth and community engagement, leading to the development of Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZs). CEZs were formalised to support creative industries through targeted investment, infrastructure development, and policy support, creating an environment conducive to innovation and collaboration.

Building on the success of CEZs, the concept of Creative Improvement Districts (CIDs) has been introduced, developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority that I have been working on and informing the design of the strategy and implementation plan[149]. CIDs focus on broader, more integrated cultural strategies that encompass not only economic but also social and environmental dimensions[150]. These districts aim to democratise cultural participation, ensure sustainable development, and enhance the quality of life for all residents by embedding cultural activities into the fabric of urban planning and community development.

An example of an entrepreneurial and partnership model which is growing is Creative Land Trust[151] was founded by the Mayor of London, Arts Council England, Bloomberg Philanthropies and Outset Contemporary Art Fund. The London-based charity has been developed with public and private sector partners and stakeholders, including developers,

[149] I discuss this further in the Conclusion chapter, and how my creative practice and case studies have informed the concept of the GM Creative Improvement District model.
[150] CLES, *Post-Covid recovery through culture*, 2020
[151] https://creativelandtrust.org/ (accessed March 2024)

local authorities, artists and affordable workspace providers, in response to the significant pressures creative practitioners face.

Creative Land Trust was established to secure long term, affordable space for artists and creatives, ensuring a vibrant and prosperous future for this critical industry, enriching communities and strengthening London. Their portfolio of properties are:

- Using mixed-use developments to sustain existing creative communities and strengthen reputations for culture led regeneration.
- Restoring at-risk buildings to demonstrate how investment in creative workspace can revitalise buildings, businesses, and communities.
- Delivering early intervention to embed culture and creativity right to the heart of their developments and communities.

Whilst GM's CID (emerging) model focuses on facilitating a vibrant cultural and creative sector as a key driver for economic and social regeneration, the model emphasises collaboration between public, private, and community stakeholders to develop creative spaces and support local artists and cultural enterprises. CID's have been piloted in Wigan, Stockport and Rochdale, have now set out ambitious plans to build a CID in their areas: Rochdale Council recently secured £4.2 million[152] and Stockport Council secured £2.6 million to establish their CIDs.

By integrating cultural strategies into broader urban planning and economic development initiatives, the CID model seeks to position Greater Manchester as a hub for innovation and creativity, supporting post-COVID recovery through culture-led regeneration. This approach not only bolsters the local economy but also enriches the cultural life of the community, ensuring diverse cultural expressions are nurtured and accessible to all.

Summary: Policy-Making

The Policy Making chapter explores the significant role of cultural devolution in empowering local communities and facilitating creative civic engagement. It highlights the impact of combined authorities and initiatives like Creative Improvement Districts (CIDs) in driving cultural and economic regeneration. These strategies emphasise the importance of cultural democracy, advocating for diverse cultural participation and community-led decision-making in placemaking.

[152] The third case study in this thesis presents the outcome of the Rochdale CID development plan that my creative practice, Local, was commissioned to deliver in 2022-2023.

The chapter discusses how policies like the Levelling Up agenda and the support of local governments, through frameworks such as the Community Wealth Building, are crucial for nurturing the future of the creative community sector. This sector plays a pivotal role in sustaining and enhancing local engagement and economic growth. Tools and research focused on creative civic engagement demonstrate the value of community-powered policymaking, providing evidence to influence the new Labour Government towards more inclusive and participatory approaches.

The importance of sustaining and nurturing the creative sector is underscored, as it is essential for building resilient, vibrant communities. The sub-section also references specific models like Greater Manchester's CID, which exemplifies how cultural strategies can be integrated into urban planning to support post-COVID recovery and ensure sustainable development. The discussions underscore the need for long-term investment in cultural infrastructure to develop innovation, inclusivity, and economic prosperity in local communities.

CHAPTER 2: CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the principles, concepts, and practices underlying place-based creative engagement, situating my work within a broader socio-political and theoretical context. Building on the key terms introduced in Chapter 1, the opening section provided an expanded theoretical framing of *Creative Civic Engagement*, grounding the thesis in the concepts of social art practice, culture-led regeneration, creative placemaking, and cultural democracy.

Through the three lenses - Place-based, Creative Practice, and Policy-making - this chapter explored local and global case studies, such as Civic Square and Project Row Houses, illustrating how local distinctiveness, collective management, and creative collaboration nurture sustainable urban futures. The examination of policy and strategy highlighted the need for robust creative civic engagement to respond to and influence shifting investment agendas. The uncertainty created by the new Labour Government replacing the language of 'Levelling Up' further underscores the importance of agility and of prioritising values over policy labels.

The key themes identified - including the significance of place, the autonomy of space, and the role of creative commons, directly inform the design of the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework introduced in Chapter 3. Its three components - *CCE SYSTEMS*, *CCE LOGIC*, and the *CCE PLAYBOOK* - integrate the insights gained here.

The place-based approaches emphasise flexibility and responsiveness to local contexts, reflected in the CCE SYSTEMS model of observation, experimentation, and iteration. The principles of radical co-creation and regenerative practices evident in the case studies are embedded in the CCE LOGIC, ensuring sustainability and equity. Finally, the ethical and community-oriented strategies discussed here shape the CCE PLAYBOOK, grounding it in core values and providing practitioners with a guide to navigating the complexities of civic engagement.

In summary, this chapter has established the theoretical foundation and contextual framework for the CCE Framework, which is developed and tested in the subsequent chapters. Together, these elements bridge theory and practice, offering a practical tool for practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders to co-create place-based initiatives that drive meaningful and lasting change.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY - INTRODUCING THE CCE FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodological framework and specific methods that underpin this research, as well as introducing and explaining the **Framework for Creative Civic Engagement (CCE)** developed through the PhD. My practice is deeply rooted in socio-political contexts; in order to navigate and negotiate through different systems, stakeholders, and participants, I draw on both creative and conventional methods and processes, situated within a coherent methodological approach.

The chapter is divided into three sections.

The first section, **'PhD Methodology'**, defines the methodological foundations of this research, grounded in practice-based research, participatory action-research, and creative research traditions. I explain my positionality as a creative practitioner and outline how the research methodologies and methods align with the research questions, ensuring both creative integrity and academic rigour.

The second section, **'Introducing a Framework for Creative Civic Engagement'**, provides an overview of the CCE Framework and its foundation in place-based creative (social) practice. I summarise its three component parts and describe how its implementation is embedded in both the delivery of the PhD research and the wider practice of creative placemaking.

The final section, **'Designing the Framework'**, explains in detail how the CCE Framework was developed through practice, elaborating the methodologies and methods applied throughout the case studies. This section also demonstrates how the Framework weaves together purpose, aims, objectives, values, principles, creative action-research methodology, and collaborative research methods, to act as a practical guide for co-designing projects or policy manifestos.

Each of the three interrelated sections of the Framework has its own research application and process, tailored to the sectors my work intersects, including health, education, community, and place. My ambition is for participants from these sectors to contribute to the implementation and continuous evolution of the Framework, which emphasises ethical, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches to creative civic engagement.

PHD METHODOLOGY

This section defines the methodological foundations of the research, situating it within practice-based, participatory, and creative research traditions. It clarifies my positionality as a creative practitioner, distinguishes methodology from methods, and explains how these align with the research questions and objectives of the PhD.

The research is grounded in **practice-based research methodology**, informed by creative, participatory, and interdisciplinary traditions. Practice-based research (Candy, 2006) provides the foundation, whereby the research is initiated in practice, shaped by the needs and questions arising from practice, and conducted through practice to generate original knowledge. This methodology is complemented by **participatory action-research (PAR)**, which positions participants and communities as co-researchers in a collective inquiry, and by **creative research methodologies** (Kara, 2020), which incorporate arts-based, embodied, multimodal, and transformative approaches to knowledge production.

Together, these methodologies establish a coherent philosophical and ethical stance that values creativity, collaboration, reflexivity, and social relevance. Within this methodological framework, a range of **methods** - including briefs, visual and embodied techniques, interviews, documentation, participatory workshops, and reflective practice — have been selected and applied to address the research questions and objectives. The following sections elaborate these methodologies and methods, illustrating how they interconnect and support the development of the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework.

Positionality & Methodological Approach

To situate this research within its methodological context, I begin by outlining my positionality as a creative practitioner and entrepreneur, and explaining how my practice informs and is informed by practice-based research. This section also clarifies the distinction between methodology and methods, and why this distinction is particularly significant for this research.

My research is rooted in my identity as a creative practitioner, entrepreneur, and producer. I establish ways to generate income to deliver work I am passionate about, often through partnerships, commissions, and social innovation models that enable me to pursue initiatives and research such as this PhD. My creative practice is integral to this research, and the PhD process has enabled me to develop a business proposition and creative (social) practice model. The design of the CCE Framework has been made possible through the

commissions I secured during the PhD. For example, through my consultancy work I was able to invest time and pay staff to contribute to locally significant projects, such as *Glossop Creates*.

The main methodology is practice-based research, derived from my creative practice since 2012. Due to the longevity of developing the PhD, the research comprises both retrospective reflection and live action-research. In all instances, I aim to implement good research practice, ensuring rigour and reflexivity.

> *'Research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners in the visual arts.'*[153]

It is important to distinguish between methodology, the overarching conceptual framework that guides research, and methods, which are the specific tools and techniques used to gather, analyse, and communicate data. This distinction is central to understanding how the research design supports both theoretical and practical outcomes.

Creative Research Methods

Building on the methodological foundations, I then describe the creative research methods employed in this research. These methods are drawn from and aligned with the creative and participatory paradigms outlined earlier, selected to respond to the research questions while maintaining creative integrity and ethical rigour.

I use a range of creative and conventional research methods - questionnaires, interviews, desk-based research - as well as creative, collaborative, and experimental approaches. Kara (2020) reconceptualises creative research methods into five areas: arts-based research, embodied research, research using technology, multimodal research, and transformative research frameworks. This conceptualisation has been useful for describing my own practice, which often merges methods from different disciplines to answer complex questions that cannot be addressed within a single discipline.

Creativity and design-led approaches support the integration and innovation of these disciplines. My practice facilitates those *'who want to break free from disciplinary confines or*

[153] Gray, Carol (1996) *Inquiry through Practice: Developing Appropriate Research Strategies* [online]. http://carolegray.net/Papers%20PDFs/ngnm.pdf (Accessed May 2024).

who need to do so because their research questions are too complex to be answered using the conventional methods and techniques of a single discipline'.[154]

As a practitioner, I often draft commissioning briefs that outline research questions, methodology, and methods. Sometimes I issue 'non-briefs'[155] to acknowledge that we may not yet know what we want to discover, inviting artists to respond creatively to a place, community, or their own practice. These briefs and proposals act as research frameworks, tools that provide infrastructure for a project, commission, or partnership.

I often start a brief by identifying the research questions or the lines of inquiry, as sometimes we're invited to critique rather than investigate. Or I may want to improve my understanding about a situation or test a working relationship before developing a larger research or creative project. Being honest about the intentions of the research has enabled me to develop meaningful partnerships but also embed an ethical practice from the start of a process. Highlighting the research questions, identifying the most appropriate research methodology and methods enables me to then design a communication plan to agree key messages and support participants, partners and audiences to *'understand how and why researchers make decisions in the course of designing and conducting research… and although some creative research methods may be appealing in themselves, it is essential to choose methods for that ability to address the research question within the methodological context.*'[156]

I also use private creative research - sketching, diagramming, walking, photography, collaging - as a way to reflect and explore ideas in solitude. Visiting exhibitions when grappling with an idea is another way I immerse myself in creative thinking. I have taken the opportunity to provide regular short, reflective pieces throughout the discourse of this thesis to provide further evidence of my embedded creative research practice, examples of methods and their outcomes, and interconnecting research methodologies.

Ethics & Reflective Practice

Ethical considerations are embedded throughout this research. This section outlines the principles, tools, and practices that support ethical engagement with participants,

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[154] Kara, H. *Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020. p.6

[155] A non-brief only includes the limitations of a commission - timescales, budget, project management capacity, but leaves the research area and/or questions open for the artist to develop their own brief. I use this approach for Pairings residencies - full description given in Chapter 5 - the Glossop case study.

[156] Ellingson, L, 2009 in Kara, H. *Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020. p6

collaborators, and communities, and explains how reflective practice strengthens the rigour and transparency of the work.

Over twenty years of practice, I have developed an informal but considered ethics-based approach, supported by tools such as codes of conduct, communication plans, engagement strategies, and visual reports. When facilitating conversations or collaborative design sessions, I implement a code of conduct to set expectations for behaviour and contributions, and I record activities to support documentation and reflection.

The formal ethics application process for this PhD prompted me to embed additional good practices, such as storing data securely and informing participants that my work forms part of my PhD research. I have been transparent with collaborators, funders, and partners about the dual role of my practice.

Documentation

Research which employs methods of creative and arts-based practice, especially one being funded by public investment, requires transparency on the decision-making process. Therefore, documentation becomes essential to the rigour of the research. Documentation functions as evidence and provides examples for future creative-researchers. The documentation articulates the practice-based research process as well as the outcome (the project or policy), making explicit the thought and making processes involved. I often produce decision-making diagrams, flow charts and presentations to illustrate the visual language used to explore concepts which provide creative forms of communication, understandable to a wider audience. Documentation of both quantitative and qualitative research is also fundamental in any evaluation and analysis. Identifying ways to document as part of a planning process is critical, ensuring resource and finance is allocated. Methods of documentation I use include photography, video, attendance sheets, planning tools - for example, mapping and diagrams in Miro, etc.

A key development in the design of a Framework for Creative Civic Engagement is reflecting back on, collating and digitally archiving the accompanying portfolio of work. The portfolio is a collection of carefully selected printed materials, project assets, online platforms and art objects. The portfolio provides an evidence trail and enables my collaborators to envelope into the PhD research and provide appropriate credit.

Collaboration & Co-Production

Collaboration is at the core of my creative practice. This section examines the collaborative approaches and tools used in the research, exploring how concepts such as co-design, co-production, and co-creation have informed both the methods and the outcomes.

As a community connector, curator, and strategist, I seek out ways to connect and bring people together in order to help co-design solutions and co-create something relevant and distinctive. I aim for transparency about decision-making processes, the call to action, and how contributions will be heard and valued.

There are terms now commonly used to describe different stages of collaborative practices include co-design, co-produce, and co-create. The term 'co-production' was originally defined in the late 1970s by political economist Elinor Ostrom as *'the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not 'in' the same organisation'*.[157]

Co-production has recently been used in public services policy. In 2018, a major research project 'Jam and Justice'[158] brought together academics, practitioners, citizens and political leaders through an action-research Collective (ARC) in Greater Manchester. Through collective exchange of knowledge and developing creative responses to emerging urban governance challenges through a series of co-initiated action-research projects to generate data to test and learn from different approaches to citizen engagement. One of the resulting reports, **'How can we govern cities differently? The promise and practices of co-production'** (2019) shares the learning taken from the tested idea that co-production could offer a way to address the big three urban challenges of building local democracy, valuing knowledge and expertise and producing fairer outcomes.

Similar to the Jam and Justice approach, to test ways to connect decision-makers, civil society, citizens and creatives[159] ('the jam'), specifically involving those usually excluded from such processes to address wider issues ('justice'), this is where the objective of my

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[157] Ostrom, 1996, p. 1073 in Doina Petrescu, Constantin Petcou & Corelia Baibarac (2016) *Co-producing commons-based resilience: lessons from R-Urban, Building Research & Information,* 44:7, 717-736, DOI: 10.1080/09613218.2016.1214891

[158] 'Jam and Justice' was a research project, with the aim of creating space for social innovation to co-produce, test and learn from new ways of governing cities. 'Jam' represents bringing together different partners in the city to experiment and innovate to address shared problems. 'Justice' is about reconnecting with those who have been disenfranchised and excluded from the search for solutions. https://jamandjustice-rjc.org/ (accessed March 2024)

[159] Jam and Justice didn't necessarily include creatives in their list of 'jam', but is part of the multidisciplinary approach in my own work.

work and the resulting Framework for Creative Civic Engagement is enacted. It has been widely acknowledged that co-production is an idea that is now being implemented across the public sector, civil society, the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector (VCFSE) and universities. Fig 3.24 below demonstrates how the concept has been embedded in the NHS as a way of bringing together different voices and different forms of expertise. Co-production methods can facilitate different ways to have a conversation that brings out the best of what everyone has to offer.

Co-production is usually seen as a ‘deeper’ form of participation than traditional methods such as consultation. It is often characterised as ‘doing with and not to’, engaging those with most at stake in the fullest way possible: from setting the agenda, defining problems and identifying ways forward. Jam and Justice conclude that co-production can be applied to maximise opportunities to govern cities better, utilising their resources creatively to make sure people do not feel left out or left behind.

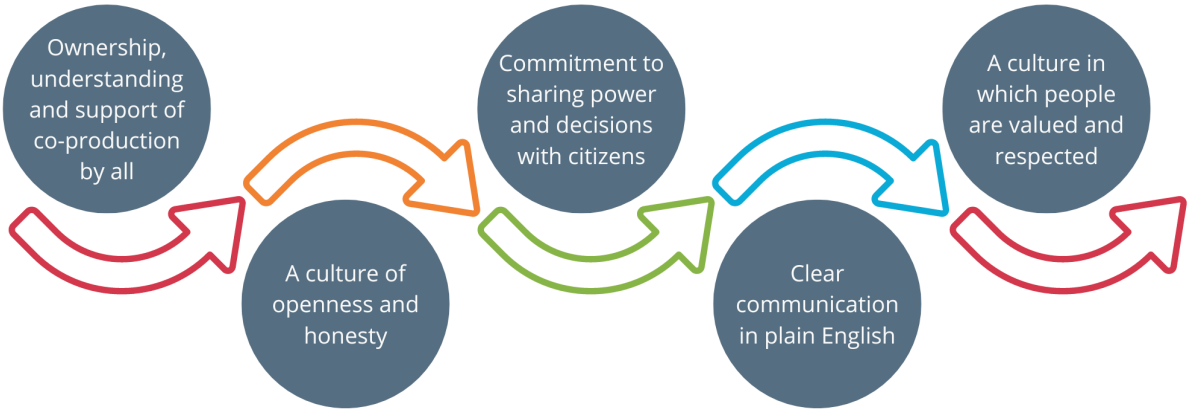

Fig. 3.0 Co-Production Model - Produced by NHS England and Coalition for Personalised Care.[160]

Collaboration, as with any participatory research activity, requires an open and transparent agreement on decision-making processes. Something as simple as convening a meeting or assembling a collective of passionate people, understanding the purpose, the call to action and how contributions will be heard and considered, is a fundamental principle of collaboration. Who are the 'makers' involved in making decisions? What skill sets may be required? Who has knowledge about the issue or topic? How might ideas be considered and/or protected? There are a growing number of tools and methods to enable ethical

[160] https://www.england.nhs.uk/always-events/co-production/ (accessed Jan 2024)

collaboration and decentralising governance models, some of which are outlined in the following section, Participatory action-research.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action-research (PAR) (also known as participatory research) creates a collective inquiry and experimentation grounded in experience and social history. Within a participatory research process, *'communities of inquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers*'[161]. Participatory research focuses on communities or groups and aims to include the full involvement of participants at each stage of the research process.

During my employment at Elevate East Lancashire, I was introduced to PAR and participatory budgeting. I also deepened my understanding of community engagement, and it was in 2006 I learned about Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation[162] (Fig. 3.25), which emerged from a piece she wrote about the planning system in the US back in 1969. The ladder was a useful tool when I was discussing, with housing, regeneration and neighbourhood manager colleagues, the different ways communities could be involved in the housing market renewal regeneration programme. It has become a point of reference that has been revered, challenged and reinterpreted in both practice and research, and in the context of placemaking, is considered an important tool in helping to explore the many facets of engaging people in processes to shape their environments.

[161] Kara, H. *Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020. p46
[162] Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation has been widely reviewed, referenced and discussed, and is recently referenced in the Quality of Life Framework.

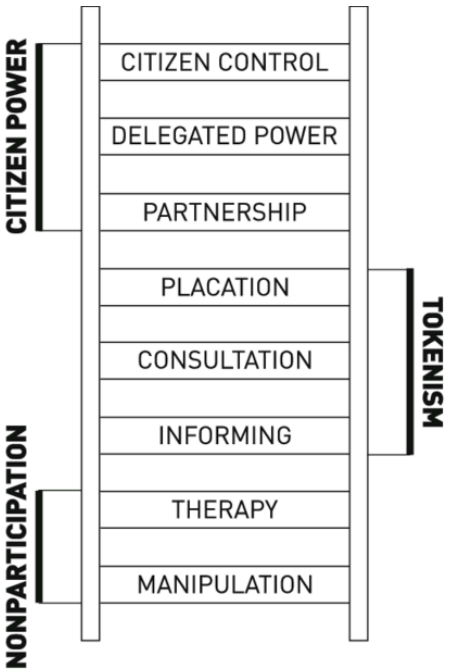

Fig. 3.1 Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

Similar to Sophia de Sousa, CEO of The Glass-House, I always criticised the term 'consultation', as it had the connotation of 'doing to' rather than 'doing with' the community. Consultation as a term is most often used by planners, developers and regeneration officers as a tick-box exercise, to prove the community has been told about the regeneration plans. However, in my experience, the majority of consultation events are poorly attended and poorly executed. Delivering a programme of participatory action-research requires a deeper level of engagement, empowering local communities to develop leadership skills in design and placemaking.

The Quality of Life (QoL) Framework was originally produced in March 2021, representing the culmination of over a year's worth of research, discussions and engagement with communities, politicians and wider industry stakeholders to understand how the built environment can improve our physical, social and mental wellbeing.[163]

The QoL Framework sets out how communities, developers and their designers, and local authorities can create better places for people to live by placing greater emphasis on health and wellbeing through a series of practical steps to address the changes that can be made across the development industry. Within the Framework's chapter on 'Control', it presents a modified version of the Arnstein ladder (Fig. 3.26) to one which 'is the most commonly used' stating the level of engagement will depend on what is planned and how it affects the

[163] Quality of Life Framework 2.0. Quality of Life Foundation 2024

community in question.[164] They propose that people living near to a proposal should, at the very least, expect to be 'consulted' or 'involved'. On the other hand, where communities are directly affected, such as the redevelopment of their estates or low traffic neighbourhoods, the community should be treated as clients through 'involvement', 'co-creation' and 'empowerment'.'[165]

Fig. 3.2 The Quality of Life Ladder of Participation[166]

In May 2021, De Sousa, who had 'played a very small role in shaping' the Quality of Life Framework, wrote a blog 'proposing the notion of a tapestry of participation' in order to acknowledge that '*the ladder feels useful in framing and assessing individual activities, but we need something else to help us think about how those activities fit together to form an effective community or citizen engagement strategy*.'[167] The Glass-House ethos of beginning by '*empowering people with the tools and confidence to take part in or lead a design process' is required, and that 'that taking part in a design process to shape local places can play in creating empowerment opportunities that extend far beyond the confines of a placemaking project itself, building confidence, skills, relationships, and ultimately social capital and social cohesion.'*[168]

De Sousa proposes an alternative model (Fig. 3.3) that reflects the complex layers and levels of empowerment within a participatory design process in placemaking. Whilst I could

[164] Quality of Life Framework, produced by URBED on behalf of Quality of Life Foundation. p.8
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] De Sousa, S, A tapestry of participation: revisiting Arnstein's ladder. The Glasshouse. May 2021
[168] Ibid.

explain De Sousa's approach in detail here, I would like to signpost to the blog which does this, and instead explain that this approach has provided me with the confidence and inspiration to apply a similar methodology to my own Framework - which is outlined in the following section in this chapter.

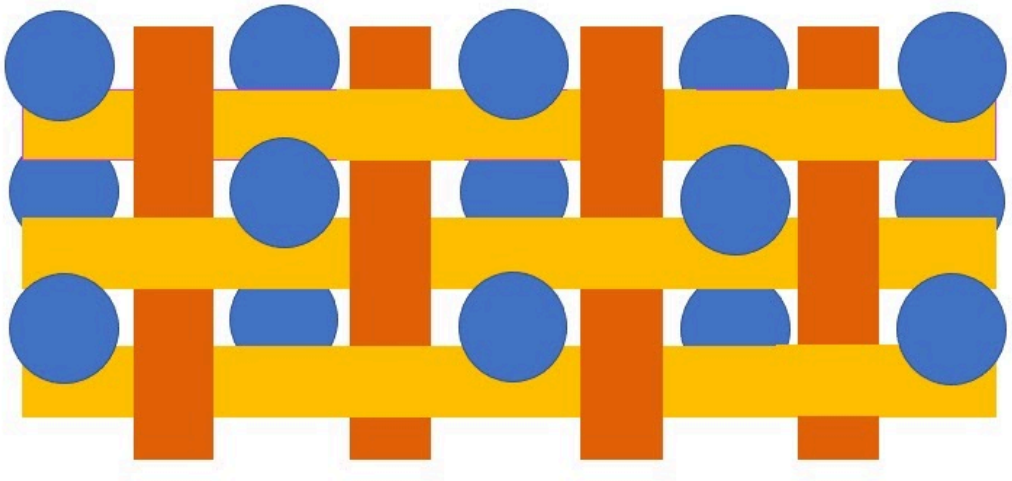

Fig. 3.3 A diagram illustrating a 'tapestry of participation', designed by Sophia de Sousa, Glasshouse Community-led Design, May 2021[169]

Participatory research has been adopted by other disciplines, including art, design and creativity. My own creative engagement practice embodies art and design. The following summaries how participatory art and design are considered in my own methodologies.

Participatory Art & Design

This section illustrates how participatory art and design practices[170] have been integrated into the research, drawing on examples from my own practice and commissioned projects.

Many of the artists I work with create participatory art, directly involving audiences in the creative process. This often requires the artist to take a directive role — distinct from socially-engaged practice, which is typically more exploratory and facilitative. An example is Ling Tan's *Pollution Explorers* (2019)[171], a participatory project I produced, using wearable technology and collective action to address air quality.

Participatory design and co-design, by contrast, rely on tools, codes of conduct, and networks to facilitate inclusive engagement - whether in a playground, supermarket, or

[169] Ibid
[170] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/participatory-art (accessed March 2024)
[171] https://lingql.com/pollution-explorers/ (accessed March 2024)

online. One key concept in my work has been the *Urban Room*, recommended in the 2012 Farrell Review and developed into a growing network of projects since 2013, in which I played a founding role. Over the past decade, I have used the Urban Room model to create accessible, inclusive spaces for collaboration and participatory experiences, offering an alternative to conventional consultation.

In 2017, while coordinating the Place Alliance Big Meet symposium[172], I co-developed the *Urban Room Canvas (Fig.3.4)*, a practical tool to help participants design and operate an Urban Room. This canvas became part of the broader *Urban Room Toolkit*[173], which I contributed to alongside the launch of the updated Urban Room Network website in 2022.[174]

[172] Place Alliance's The Big Meet 7 explored and showcased how approaches of creative community engagement and co-production can transform the built environment and strengthen communities at the same time. Coordinated by the Urban Rooms Network and hosted by UCL, the event brought together organisations, groups and individuals from around the UK, who are interested and involved in championing place quality and creative engagement in placemaking. Place Alliance is a movement for place quality. It is founded on the idea that through collaboration and better communication we can establish a culture whereby the quality of place becomes an everyday national and local priority. Place Alliance is open to all and brings together organisations and individuals who share the belief that the quality of our built environment has a profound influence on people's lives.
https://placealliance.org.uk/ (accessed January 2023)
[173] https://urbanroomstoolkit.org/ (accessed January 2024)
[174] https://urbanroomsnetwork.org/ (accessed January 2024)

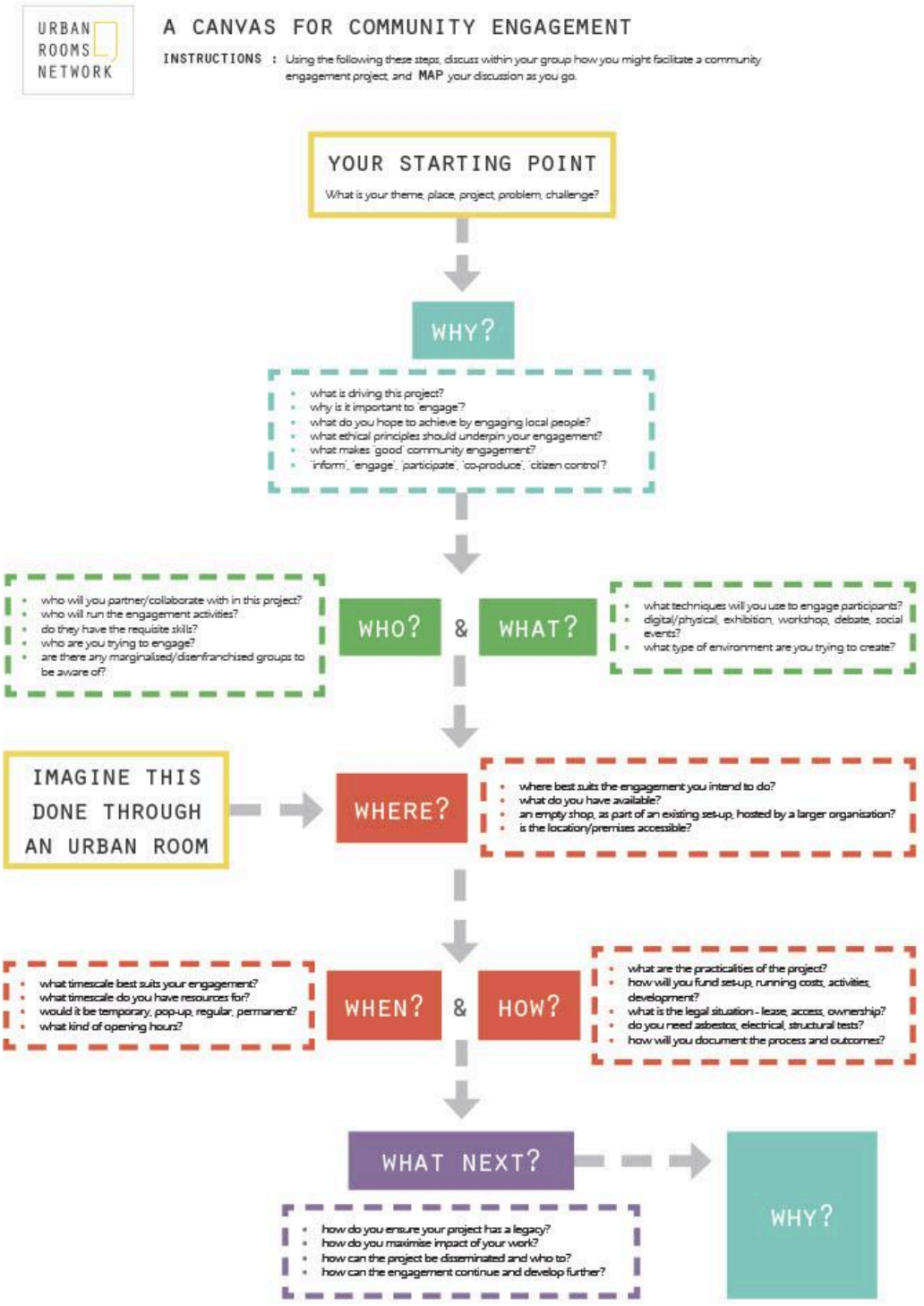

Fig. 3.4 Urban Room Canvas, 2017 (expand)

Creative Action Learning & Pedagogy

I position creative action learning as both a method and an ethos: a way of embedding pedagogy, co-learning, and experimentation into my practice, while supporting the next generation of creative practitioners. Since 2005, I have collaborated with Sheffield School of Architecture's *Live Projects* and *Live Works*, first as a client, then as an Associate, and later as a practice-based PhD researcher. This partnership has challenged my assumptions, exposed me to new ideas, and continually informed how I work with diverse communities and cross-sector stakeholders.

The schools I work with explicitly promote civic responsibility, creating a context in which I, as a client, can bring forward live projects, proposals, or award opportunities that connect students and staff directly with the realities of place-based challenges. This relationship has been mutually beneficial: for me, *Live Projects* offers a cost-effective way to bring in skills, knowledge, and capacity from both students and lecturers; for the students and university, it provides authentic, complex scenarios through which to test and develop their ideas, methods, and confidence.

Over the years, I have acted as client or partner for 10 Live Project groups and 2 studio groups, engaging over 150 students in developing real-world regeneration proposals, many of which are detailed in Chapter 4. I invest important time in sharing context, co-designing briefs, reviewing work, and reflecting with students to create a genuine exchange of skills, knowledge, and feedback. I ensure that project partners are actively involved and always attend final presentations, adopting accountability and visibility. I also aim to sustain meaningful engagement and, where possible, instigate further live projects beyond my direct involvement, building longer-term connections between local authorities and the *Live Projects* team.

Ultimately, this partnership exemplifies creative action learning at its best: embedding students, lecturers, and practitioners in reciprocal relationships that bridge theory and practice, enrich interdisciplinary research, and contribute to national and international dialogues about place-based civic engagement.

Linking To The CCE Framework

These interconnected methodologies and methods underpin the development of the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework, which is detailed in the following section. All of these experiences, methodologies, and methods form the underpinning values, processes, and tools that informed and shaped the CCE Framework.

INTRODUCING A FRAMEWORK FOR CREATIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This section introduces the Framework for Creative Civic Engagement (CCE), developed through and alongside the PhD research. I provide an overview of the Framework's purpose, its three component parts, and how it is embedded in place-based creative practice and the delivery of the research.

Curating, making and producing are processes at the heart of my creative practice. Embedding art, design and creativity into these processes provides participants with conceptual, meaningful and aesthetic experiences and inclusive outcomes. Inspired by my work in post-industrial towns, the cultural heritage of craft, innovation and invention, my own creative framework is shaped around the manufacturing of, and distribution of outputs and outcomes, creating an impact of lasting change.

The **Framework for Creative Civic Engagement (CCE)** aims to create a simple strategy for what can be considered a complex set of ideologies to enable a diverse group of people to co-create a shared vision and plan to implement sustainable change in places, through culture and creativity, to support and inform policy-making. In order to achieve this, I have designed a Framework based on the following models with processes, illustrated in Fig. 3.5:

1. CCE SYSTEMS - Observatory, Laboratory, Factory, Story
2. CCE LOGIC - Creative Economy, Creative Community Capacity, Creative Action & Innovation, Place Leadership, Place Narrative
3. CCE PLAYBOOK - Qualities, Values, and Principles

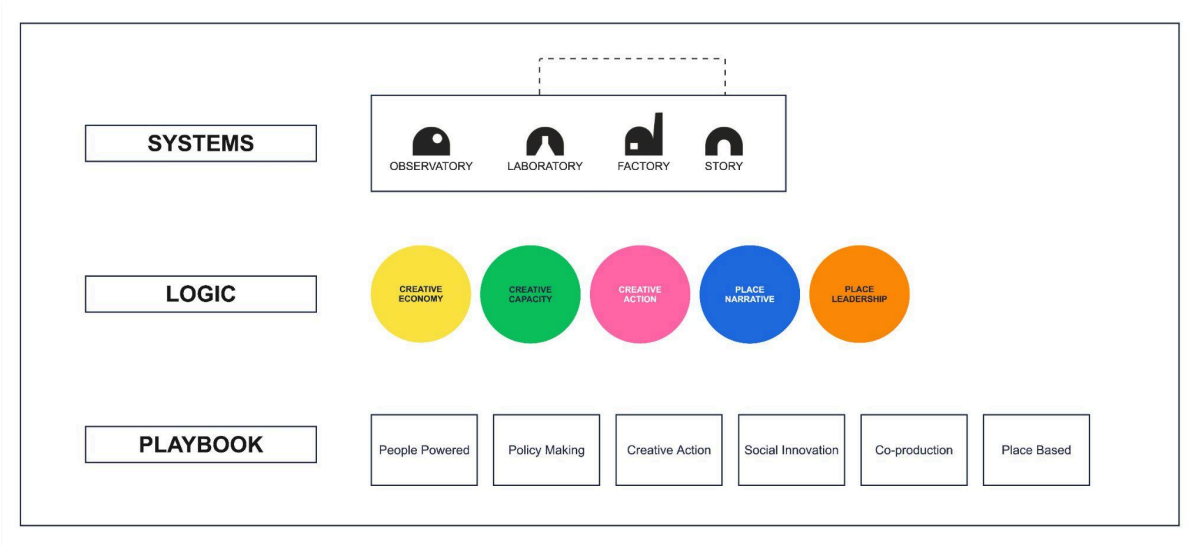

Fig. 3.5 Diagram visualising the 3 different component parts - Systems, Logic and Playbook (expand)

Purpose of the CCE Framework

My work is situated in place, often over several years, building relationships, testing models, and informing strategies. In 2017, I initiated a campaign in my hometown, inspired by Claudia Zeiske's *Transformational Fieldwork* at Deveron Arts, to establish projects and events that support the local creative community and nurture the area I call home.

While my work has always been place-based, the increasing prominence of the term prompted me to examine it more deeply as both a concept and a strategy. My practice aligns with transformational placemaking - informed by methodologies such as ethnography and fieldwork - which position 'place' as dynamic, interconnected, and shaped by flows of people, ideas, and materials. These approaches combine person and place, and utilise methods like walking interviews or mobile mapping to adapt to each context's unique demographics, challenges, and opportunities. In ethnography, a place is seen as dynamic and interconnected, constituted through flows linking it to other locations, persons, and things, rather than as fixed and enclosed. In geography, the field can be anywhere and everywhere, in both material and virtual spaces, within places and between them[175].

These approaches create holistic methods that include both place and person, such as place-based research and mobile methods like walking interviews. Each place has a unique context in terms of demographics, geographic location, challenges and opportunities, communities, infrastructure, and connectivity. Therefore, both my research methodology and the Framework for Creative Civic Engagement are designed to be adaptable to the unique characteristics of each place, shaped by the people who live there.

The Framework for Creative Civic Engagement aims to provide a methodology for creative placemaking so that the opportunities and impacts for partnership working across different sectors are clear, and a range of 'makers' feel confident to collaborate on place-based projects in health, education, community development, innovation, regeneration and placemaking.

Although I initiated and led the design of the Framework, it has evolved through collaboration with a community of makers, participants, and partners throughout the PhD, culminating in a model for creative and sustainable placemaking that is rooted in values, principles, and ethics.

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[175] Phillips, R and Johns, J. *Fieldwork for human geography*. London: SAGE (2012) in Kara, H. *Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020. p 33

Objectives of the Framework

The Framework provides a structured approach to civic engagement, integrating design and creativity into the fabric of community infrastructures. Its key objectives are to:

Empowering Communities: Encouraging local communities to take on active roles as makers and shakers in shaping their environments and creating a sense of ownership and pride in their localities.

Promoting Radical Co-Creation: Shifting power dynamics to ensure all collaborators have a voice and influence in the decision-making process. This involves creating inclusive spaces where diverse perspectives are valued and integrated into planning and development.

Incorporating Regenerative Practices: Adopting sustainable methods that preserve and enhance the natural and social environments. These practices focus on long-term sustainability and community well-being.

Drawing on Historical and Contemporary Insights: Utilising lessons from the industrial revolution and modern methodologies to inform innovative practices. This dual approach ensures that engagement strategies are both grounded in historical context whilst being forward-thinking.

Facilitating Creative Leadership: Developing leaders who can nurture a culture of creativity and innovation within communities. These leaders are crucial in creating environments where new ideas can flourish and be valued.

In summary, the CCE Framework serves as an accessible guide for local, national, and international placemaking sectors. It empowers commissioners, policymakers, and community groups to collaborate with local innovators and design healthier, more cooperative local economies and societies.

The Framework builds on and synthesises approaches I have tested and mapped throughout my practice, informed by frameworks such as The Quality of Life Framework[176], A

[176] *Quality of Life Framework 2.0.* Quality of Life Foundation 2024

Creative Placemaking Approach[177], Creative Health Quality Framework[178], and the Glasshouse Community-led article, ‘A Tapestry of Participation’.[179]

By providing a product that is accessible, affordable, and adaptable, the Framework enables communities to co-produce meaningful change, including influencing policy and strategy, and to embed action-research and creative civic engagement practices in a sustainable, place-based way.

The following section, **Designing the Framework**, describes how the CCE Framework was developed through practice. It explains how the methodologies and methods outlined earlier are applied within the case studies, and how the components of Systems, Logic, and Playbook were conceptualised and brought together into a coherent, values-led model for creative civic engagement.

[177] *Creative Placemaking*. The Stove, 2024
[178] *Creative Health Quality Framework.* Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance. 2023
[179] de Sousa, S, *A tapestry of participation: revisiting Arnstein’s ladder.* The Glasshouse. May 2021

DESIGNING THE FRAMEWORK

PART 1 - CCE SYSTEMS: A model for creative action-research

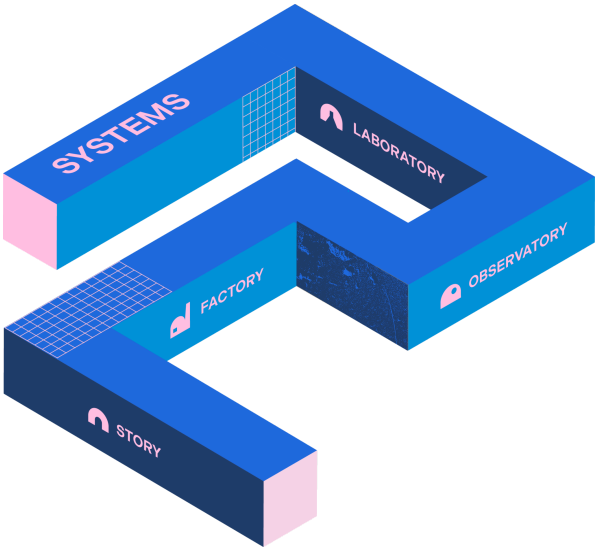

Fig. 3.6 Section ‘CCE SYSTEMS’ of the CCE Framework

The first part of the Framework consists of a model for action-research, a methodology that sits at the heart of my practice. The context in which I work is driven by action and delivery - normally short, sharp funding opportunities requiring tangible outputs, such as community participation, new jobs created, new venues opened. Having the time to properly plan, engage, and evaluate can be challenging due to the constraints of the funding and resources available. Embedding an action-research approach into my practice enables me to design activities that help build the understanding and identify additional resources and opportunities to connect with other partners and projects with similar objectives.

CCE SYSTEMS (Fig. 3.6) as a model provides a structure to work with, and implement, a system that recognises the fundamental requirements for action-research - inputs, processes, outputs, feedback loops. The following section provides the steps I took in order to design the systems model for creative civic engagement as I explain the origins and function of the model throughout this section.

The four stage action-research process, inspired by a range of design and innovation processes, aims to create an accessible research model that supports facilitating an iterative plan of action. By adopting systems and processes from the private or 'innovation' sector, and enabling governance structures adopted by the voluntary and community sector and

combining them to create a framework of support for the public sector (policy makers and funders) including local authorities, planners, and cultural organisations - to engage in and implement sustainable creative placemaking practices.

Similar to the action-research cycle, CCE SYSTEMS has four stages in the cyclical creative action-research process: Observatory, Laboratory, Factory, Story, followed by a continuous looped process through the cycle. Each of the stages have their own set of principles, toolkits, methodologies and evaluation criteria, which are explained through a series of diagrams and tables below.

CCE SYSTEMS facilitates civic engagement at various levels: street, neighbourhood, and borough. It develops ideas publicly, involving citizens in reimagining and prototyping solutions. Small-scale interventions, prototypes, soft infrastructure, and social capital provide a focused perspective, effectively addressing and illuminating complex issues such as social innovation, sustainability, economic development, infrastructure, participation, and public space. Beginning with pilots and small-scale initiatives helps mitigate risks whilst exploring innovative approaches.

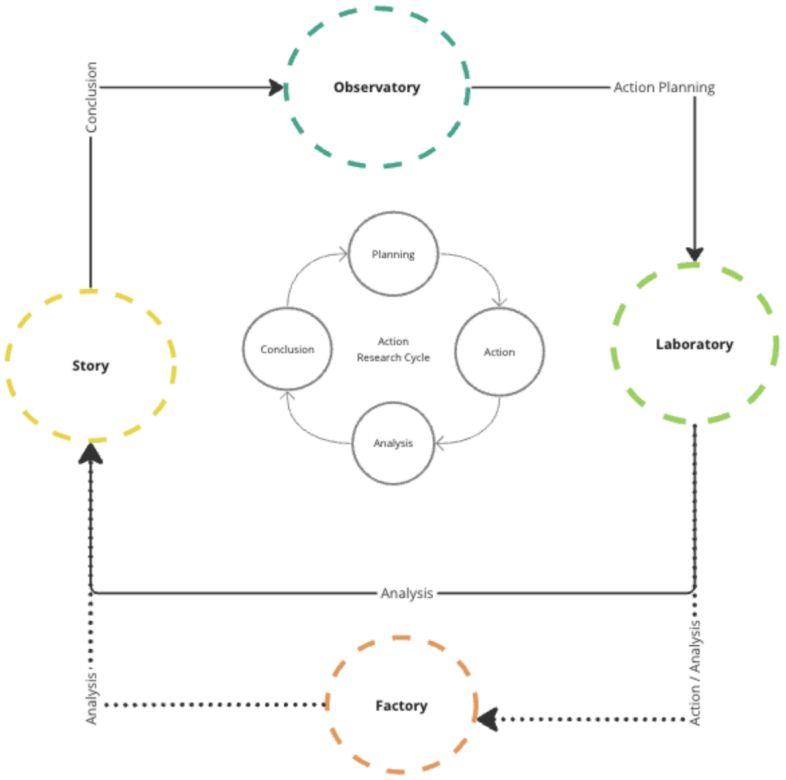

Fig. 3.7 Creative Civic Engagement - action-research Cycle (expand)

Fig.3.7 shows how I have implemented the newly titled stages into an action-research Cycle format, with each of the connecting actions - analysis, action, planning, conclusion.

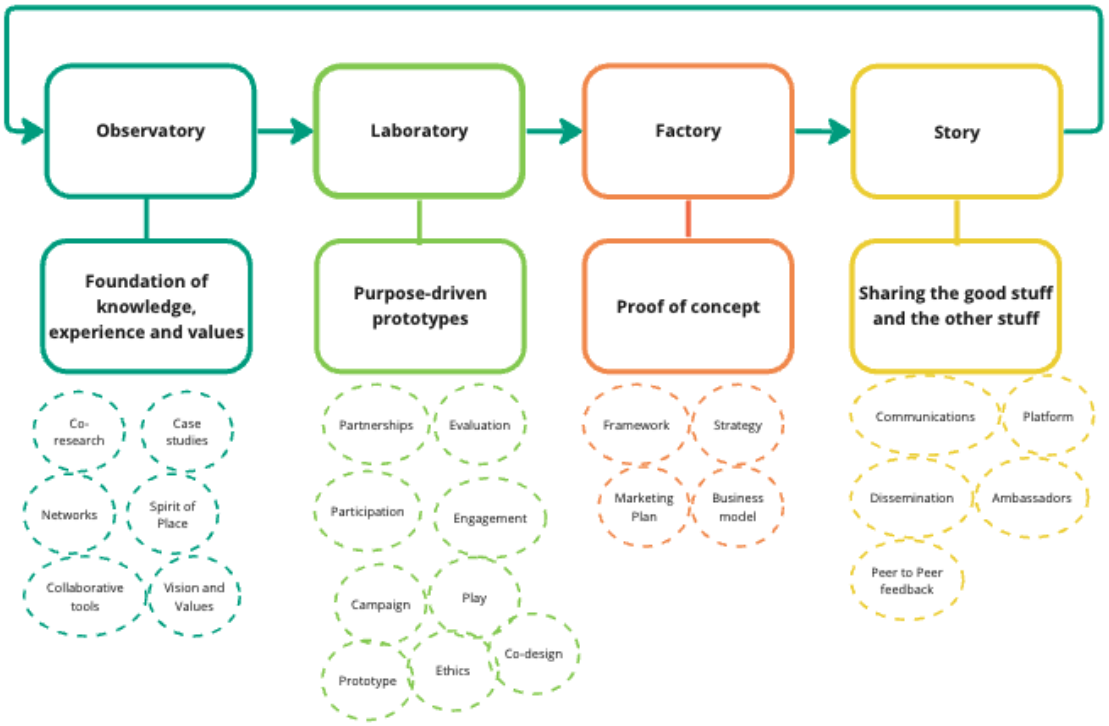

Fig. 3.8 CCE SYSTEMS - action-research cycle including priority values, mapping key characteristics and methods (expand)

Fig. 3.8 illustrates my process of mapping the key principles and values associated with each of the stages (or platforms) in the Creative action-research cycle. Each platform has a clear aim in relation to the PhD research, which sits in the context of creative placemaking.

OBSERVATORY - Identify new and radical ways in which communities can become active citizens in placemaking and ensure their involvement in decisions made about the future of places, using and/or working with culture and creative sectors
Key words: Observe, Research, Data, Stakeholder Mapping, Social Practice

LABORATORY - Develop an action-research / practice based approach in the development of a long-term, embedded approach to creative placemaking, through the testing of creative community engagement methodologies

Key words: Prototyping, Pop-Up, Testing, Experiment, Co-Design, Co-Production, Social Art Practice, Market testing, Meanwhile Use

FACTORY - Create a product or policy for creative, community-driven placemaking and civic engagement that is accessible, affordable and effective to enable people to co-produce change - including implementing policy and strategy, in order to implement, fund and sustain new placemaking practices

Key words: Social innovation, Innovation, Business model, Market, Business value proposition

STORY- Share the findings, learnings and impacts through a series of open-source methods (including digital) and disseminate via a communications plan with partners and academics

Key words: Dissemination, Storytelling, Sharing, Open Source, Wiki,

Fig. 3.9 Creative Civic Engagement action-research cycle (expand)

Fig. 3.9 illustrates how the creative action-research process is not linear, and each platform

or strategy is connected by an action or process of reflection, analysis or planning. The flexibility of the structure provides space and time for an iterative or agile approach, building in a network of resilience and opportunity to respond to opportunities as and when they may arise.

The need for a flexible, agile structure is required due to the context in which political, social and environmental factors impact on place. Each platform will require its own strategy that can be designed to embed the uniqueness of a place.

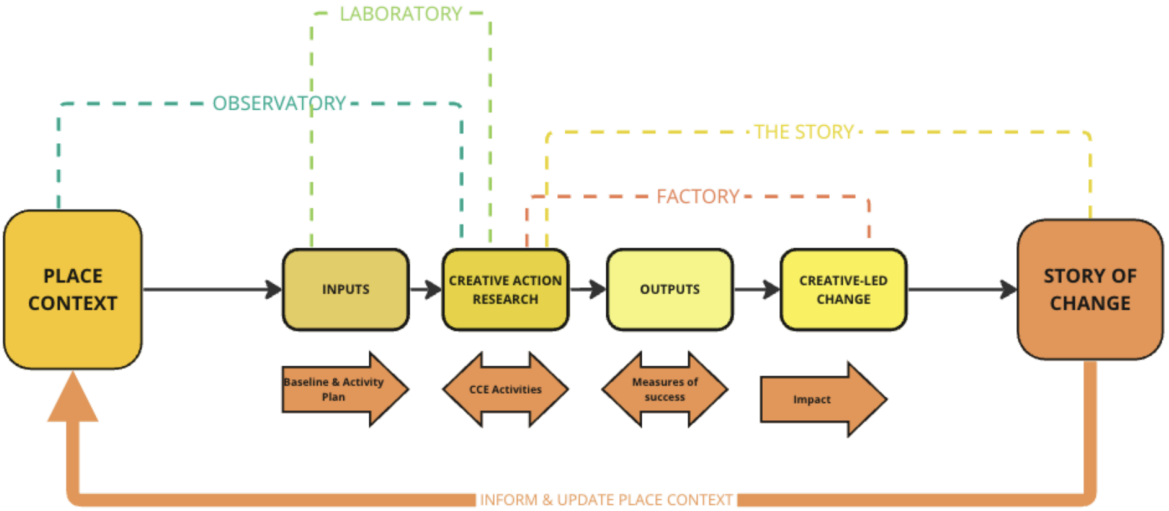

Fig. 3.10 Creative Civic Engagement with a systems model for action-research (expand)

To design a strategy for each platform, I have mapped the creative action-research process onto a systems model for action-research, utilising INPUTS > ACTION > OUTPUTS functions. I have rescoped ‘action’ to include ‘creative action-research’ as this is specific to my practice, and I have also included an additional function of ‘creative-led change’ to ensure the research project considers the change or impact that has happened as a result of the project.

The strategy for each stage of the creative action-research process utilises the headings Place Context, Inputs, Creative Action-Research, Outputs and Stories of Change - as seen in Fig. 3.10.

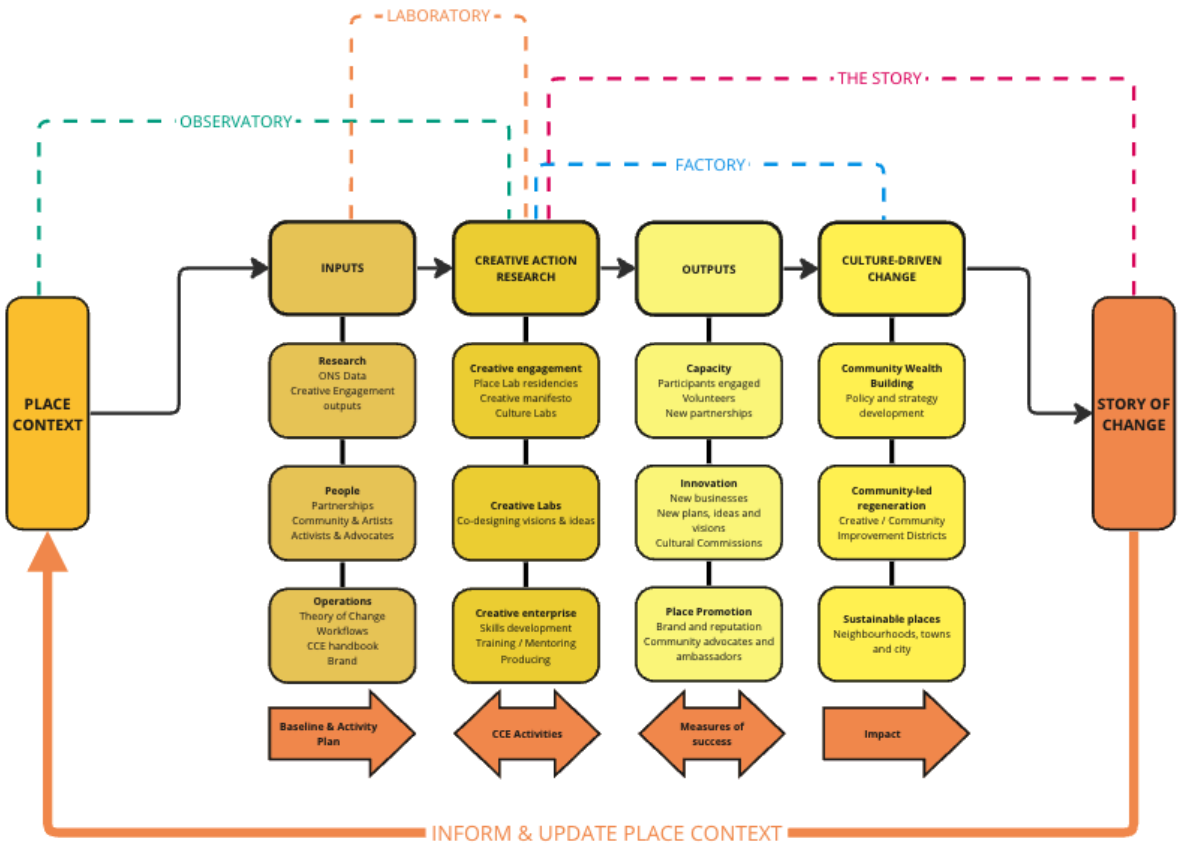

Fig. 3.11 CCE SYSTEMS - Mapping activities and methods (expand)

An expanded version of Fig. 3.10, Fig. 3.11 maps types of activities and methods considered during a creative action-research project or activity. Whilst each creative action-research platform (Observatory, Laboratory, Factory, Story) utilises the AR strategy (inputs, creative action-research processes, outcomes and outputs, impact), this model builds on these functions and starts to develop as a strategic framework, as illustrated in Fig. 3.12 below.

The following section provides a detailed summary of each of the Observatory, Laboratory, Factory and Story processes, methods and outcomes, creating a template which provides a useful guide for organising action-research activities. Some example methods I have myself designed and developed are provided for both context and inspiration. The case studies also adopt this template structure, building evidence and evaluation from my own contribution to the practice of creative civic engagement.

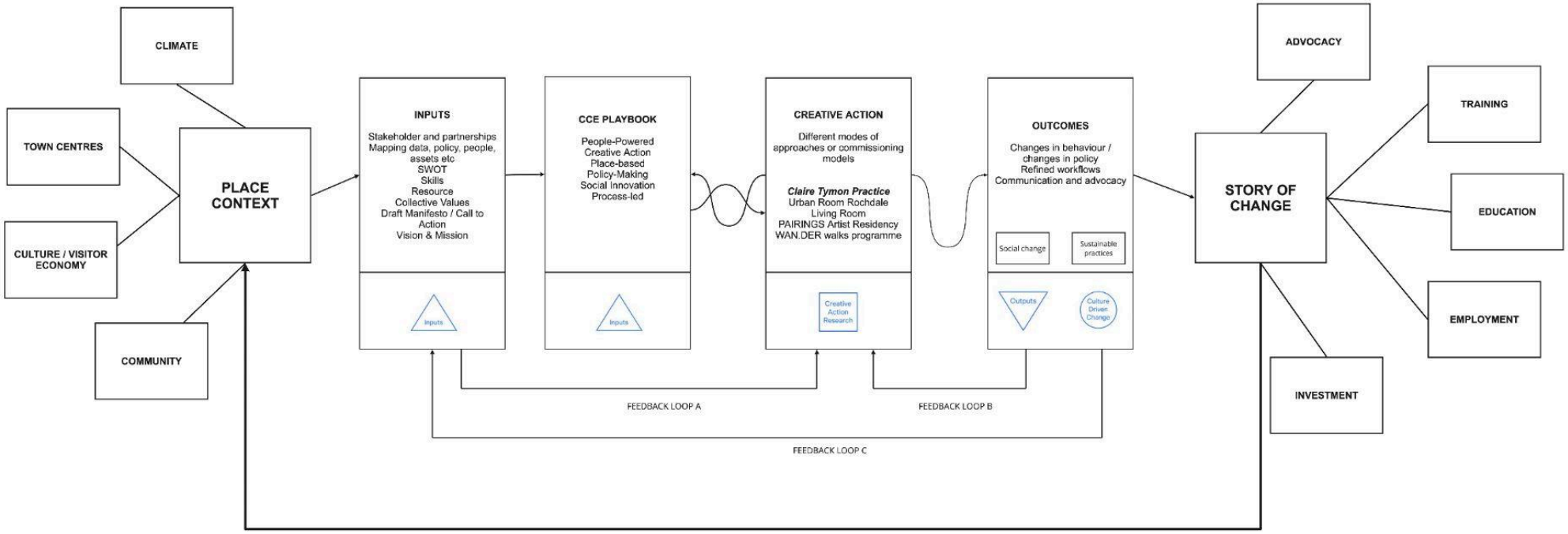

Fig. 3.12 A Systems Logic Framework CCE Framework (expand)

OBSERVATORY

Within the observatory, this stage of work is to ensure consideration is given to the context and complexities of a place, and not to enter into a project or situation with a set of assumptions, especially when we may not be familiar or local to a place. Being conscious of our own privileges and lived experience builds empathy and objectivity and should reduce discrimination. The observatory provides an opportunity to become familiar, understand a place or context from different perspectives and build relationships with participants.

In a circular process, the observatory comes after the story and before the laboratory. Therefore, we are building on existing knowledge, partnerships and cultural heritage and can embrace the learnings (and failings) to continue to help shape a better place. The observatory is also a place where accountability and responsibility of knowledge and data exists, and nurturing and maintaining relationships developed. Working with the public and the public sector requires additional accountability, and therefore, implementing processes such as risk assessments, GDPR and safeguarding policies may be required.

However, the observatory should be considered a safe space or phase, providing an opportunity to be visionary, ambitious and asking as many questions as possible. In order to understand the scope, the scale and the different perspectives, this may require a slow, embedded action-research process. Perhaps the role of the organisation is primarily to observe, and provide the research findings to other action-focussed (delivery) people, groups or organisations.

I have also adopted a simple way to consider 3-way perspectives and insights to support and improve ways of observing place-based context.

- **In looking in** - internal systems and processes, governance and/or decision making processes, internal cultures.
- **In looking out** - where we find inspiration, who we would like to partner with, what networks exist.
- **Out looking in** - external queries and requests, external perceptions of place, media coverage.

Networks

Creative networks, encompassing events, activities, and directories, play a vital role in convening collaboration, showcasing talent, and promoting creative enterprises. By facilitating connections among individuals and organisations, these networks create

opportunities for partnerships and innovation, enabling participants to share resources and ideas. An active and dynamic network energises and mobilises the creative sector, empowering it to initiate projects, launch businesses, and drive social change. By providing platforms for interaction and visibility, creative networks help nurture a vibrant community that supports growth and resilience in the creative industries. A summary of the benefits of place-based networks and groups is provided in Appendix P3.5.

Mapping

I use mapping as a creative tool for research, engagement activities, communication and measuring impact. I have developed skills in a range of mapping methods including mind mapping, stakeholder mapping, journey mapping and cultural mapping. Mapping is useful as a creative engagement tool for participants and stakeholders, as everyone can take part and encourage conversation and idea sharing. Using both analogue and digital mapping tools, participants' information is captured during workshops and compiles a generated contact, resource, and knowledge base as an asset to the project.

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Mapping can take the form of:

- Mind mapping
- Community mapping eg. Stakeholder mapping, community mapping
- Spatial mapping
    - Asset mapping
    - Culture - organisations, creative industries, freelancers
    - Location mapping (and clustering)
- Visitor economy - partnerships, events, heritage
- Champions - successful entrepreneurs, advocates, community leaders
- Strategic priorities / spatial framework
- Thematic mapping eg. Cross-sector opportunities - culture, academia, community, industry
- Making processes eg. decision making

Example: Proxi mapping

In my creative practice, Local, we are using a software called Proxi (Fig.3.13) to create interactive websites where participants can map their ideas as well as how they feel about particular areas. We have used this in the Urban Room Rochdale website, utilising activities based in psychogeography[180]. The objective is to create a digital version of a physical urban room, enabling participants who may not be able to attend an activity in real life. The software enables us to quickly analyse the findings of the information from participants.

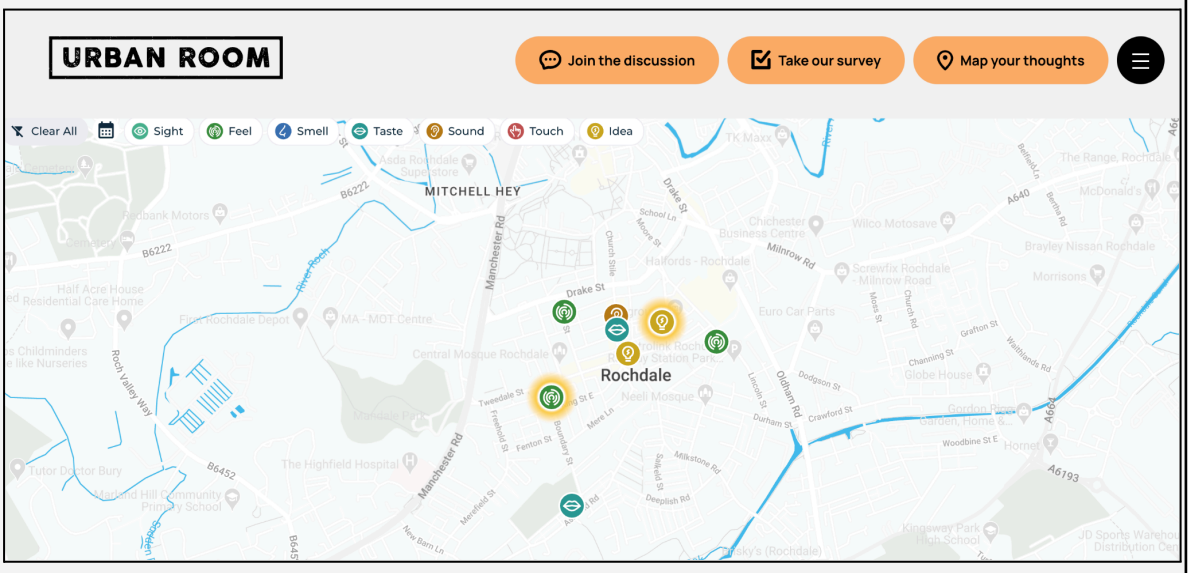

Fig. 3.13 Screenshot of the Proxi map on Urban Room Rochdale website[181]

[180] Psychogeography is the exploration of urban environments that emphasises playfulness and 'drifting' (dérive) through city spaces to uncover the psychological effects of geographical settings. It involves examining how different places evoke emotions and behaviours, highlighting the intersection between the physical environment and human experience. The concept originated with the Situationist International movement, particularly through the work of Guy Debord, who described it as the study of the '*specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals'* (Debord, 1955). Psychogeography encourages a deeper engagement with urban landscapes, often challenging conventional ways of navigating and perceiving city spaces. (References include Debord, G. (1955). 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography.' in Coverley, M. *Psychogeography*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2010.

[181] https://rochdale.urbanroomrochdale.com/map/ (accessed August 2024)

Observatory Systems Model - Summary table

Objectives	● Conducting creative research to build intelligence and understanding of the context of place ● Identify a need or further ideas requiring investigation ● Understand decision-making processes within the context of the research ● Identify participants, stakeholders, decision makers
Inputs	● Initial research questions ● The Makers - participants ● Data, strategies, corporate policies and plans ● Human resources inc. creative
Inputs - Tools and skills	● Data sharing agreement ● Visualisation of data ● Analysis tools ● Documentation - camera, audio recorder
Process(s)	● Start with a conversation - dialogical ● Perspectives (listed above) ● Spirit of Place methodology ● Creative residency
Methods	● Desk research ○ Strategy and policy mapping / scope ○ Asset mapping ○ Precedents / case studies ● Stakeholder / community mapping ● Interviews / informal conversations ● Observation / Wanders (phenomenology) ● Creative futures workshop ● Go and see visits
Outcomes / Outputs	● Clear evidence of need ● Further research questions - gaps in knowledge ● List of recommendations / action plan / options appraisal / Green Book business case ● Draft manifesto or set of principles ● Storyboard illustrating potential next steps / actions

LABORATORY

A laboratory provides an experimental environment for testing and evaluating new approaches to creating places, policies, and practices. The Laboratory (or Lab) functions as a space dedicated to prototyping ideas for creative placemaking strategies and interventions. It utilises the concept of 'Placeshaking' as described by Dan Thompson: 'taking places, jiggling them, shaking them, making them more interesting. It's an evolutionary, incremental process about taking small steps, trying, testing, and prototyping. Will it work? Who knows, but let's try and see what happens.'[182]

Even when familiar with a place, we may not always predict what will work. Therefore, an action-research approach is essential, testing ideas before full implementation, or policy adoption. The laboratory phase is where the production of ideas, design solutions, theories, and frameworks takes place, ensuring informed and playful placemaking.

The Laboratory is a place to share insights on research and practice through a place-based approach to knowledge creation. It provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together creative research and innovation, and co-production and learning. The Lab is a space for rethinking, reimagining, and reinventing the way places are governed and programmed, and how communities and local governments can work together towards a more open, more liveable and more imaginative and sustainable place.

In the manufacturing process, the research and development (R&D) phase or section is robust, allowing space for experimentation and failure. The Lab is a driver for change through participation and collaboration. Throughout my own practice, I have been part of teams designing 'creative labs', both within the creative and digital sector and also bringing different sectors together to collaborate on product design and service design. I have included some examples of these lab models below.

Example method: Creative Labs
A Creative Lab includes inspirational talks, design sprints and intensive co-design workshops. Commencing with an inspirational speaker and panel over the course of 2 hours, this format seeks to prime participants with a common frame to work from whilst bringing them together with other professionals and sectors working in their town or city

[182] Thompson, D. (2013, July 15). *Shake Up Your Place!* [Video]. YouTube.

that they may not normally have the opportunity to talk to or work with.

The inspirational speaker will usually be someone who is able to efficiently outline existing policy or strategic plans and able to communicate a vision of why those plans are being implemented. A follow up Q&A then seeks to identify the challenges, opportunities, and blind spots of that strategic approach in order to highlight design challenges that project teams can distil into a design sprint.

CREATIVE RESEARCH EXERCISES:

- Co-design a framework or plan for creative research for the local Creative Lab including a programme of support, identifying the needs and opportunities of the local creative community
- Identify potential additional engagement producers or artists who can support the delivery of the programme
- Understand who will evaluate the process and signpost to further support and development, building a sustainable Creative Lab ecology

Example methods: Creative Ideas Bursary & Creative Research Commissions
Establish a creative bursary programme, supporting smaller commissions and ideas with some budget, training and mentoring, space (exhibition or workspace) and promotion. This could be implemented through a Kickstarter scheme, a bursary programme, or a small grant programme in collaboration with a social enterprise or charity.

Similar to the Creative Ideas Bursary, the creative research commissions (eg. short term creative residencies) can help create space for open dialogue and ideation - sharing experiencers, critical conversations and decision-making. Commissions may include training and development for artists, commissioners and participants to ensure participants develop new skills and experience relevant to the Place Lab proposals.

Example: Alternate Futures
In July 2019, I led on the development of Alternate Futures, an interdisciplinary lab and symposium

Instead of allowing technology to distract us, how can we harness digital tools to better

shape the future together?

Alternate Futures invited citizens to explore and develop ideas for an alternate future. A future that is more connected, more collaborative and one that makes space to amplify different voices.

Participants included Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Manchester City Football Club, BBC R&D Future Experiences, OPPO, Tech for Good Live, Manchester Metropolitan University and more. Alternate Futures was part of Distractions, a three-day summit presented by Manchester International Festival, Sound City and FutureEverything, developed by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham and Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Fig.3.14 is a photograph from the Alternate Futures Lab. See Appendix P3.2a for a detailed blog of the project, by Michelle Collier. And Appendix P3.2b showcasing the conference programme accompanying the Lab, where the Lab outputs were presented to an audience of 120.

Fig. 3.14 Alternate Futures Lab, FutureEverything, June 2019
Image credit: Richard Tymon, 2019

Laboratory Systems Model - Summary table

Objectives	● Building on the Observatory, utilise the outcomes to confirm the Creative Lab framework / plan to test ideas and/or approaches ● Agree and implement one or more creative approaches to test ideas, assumptions and/or strengthen research outcomes (evidence) ● Understand the role and impact culture and creativity plays in the development and outcomes of the Creative Lab work
Inputs	● A clear set of research questions or lines of enquiry ● The Makers - participants, stakeholders, community ● Baseline data and evaluation framework ● Resources - capacity, tools, funding ● Manifesto, Code of Conduct or Code of Ethics ● Risk Assessment ● Communications / Engagement / Audience Development plan
Inputs - Tools and skills	● Social Value Toolkit eg. RIBA ● Artistic Excellence Matrix ● Visualisation tools ● Collaboration tools eg. Miro, Slack, Google Drive ● Documentation - camera, audio recorder, ● Communication tools eg. website, social media
Process(s)	● Co-production / Participatory design ● Creative action-research ● The Town is the Venue
(Creative) Methods	● PAIRINGS creative residencies ● Pop-up exhibitions / events in a variety of locations ● Student Live Projects ● Urban Room
Outcomes / Outputs	● Evaluation of prototypes ● Impact assessment - stories of change ● Advocacy tools eg. presentation, blog ● Replicable 'products' - eg. tools, frameworks, artworks / interventions

FACTORY

The origin of the word factory is a Latin term for a 'place of doers, makers'. In the context of the creative action-research model, the Factory serves as a metaphor for a platform that creates replicable models or products - a process known as productization in business planning.

Similar to the Laboratory, the Factory is action-focused and emphasises the social and economic value of replicable place-based models of creative placemaking. It aims to develop sustainable, enterprising opportunities across different localities to strengthen social and civic infrastructure. Retrofitting creative civic engagement methods to various places is cost-effective, particularly for communities and local authorities facing financial constraints. The goal is to provide accessible and adaptable models for local partners and communities to adopt and implement, and for funders to invest in, whilst also creating opportunities to recruit local 'place-makers'.

Establishing a creative enterprise supports initiatives or campaigns in becoming more financially and organisationally sustainable. By creating a business model that generates income, these enterprises can fund activities that require financial support. Designing for social innovation necessitates a collective support structure, a dynamic leadership model, and a dedicated team, whether paid or volunteer.

Furthermore, integrating creative and community enterprises into the Factory model enhances the local economy and social fabric. These enterprises drive local development by offering sustainable business models and enriching the cultural and social vitality of the area. The Factory thus becomes a powerful metaphor for enabling innovation, resilience, and community-driven growth, ensuring long-term sustainability and impact.

Factory examples include:

- A creative enterprise / business
- Permanent Urban Room and/or replicable UR methodology
- Regular annual community festival programme
- A high street makerspace

Figs. 3.15 and 3.16 are examples of different financial and business models for CCE projects.

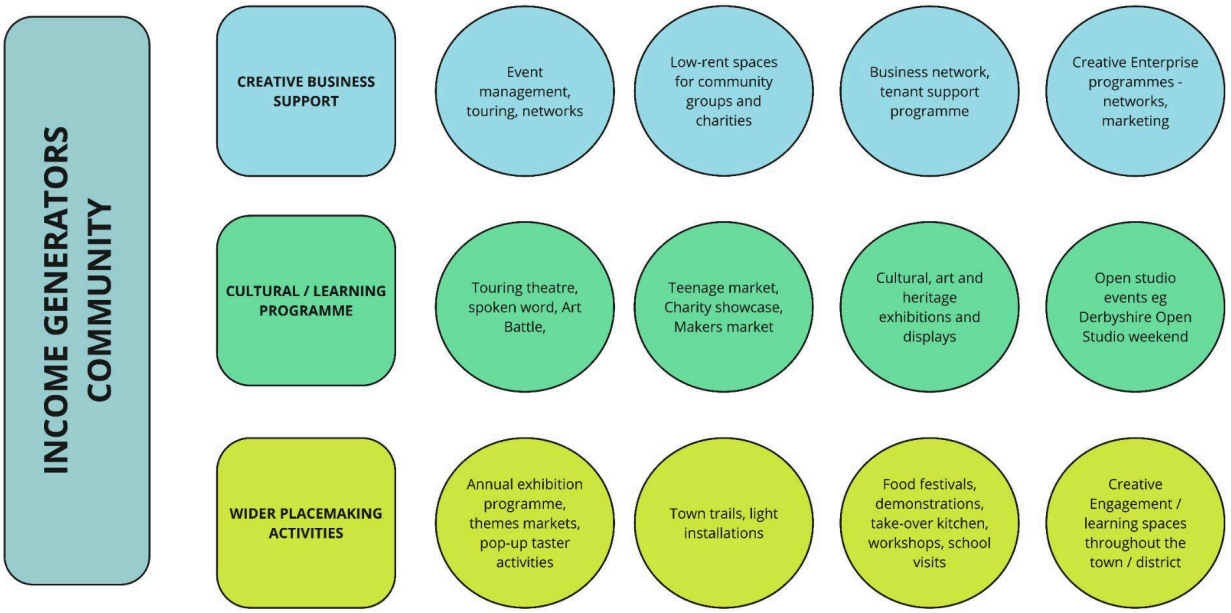

Fig. 3.15 Mapping different income generation to support a future creative enterprise - I created this model for a tender for a business plan for an indoor market hall in 2022.

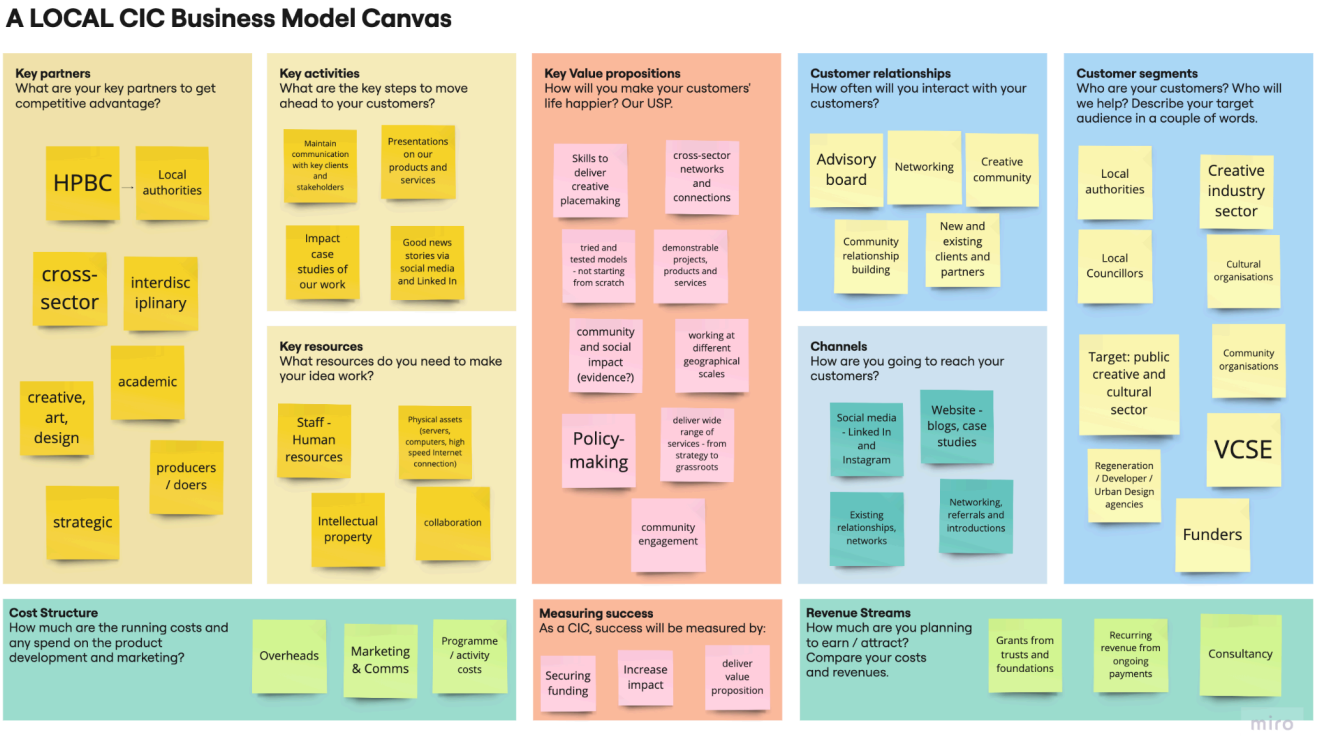

Fig. 3.16 Local CIC Business Model Canvas - I created this for my new social enterprise in March 2024 (expand)

Factory Systems Model - Summary table

Objectives	● Transforming the successful outputs from The Lab into replicable place-based products, models or strategies ● Produce a business plan and/or a value proposition
Inputs	● The Makers - producers ● Impact assessment ● Resources - capacity, tools, funding ● Expertise - IP, finance, business support ● Bank account
Inputs - Tools and skills	● Financial systems and processes ● Advocacy presentation / pitch ● Business Model Canvas ● Documentation - camera, audio recorder
Process(s)	● Business model canvas ● Business planning / Feasibility ● Strategic framework development ● Production plan
(Creative) Methods	● Demonstrations - through film, live action, performance ● Participatory websites / games ● Team building workshops ● Programme permanent / semi-permanent spaces
Outcomes / Outputs	● Products eg. Cultural programmes ● Social enterprise / innovation models ● Successful business models ● Case studies and stories to share ● Marketing plan / objectives

STORY

The creative industry sector is strong at sharing stories, learnings and processes throughout the whole project cycle. Social media is a key driver for this. Stories told by participants and those impacted by the work is a very powerful tool, especially when influencing investors and policy-makers.

The Story is a stage in the cycle, not necessarily the final stage but an important one to communicate the outcomes and impacts, as well as help inform and strengthen the context of a place - from a range of perspectives. So often the places I work in receive negative press based on lazy research and stereotypes. In order to change or strengthen the story of a place, we need to produce the evidence through storytelling and take a lead on our own place promotion.

To understand and share the story is an empowering action for the participating ‘makers’ who have played a role throughout the process. Additionally, inviting critical friends and peers, or Shadow Curators[183] who are tasked with providing outside perspectives and reflections on the process and impacts is equally relevant and useful when sharing the project learnings and successes. There is a need to understand the purpose of the storytelling, identify who the audience is and then the ways in which to communicate the key messages. For example, the purpose is to communicate the findings of my practice-based PhD and is to validate the authenticity of the work and ways in which it contributes new knowledge to research. The production and publication of the thesis along with presenting the work to senior academics provides me with an opportunity to deliver the research findings, receive feedback and continue to strengthen the proposition through a discussion. My aim is to also receive feedback from industry professionals working in this field of research.

Creative storytelling can be conveyed through various mediums to reach and engage diverse audiences. Exhibitions visually present material and artistic responses to issues and solutions, either via online platforms or in-situ displays. Films and podcasts offer another avenue, producing content that can be broadcast online, on TV, or on the radio, thereby reaching a wider audience. Additionally, zines and online blogs provide platforms for sharing stories in written form, allowing for more in-depth exploration and discussion of the topics at

[183] Zeiske, C, Transformational Fieldwork Or: How might a sustainable cultural provision in the rural/small town context be framed? PhD Thesis, 2022

hand. These methods collectively enhance the accessibility and impact of creative storytelling.

Similar to the other stages, the Story requires planning, engagement and evaluation results. It is important to consider how different audiences have different requirements and access needs.

Stories of Change

Collaborating with my co-worker, Andy Brydon, on a number of cultural strategy projects, we have co-designed a Theory of Change (ToC) model (Fig. 3.17 below) to demonstrate a cyclical refreshing of cultural policy that is adaptable and structured to sustain communication with cultural producers at an operational and tactical level, not just bureaucratic strategic level thinking.

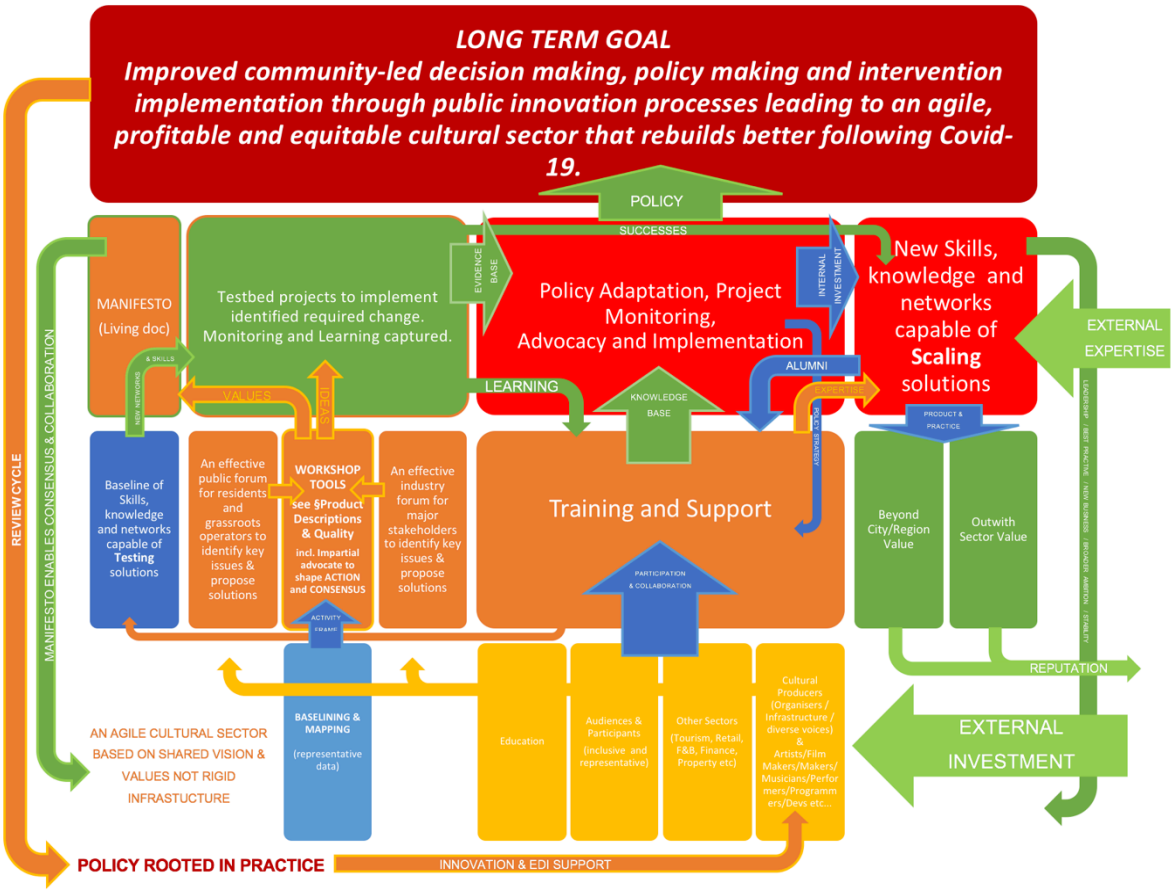

Fig. 3.17 - Theory of Change co-designed by Andy Brydon and Claire Tymon, 2020 (expand)

However, ‘Stories of Change’ is an approach used by Happy Museums and other cultural organisations as an appropriation of the Theory of Change model, which is an approach more aligned with my own practice and the CCE Framework. Happy Museums describe the purpose of the Story of Change is '*to make sure we focus on the difference we want to make rather than what we do (which is similar to theory of change, or logic modelling). It challenges ‘business as usual’ by starting with the overall purpose and working backwards. Hopefully, we don’t then confuse the means to the end (our activities, which are often what is monitored by funders) with the ends themselves.*'[184]

Telling the story of a process, success, achievement, or change creates a much stronger impact and deeper connection with an audience than statistics or pie charts. Throughout the design and delivery of a CCE process, it is crucial to understand the audience, determine how to engage them, and identify the key messages to share. This approach helps to engage and influence decision-makers, including investors and funders, build pride in the place and community, recognise the contributions of participants, and communicate the needs and strategies required to sustain and build on the success of the creative civic engagement work.

Traditional formats may include:

- Presentations / Advocacy reports - using slides to communicate research is useful when sharing screens via video conferencing. A variety of technologies may be used to record the programme, the co-production process and evaluation which can then be edited for final presentation.
- Data visualisations - the data gathered is shared as raw data (where consent is given) as well as presented in graphs, charts, diagrams, word clouds etc.
- Exec Summaries - the research and evidence base is presented in a summary format.

Measuring the success (Monitoring and evaluation tools)

Creating a baseline map - identifying and recording datasets relevant to the project deliverables, using this data to measure progress and inform a final report

➔ Stakeholder mapping - create a strong network of contacts, collaborators, associates and partners to co-produce the project.

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184 https://happymuseum.gn.apc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/HM_1_Story_of_Change_Feb2016.pdf (accessed June 2023)

- ➔ Circular evaluation techniques - regular project ‘check-in’s’, gathering feedback from the client, producing team, and participants to inform planning for the next set of activities.
- ➔ Questionnaires - using tools like Eventbrite, Survey Monkey and TypeForm, I design short surveys to generate useful qualitative and quantitative data. Questions are accessible, survey formats are available in large print and results are illustrative, enabling us to share back the information in easily translatable ways.
- ➔ Self evaluation - invite all participants to carry out an initial assessment of what their own needs, objectives and expectations are and compare this to a final self-reflection.
- ➔ Social capital / social value formula - designing and developing programmes of activity which requires people to give up their time to invest their skills and knowledge into a new way of thinking and creating policy needs to be captured and valued.
- ➔ Documentation - archiving the recording of the sessions through note-taking, film, illustration, photography/screenshots and blogs/articles.
- ➔ Debriefs - end of project debriefs with the client/commissioner, participants and stakeholders
- ➔ Feedback / Follow up interviews - assessing the impact of the project, process and implementation of tools and techniques.

Story Systems Model - Summary table

Objectives	● Increase understanding and awareness of the creative civic engagement framework and its impact on creative placemaking ● Produce a marketing and communications plan with comms objectives and key messages ● Advocate the civic role of art, design and creativity in the development of the place-based approach
Inputs	● Data - quantitative data ● Feedback - qualitative ● The storytellers - participants, stakeholders, community ● Impact statements ● Resources - capacity, tools, funding
Inputs - Tools and skills	● Storytelling and marketing skills ● Visualisation eg. zines, illustrations ● Communication tools eg. social media ● Communication and Marketing plan
Process(s)	● Storyboarding ● Documentary
(Creative) Methods	● Exhibitions / pop-up events ● Radio or podcast ● Creative campaigns ● Instagram take-overs ● Creative reporting
Outcomes / Outputs	● Increase investment and partnership opportunities - for further research and/or implementation of the model/s / products ● Build audiences for the PhD Thesis, case studies and models ● Conference paper and presentations

The Role of Creativity in action-research

Creativity is complex and notoriously hard to define. It is also difficult to measure.[185] My practice-based research aims to challenge and redesign consultation, engagement and research methods by demonstrating the impact of collaborating with a range of creatives[186] and the participants in which the work is aimed to benefit (which sometimes is the creative industry sector) to develop more accessible, relevant and interesting methods. Examples of methods are provided throughout Part 3 of this Methodology chapter.

In 'Creative Research Methods' Kara explains *'It's not about making something from nothing; it's about taking things that already exist and making new combinations. And whilst creativity is often viewed as a type of behaviour."*[187] It is not only about making things; creativity can also be applied to thinking, reading, playing and other activities. Creative thought involved lateral thinking, challenging accepted ways of seeing and doing things; defining problems as well as solving them.[188]

Creativity is sometimes conflated with art, so when I describe my practice as a creative practice, it is to enable me to include all forms of creative collaboration, social value and innovation, process and outputs. My work often involves working with artists - performance, visual, digital, poets and authors and more - through cultural commissions, research collaborations or promoting their artistic practice in the context of placemaking.

Kara further discusses the process involved in making art can be similar to the processes involved in making research, '*We talk about doing research, perhaps a more appropriate verb would be making research'*.[189] Sullivan in his seminal 'Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts'[190] states that '*higher level thinking demands connections, associations, linkages of conscious and unconscious elements, memory and emotion, past, present and future merging in the processes of making meaning. These are the very processes that poets actively seek to cultivate'.*[191] Kara argues that these are processes in which many

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[185] Kara, H. *Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020. p.13
[186] By creatives I am referring to those whose work or practice is included in the DCMS definition of the creative industry sector - artists, designers, makers, architects, filmmakers, etc. (DCMS definition link in Bibliography)
[187] Walsh et al 2013 p26 in Kara, H. *Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide.* 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020. p.15
[188] Carter 2004 p41 in Kara, H. Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020. p.15
[189] Kara, H. *Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide.* 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020. p.1
[190] Sullivan,G, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts.* SAGE Publications. 2009. p121
[191] Ibid. p121

researchers aim to cultivate. Previous artist-researchers I have worked with have also taken this approach, including socio-ecological artist, Kerry Morrison, and interactive-design sculptor and artist, Tine Bech. Both their doctoral thesis demonstrate a detailed analysis of their action-research and practice-based methodologies.

Whilst I draw inspiration from the work and practices of others, both regionally and internationally, my own creative research practice is deeply rooted in action-research - learning and adapting through the act of doing. Kurt Lewin, then a professor at MIT, first coined the term 'action-research' in 1944. In his 1946 paper 'action-research and Minority Problems' he described action-research as '*a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action*' that uses '*a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action*'.[192]

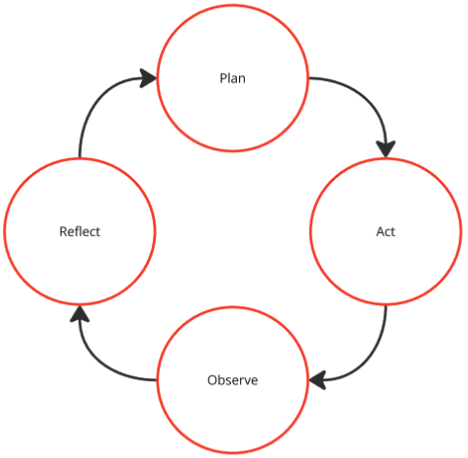

Fig. 3.18 Action-research of action, reflection, observation and planning

The process of action-research is a systemic, collaborative, self-reflexive, critical, inquiry consisting of four major phases: ‘planning’, ‘action’, ‘reflecting’, and ‘observing’. These phases can occur in any order, and can overlap - as demonstrated in Fig. 3.18.

Lewin, focused on achieving effective and lasting social change, emphasised that motivation to change is closely linked to action. He believed that when people are actively involved in decisions that affect them, they are more inclined to embrace new behaviours. According to Lewin, "*Rational social management proceeds in a spiral of steps, each consisting of a cycle*

[192] Lewin, K, *action-research and Minority Problems.* (originally published in the Journal of Social Issues in November 1946) http://www.fionawangstudio.com/ddcontent/Instructions/action_research/readings/Lewin_1946_action%20research%20and%20minority%20problems.pdf (accessed January 2024)

of planning, action, and fact-finding about the results of action". To implement this approach to systems change, a systems model was necessary.

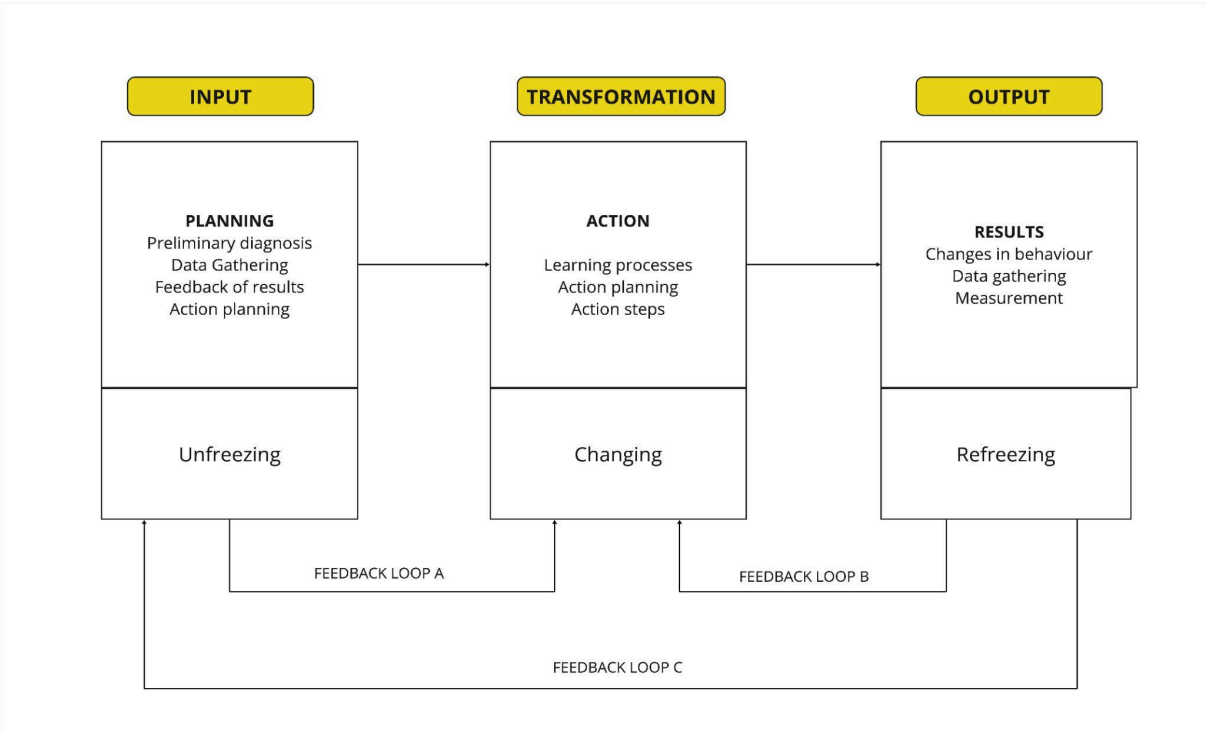

Fig. 3.19 Lewin's Systems model of action-research process

Lewin describes the process of change in three steps: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, depicted through a cyclical action-research model (Fig. 3.19).

Planning Phase: The cycle begins with planning actions initiated by the client and change agent together. This phase involves preliminary diagnosis, data gathering, feedback, and joint action planning. It corresponds to the input phase in systems theory, where the client system becomes aware of unidentified problems, recognizes the need for external help, and collaborates with the consultant for problem diagnosis.

Action or Transformation Phase: The second stage involves actions related to learning processes and implementing behavioural changes within the client organisation. Feedback at this stage (Feedback Loop A) helps refine the planning to align learning activities with change objectives. This phase includes joint action planning by the consultant and client system members, followed by executing these plans on the job.

Output or Results Phase: The final stage includes actual behavioural changes resulting from the implemented actions. Data is gathered again to assess progress and make

necessary adjustments through Feedback Loop B. This phase ensures that the changes are embedded and sustained. Figures 3.20 and 3.21 illustrate the action learning process adapted for the CCE Framework.

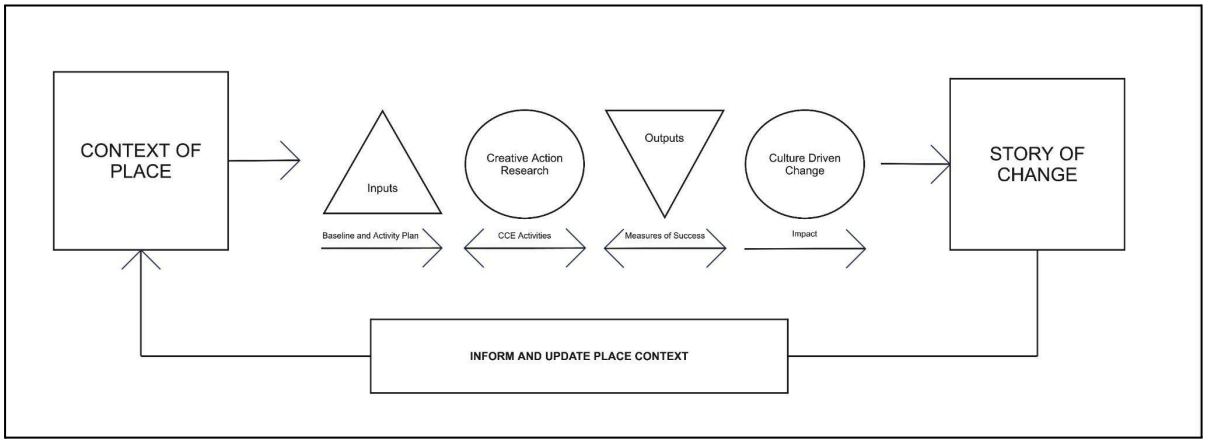

Fig. 3.20 CCE SYSTEMS model adapted from Lewin's Systems model (expand)

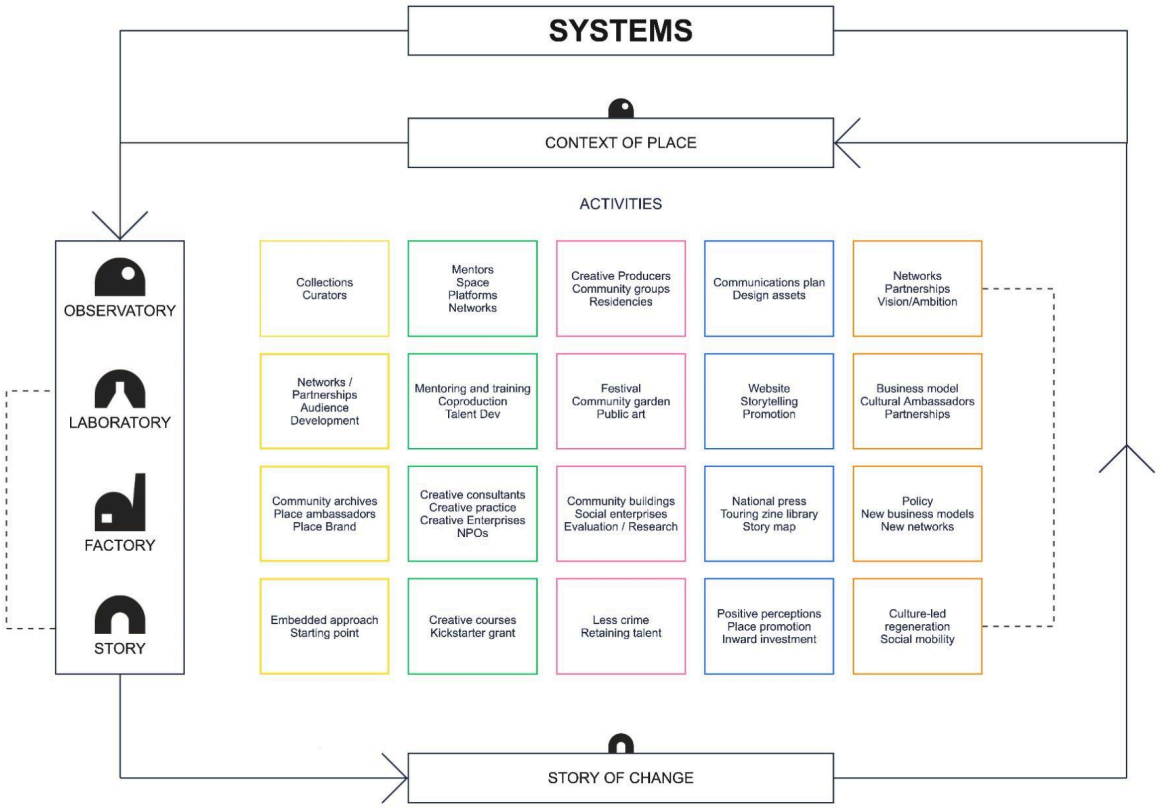

Fig. 3.21 CCE SYSTEMS expanded to illustrate Observatory, Laboratory, Factory and Story with example activities (expand)

Summary

Overall, action-research is a cyclical process involving continuous feedback and adjustments to achieve effective and lasting change. As a researcher with a creative and arts-based background, adopting the social sciences and action-research methodology has given me a structure to share with multidisciplinary collaborators in an ongoing process of investigation. This approach provides a framework within which the team can actively co-design and validate creative and arts-based research. I have taken the main action-research phases: 'planning', 'acting', 'observing', and 'reflecting', and utilising the 'Systems action-research Model', I have adapted it to create a new creative action-research model for my practice. The new model will run through each case study, supporting a reflective process whilst shaping the development of the live action-research (live projects taking place during the PhD period).

The structure of the framework encompasses a range of action-research methodologies which can be developed into individual projects or 'products', using established models for innovation, for example, Double Diamond,[193] a Systems model of action-research[194] and the circular economy[195] model. These approaches or models are adapted, shaped and tested throughout the different case studies in the following chapters - resulting in a demonstration of the CCE Framework in practice, which I will then discuss how it is helping to develop new emerging policies.

[193] Advocated by the UK Design Council - What is the framework for innovation? Design Council's evolved Double Diamond 2019 (accessed September 2023)
[194] McDermott, I & O'Connor,J, *The Art of Systems Thinking: Essential Skills for Creativity and Problem Solving.* Thorsons, 1997. p.5
[195] Circular economy: definition, importance and benefits | News | European Parliament'. *www.europarl.europa.eu* . 2015-02-12. (accessed June 2023)

PART 2 - CCE LOGIC: A structure for planning and evaluation

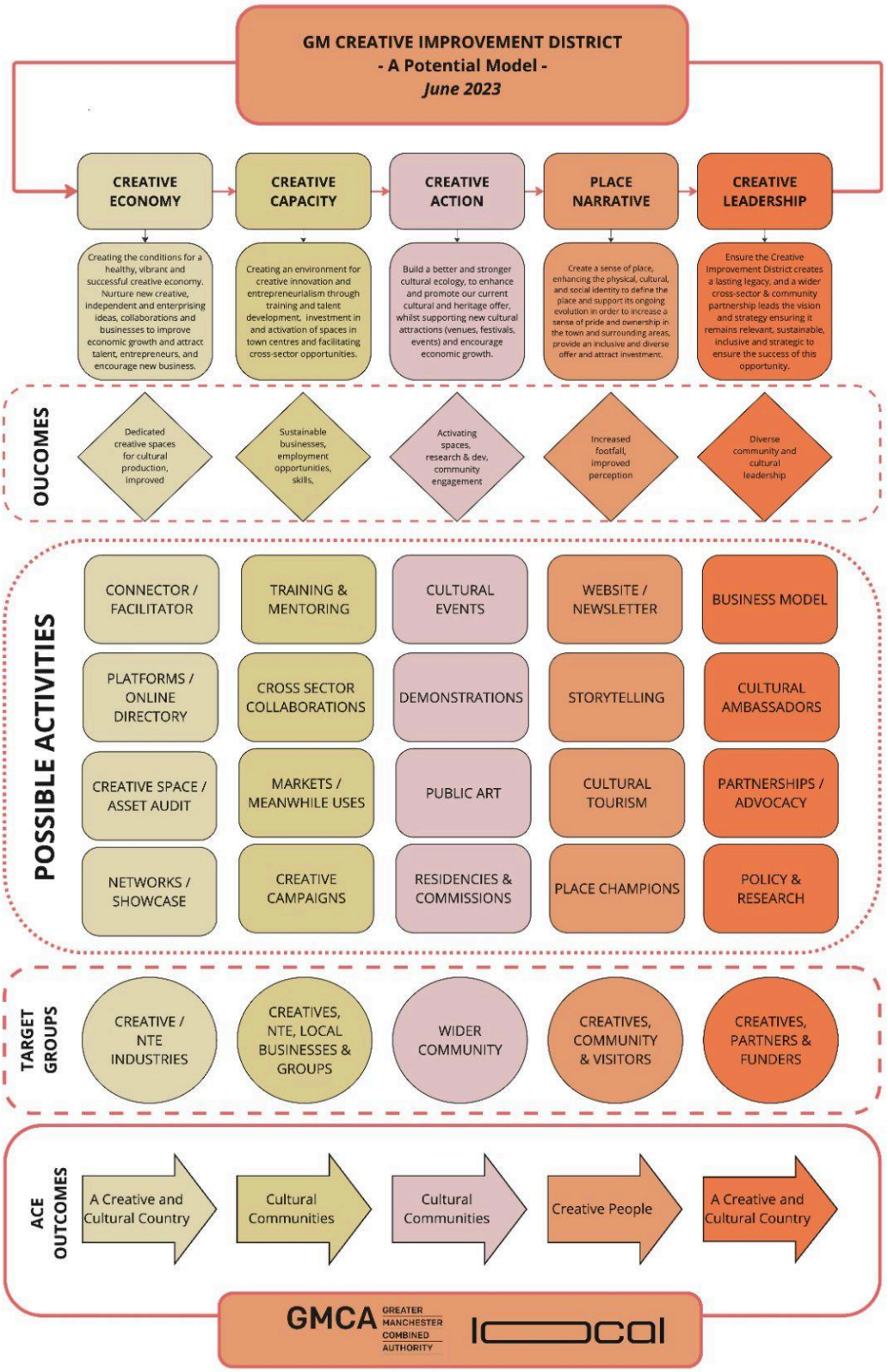

Fig. 3.22 An example CCE LOGIC Framework[196] (expand)

[196] This diagram uses an example from the Greater Manchester Creative Improvement District work I have worked on, which is further explained in the Conclusion chapter in this thesis.

As my work has been unfolding and developing since 2006, a project's purpose and objectives are adapted depending on the brief, the context and/or the opportunity, for example, the investment used to fund the work or the partnership enabling it to happen. To illustrate how, within the context of my work, the objectives may shift, Fig. 3.23 aims to visualise the interdependence of the situation, policy or funding requirements.

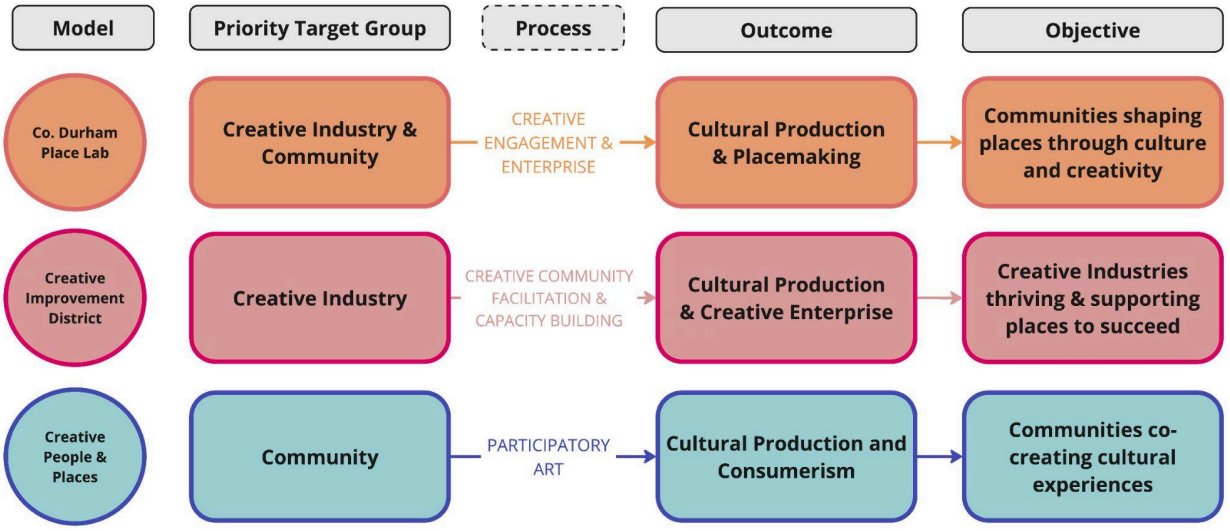

Fig. 3.23 A diagram illustrating the different models that have either influenced my work or in which I have designed, and how they have slightly different objectives and creative processes, but share the same values and principles.

The development of the CCE Framework includes a series of different layers, each with its own function - similar to the workings of cogs in a machine, enabling the production of creative civic engagement. A pillar acts as a support structure for a strand of work and defines a set of objectives for that strand of work. The following section outlines the five key pillars in the CCE LOGIC structure with a description of its accompanying objective. These are illustrated through an example model in Fig 3.22 (above) with further detail in Fig. 3.25 (below).

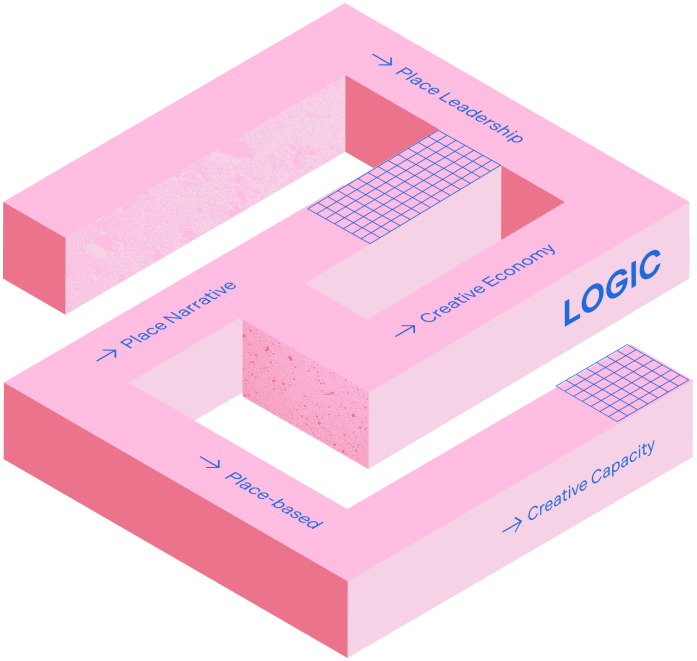

Fig. 3.24 CCE LOGIC - objective headlines or pillars

O1. Creative Economy

Support, nurture and promote the local creative industry sector, facilitating new creative, independent and enterprising ideas, collaborations and businesses to improve economic growth and attract talent, entrepreneurs, and encourage new business.

O2. Creative Community Capacity

Build on existing creative community capacity to enable, drive and deliver creative civic ambition and empower local leadership to help create a more sustainable future and ensure wider engagement is achieved, through partnership working to build skills and confidence and respond to new ways of working.

O3. Creative Action & Innovation

Build a better and stronger cultural ecology, to enhance and promote the current cultural and heritage offer, whilst supporting new cultural attractions (venues, festivals, events) and encourage economic growth, by capitalising on local assets - buildings, spaces and experts, support and facilitate the development of new, high quality cultural experiences, advocate best practices to partners and investors and attract funding for community-led projects.

O4. Place Narrative

Create a sense of place, enhancing the physical, cultural, and social identity to define local distinctiveness and support its ongoing evolution in order to increase a sense of pride and ownership in the town and surrounding areas, provide an inclusive and diverse offer and attract investment through the creation of an inclusive and exciting place brand, attract regional and national PR, and drive innovative placemaking practices.

O5. Place Leadership

Ensure the work remains relevant, sustainable, inclusive and strategic to ensure the success of this project by recruiting a committed and proactive Board who feel ownership of this work, support its implementation and continue to invest in its future development, invest in Board training and leadership and continue to review and evaluate the project aims and objectives. And celebrate success!

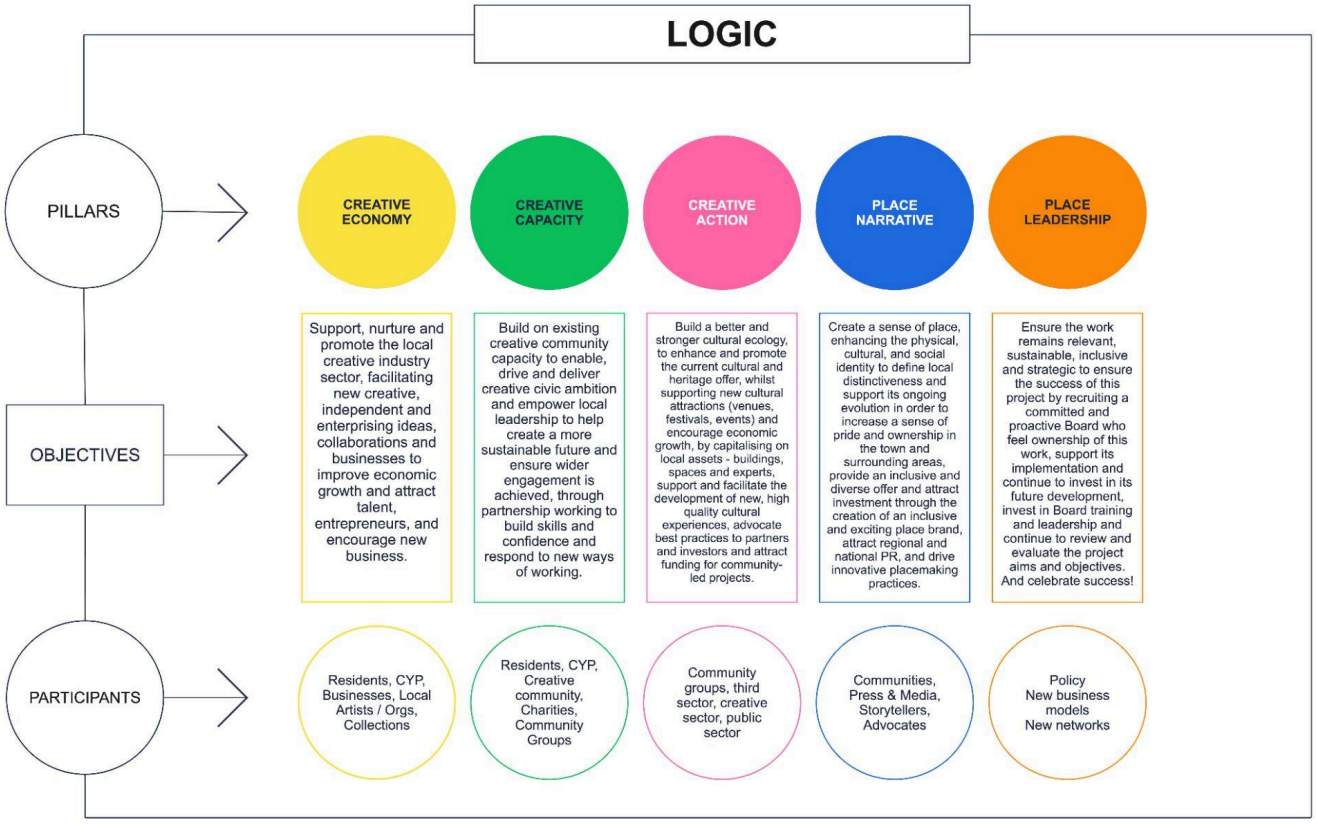

Fig. 3.25 CCE LOGIC - objectives and participants (expand)

Summary

CCE LOGIC uses the same structure as a logic framework, mapping the purpose, objectives and target audiences or participants engaged. It also provides the foundation for an evaluation framework. As the objectives will change, depending on place, the context of the work and other external factors, so will the participants and measures of success, however, it supports as a key function of the CCE Framework. What underpins this and the CCE SYSTEMS is the CCE PLAYBOOK, a series of principles and values that can also be co-designed with participants.

PART 3 - CCE PLAYBOOK: A guide of values and principles

Fig.3.26 CCE PLAYBOOK section of the CCE Framework model

The CCE PLAYBOOK is a cornerstone of the CCE Framework. This Playbook provides the foundational principles and values essential for developing a robust evaluation framework. Given that objectives, participants, and measures of success vary depending on the context, place, and external factors, the CCE PLAYBOOK offers a flexible yet structured approach to maintaining alignment and coherence across different projects.

At the heart of the CCE PLAYBOOK are principles and values that can be co-designed with participants to ensure relevance and buy-in. This can manifest as a Code of Conduct, a Code of Ethics (as used by In Situ), or a manifesto. These guidelines help facilitate a culture of openness, transparency, and respectful behaviour, which are crucial for effective and ethical civic engagement.

Values are integral to our behaviour and decision-making processes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a workshop by Eden Project Communities I attended emphasised the importance of staying true to one's values and purpose amidst a global crisis. Inspired by this, I designed a workshop exercise designed to help project teams identify their values, facilitating team building and ensuring that the project approach aligns with both individual and collective values.

The CCE PLAYBOOK encourages interactive activities that build confidence and coherence within teams, ensuring that the principles guiding the project are reflective of the group's shared values. This alignment is essential for creating impactful and sustainable civic engagement initiatives. The following are a list of the values I feel are integral to my creative practice and the methodological approach in the development of the CCE Framework. These are also mapped in Fig. 3.27 below.

- **Action-focussed** - Not just a talking shop.
- **Collaboration** - Work with others to co-design, co-create, co-produce.
- **Integrity** - Ensure safety, manage risk, consider all opinions.
- **Local-Global** - Established in locality, globally relevant.
- **Culture & Creativity** - Engage, inspire, and transform.
- **Open & Transparent** - Visible and available systems, information and ideas.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion -** Shared language, environments, and opportunities.
- **Sustainability** - Work towards a positive long-term legacy for people and the planet.

Throughout my work, I have been guided and inspired by a diverse range of methods and principles whilst also developing my own. I believe that the context of a situation, place, or opportunity significantly influences the underlying principles. When these principles do not align with core values, change is necessary. However, discovering shared values and principles can unite people, developing shared goals and visions and inviting new contributors into the fold.

Since 2019, I have been working in Rochdale, the birthplace of the Cooperative movement. In 2022, Rochdale established a new Creative People and Places programme called Culture Coop, which implements a cooperative model known as Sociocracy or dynamic governance. This values-based governance system emphasises equal voice, ensuring every member is heard. More details on my work in Rochdale are provided in Chapter 6 - The Maker’s Mile. Working in places with established principles or cooperative models that have inspired the global community is both inspiring and reflective of contemporary applications of these principles. Another example is Durham, where I have also recently worked. At the heart of Durham’s Redhills is the Pitman’s Parliament, a unique assembly that gave the miners a platform to voice their concerns and shape their industry’s future.

I feel it is essential to mention the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a manifesto comprising 17 principles aimed at transforming our world. These goals call for action to end

poverty and inequality, protect the planet, and ensure health, justice, and prosperity for all. I often use the SDGs as a tool in workshops, but also a tool to check in on how I may better consider sustainability. For the CCE Framework, I have developed a set of guiding principles that can be adopted as a playbook, code of practice, or a manifesto - essentially a written and public declaration of intentions, motives, and a call to action.

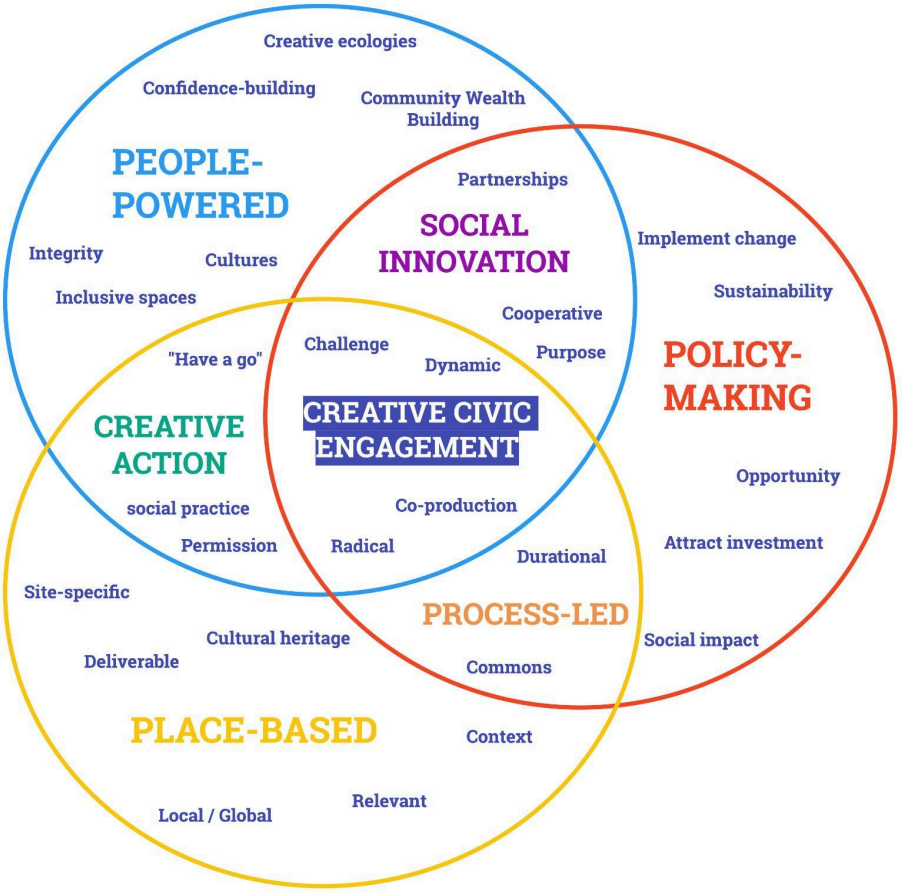

Fig. 3.27 - Venn diagram illustrating my creative practice, highlighting the interconnecting principles and underlying values within each principle (expand)

P1. People-Powered

People-powered placemaking empowers communities by building confidence through methods like community wealth building and creating inclusive spaces. This approach supports local economic growth and ensures that benefits are shared equitably amongst residents. By designing spaces that welcome and include all individuals, we cultivate a sense of belonging and respect. Instilling integrity in these processes ensures transparency and trust, whilst acknowledging and celebrating cultural backgrounds enriches the community fabric. People-powered placemaking champions local voices and experiences,

creating vibrant, resilient environments where everyone can thrive and contribute to a shared vision for their community's future.

P2. Place-based

Place-based culture and civic engagement are vital for enabling strong, resilient communities. By recognizing and valuing the unique histories, traditions, and identities of specific locales, we cultivate a sense of belonging and pride amongst residents. This approach encourages active participation in local governance and decision-making, ensuring that community members have a voice in shaping their environment. Engaging with place-based culture promotes social cohesion, inclusivity, and sustainable development, as it harnesses local knowledge and resources. Ultimately, it strengthens the fabric of society by building empowered, connected communities dedicated to their shared future.

P3. Policy-making

Bringing different perspectives together, connect citizens, artists and policy makers to imagine better futures together. This cross-sector, cross-community dialogue means deeper engagement and meaningful longer term impact. Creative social innovation, community-led policy making, and cooperation prioritise purpose over profit, driving sustainable and inclusive progress. By creating innovative solutions through collaborative efforts, communities can address social challenges with creativity and resourcefulness. Community-led policy making ensures that the voices and needs of local residents shape policies, promoting fairness and equity. Cooperation amongst diverse stakeholders strengthens collective action and shared ownership of outcomes. Emphasising purpose before profit aligns efforts with long-term social and environmental goals, nurturing resilience and well-being. This principle champions a values-driven approach that prioritises human and planetary flourishing over short-term financial gains.

P4. Creative Action

Disrupting the everyday through art and creativity - helping us think differently about the nature of our interactions, both on and offline. We create experimental and collaborative spaces between art, design and society to enable everyone to think in new and creative ways. Taking creative action unites community engagement and place-based working by utilising art, creativity, and design approaches. These tools create opportunities for more inclusive and engaged communities, and supportive environments where diverse voices are heard and valued.

Through creative initiatives, spaces can be transformed into vibrant hubs of interaction, collaboration, and expression. This approach not only enhances the aesthetic and cultural value of a place but also drives social impact by addressing local needs and aspirations. By integrating creativity into community projects, we build stronger, more connected communities, where innovative solutions to social challenges are developed and celebrated.

P5. Process-led / Durational / Slow Art

Positive change through a thoughtful, collaborative action-research approach. We learn by doing, critically reflecting as we go and inviting different perspectives, ideas and solutions. Process-led, durational action emphasises the importance of taking a slow, deliberate approach to creative placemaking, inspired by the Slow Art Movement. This method values learning by doing, allowing time to build meaningful relationships and deeply understand community dynamics. By engaging in sustained, thoughtful actions, we can more effectively demonstrate the transformative impact of creativity in places undergoing change. This approach creates trust, resilience, and a sense of ownership amongst community members, ensuring that changes are thoughtful, inclusive, and sustainable. Through patience and persistent effort, process-led action reveals the profound and lasting benefits of slow, considered development in dynamic environments.

P6. Social Innovation

Creative and civic social innovation, coupled with sustainable business models, are essential for supporting social good and community well-being. Community-led developments, such as community land trusts and community-led housing, empower residents to take charge of their environment and resources. These social innovation models ensure that neighbourhoods and towns thrive sustainably by prioritising collective benefits over individual profit. By promoting equitable access to resources, these initiatives strengthen local economies, enhance social cohesion, and build resilient communities. Embracing creative and civic social innovation creates a collaborative spirit, driving long-term sustainability and ensuring vibrant, inclusive places where everyone can flourish.

SUMMARY

These are the principles in which I have developed as an integral part of my creative practice and are embedded in the development and design of the Framework for Creative Civic Engagement. They are open and flexible, but grounded in what I believe to be the fundamental principles for creative civic engagement. I provide demonstrable examples of how these principles have inspired and/or been applied throughout the case studies.

CONCLUSION

As a practice-based PhD, I have aimed to outline the key methodologies that influence and define my own creative practice and that have become the foundation of my research-led approach to creative engagement in the context of placemaking and nurturing local creative ecologies. Whilst theory supports and validates this methodological approach, it is often the skills and experience of collaborators, partners and practitioners that provides the framework or approach in which I practise. Developing a shared vision, set of values and principles and co-designing a clear purpose or plan with others is key to a successful outcome. With a strong methodological approach outlined here, I will now facilitate the implementation of a set of rules or ‘statements of intent’, delivered through a manifesto for creative civic engagement - the next layer of the CCE Framework.

CHAPTER 4 - CASE STUDY INTRODUCTION

This chapter traces my PhD journey through three major case studies - **Blackburn is Open (2012–2017)**, **Glossop Creates (2017–2024)**, and **The Maker's Mile (2022–2023)** - which collectively illustrate the development and application of the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework. The idea of undertaking a PhD emerged while I was working in Blackburn, where the experience of initiating and delivering a series of creative, place-based projects inspired me to interrogate my own practice more deeply. The design, implementation, and iteration of the CCE Framework have been central to this process, enabling me to critically examine how my creative practice performs, tests, and refines innovative ideas and methods through a series of outputs.

These case studies exemplify how my work has been shaped by an increasing awareness of existing theory and practice, and how my research methodology evolved through iterative testing - learning from each project to inform the next. The work in Blackburn laid the foundation for a longer-term creative action-research project in my hometown of Glossop, Derbyshire, which I continue to manage, and later informed my commissioned work to develop a creative strategy for Rochdale Town Centre.

Presented in chronological order, the case studies demonstrate how the CCE Framework was adapted to suit the unique challenges and opportunities of each context, integrating theory, practice, and local engagement. Each is structured around the Framework's phases - **Observatory**, **Laboratory**, **Factory**, and **Story of Change** - and is accompanied by visual timelines, contextual analysis, and a portfolio of outputs.

The chapter concludes with a **Discussion section**, which offers a comparative analysis of the three case studies, using the original CCE Framework objectives to structure the discussion, whilst reflecting on the adaptability and effectiveness of the framework in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts.

CASE STUDY: BLACKBURN IS OPEN 2012-2017

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Executive Summary
INTRODUCTION
- Timeline

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- The Opportunity

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- Methodology

CREATIVE action-research
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- LABORATORY
- FACTORY
- STORY

IMPACT
PORTFOLIO

Executive Summary

Blackburn is Open (BIO) was a five-year place-based initiative that served as a manifesto, cultural programme, creative district, and creative campaign. Governed through Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, and directed by myself in collaboration with Wayne Hemingway, BIO revitalised Blackburn's cultural landscape through the implementation and facilitation of its creative community and promoting its identity as a hub for creativity. Inspired by the town's motto, *Arte et Labore* (‘by skill and hard work’), the initiative invited and encouraged public participation in creative activities, utilising vacant and derelict spaces for creative production and enterprise, through its celebrated manifesto. With strong support from local business leaders and makers, the BIO campaign successfully established 22 new creative businesses, launched a national festival, and created a high street makerspace, as well as testing and failing and succeeding in many different home-grown cultural initiatives. BIO significantly impacted the town's social and economic fabric, and platformed Blackburn as a place to make and create, whilst also leading to the development of the CCE Framework and the production of this PhD.

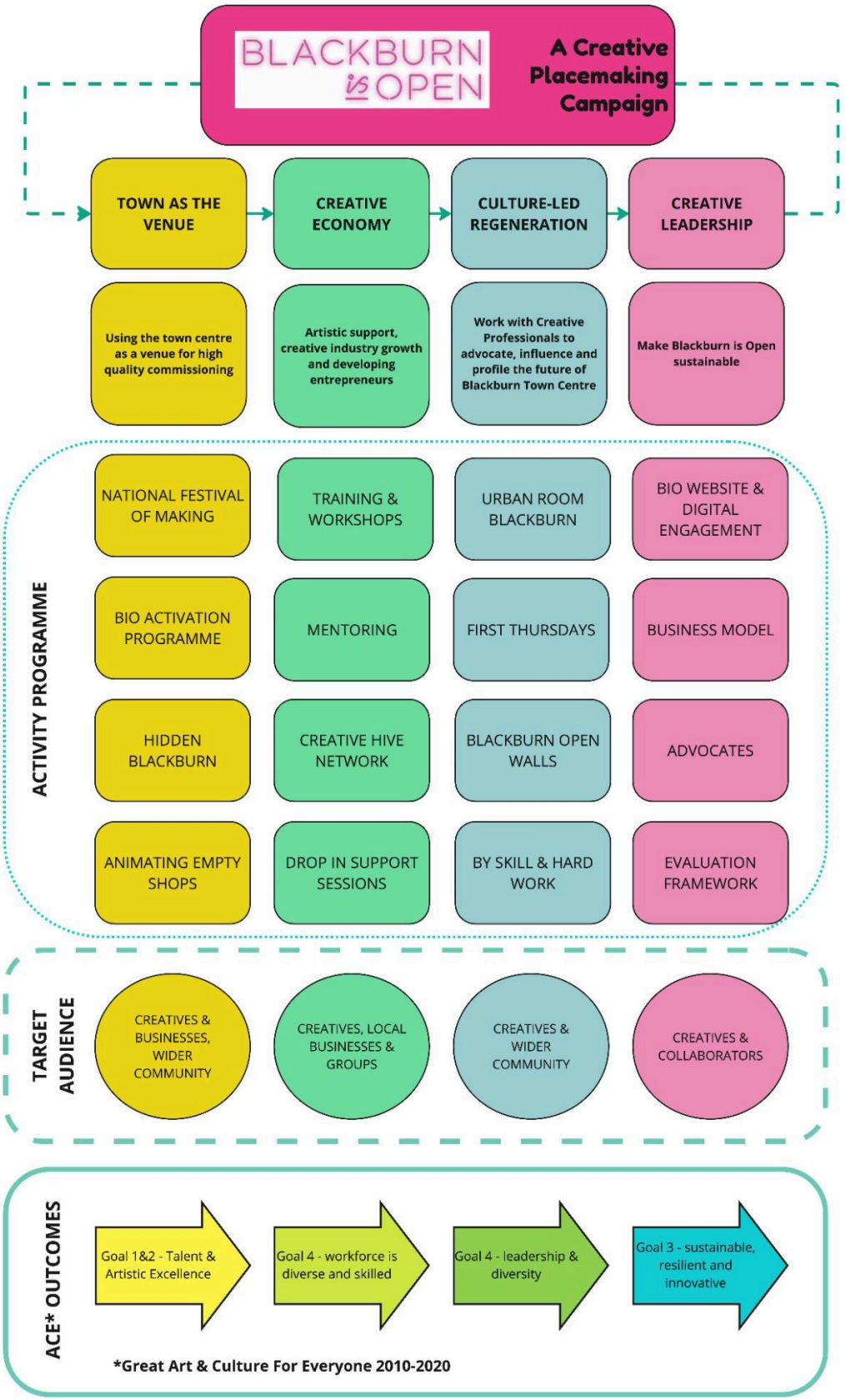

Fig. 4.1 Blackburn is Open CCE Framework

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, I was appointed as a Cultural Planner at Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, marking the beginning of an ambitious and transformative initiative, Blackburn is Open. Over the next five years, until its conclusion in 2017, I directed this action-research-driven strategy to evolve organically into a dynamic and successful creative placemaking campaign.

Initially conceived as a one-year, part-time role with partial funding from the Arts Council of England, my position was designed to integrate the council's regeneration, planning, and culture departments to advance opportunities for culture-led regeneration. A major priority was to transform St. John’s Church, strategically located in the town centre near the shopping mall and bus station, into a vibrant art centre.

Like many post-industrial town centres in Northern England, Blackburn faced significant urban challenges, including vacant buildings, empty shop units, struggling businesses, decreased foot traffic, and a declining night time economy. To address these issues and to better understand the business potential for the art centre - its audience, offerings, and contributions to the broader cultural landscape - I championed an action-research approach. This involved testing ideas in the town centre and cultivating a dynamic creative community to lead the vision, design, and operation of the art centre.

My experience with the abrupt end of the Housing Market Renewal program, which relied heavily on a government-driven agenda, informed my strategy to engage a diverse and influential network of stakeholders and partners. Key amongst them was designer Wayne Hemingway, a Blackburn native with deep ties to local industry, who became a vital advocate, mentor, business partner, and friend. Together, we launched Blackburn is Open, a campaign to galvanise local businesses, artists, councillors, and partners to reimagine the town centre as a hub of creativity and innovation. Our aim was to transform empty spaces into active maker-spaces, inspiring the community, especially young people, to embrace creativity.

The initiative's objectives (detailed in Fig. 4.7 - as a 12 Point Plan) included providing space for creative enterprises, transferring assets for community cultural initiatives, building confidence in the creative sector through partnerships with local businesses and manufacturers, and supports collaboration and experimentation. We aimed to reshape Blackburn's narrative through culture and creativity, trial new ideas for social and economic sustainability, and share our successes regionally and nationally.

What began as a 12-month contract evolved into a five-year commitment (the timeline is illustrated in Fig. 4.2 below), during which I achieved several key milestones: the development of The Making Rooms, the launch of the National Festival of Making, and the inception of numerous new events, projects, and business ventures. amongst these was The Bureau Centre for the Arts CIC, a new arts organisation that successfully transformed St. John's Church into an art centre. (Fig. 4.1 provides a diagram of BIO as a CCE Logic Framework with only 4 objectives as this is an early iteration of the Framework before it was fully designed).

Blackburn is Open has left a lasting legacy, continuing to drive a positive impact in the town. My research-led creative placemaking approach revitalised a struggling town centre, kick-started an evening economy, initiated a maker facility and co-working space, and birthed a new, award-winning national festival. More importantly, it instilled a renewed sense of confidence in Blackburn's creative community and affirmed its contemporary purpose.

The case studies in this thesis are organised according to the CCE Framework. Each study begins with a visual timeline that highlights key activities and achievements. This is followed by a context section, which offers background information on the location's social and economic landscape, cultural heritage, and the opportunities presented by the creative placemaking initiative. The study then details the core components of action-research: INPUTS, CREATIVE ACTION, and STORY OF CHANGE. Finally, it concludes with references to the case study's Portfolio contributions.

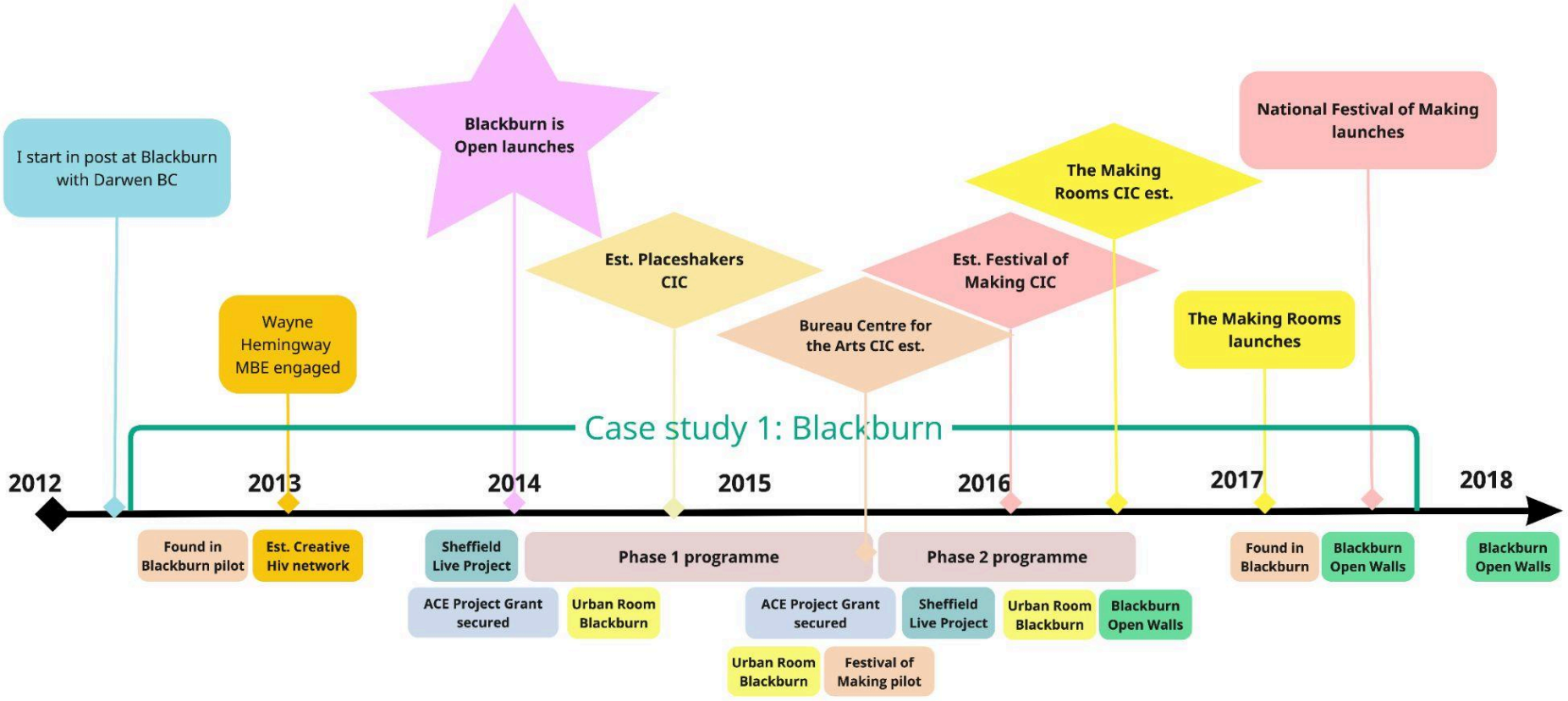

Fig. 4.2 Blackburn is Open timeline (expand)

CONTEXT

Whilst my role at the Council began in 2012, I had been working across East Lancashire, including Blackburn, since 2003. This experience gave me a solid understanding of the region's context and a network of collaborators and partners. However, my previous work focused on neighbourhoods across the borough rather than the town centre. As a post-industrial town in Lancashire, Blackburn has experienced significant social and economic changes over the past fifty years. It is famously the home of James Hargreaves, inventor of the Spinning Jenny, which spearheaded innovation in weaving and helped make Blackburn one of the first industrialised towns in the world. However, the decline of large-scale industry has led to challenges, including high unemployment and limited social mobility. Since the 1950s, Blackburn's population has become increasingly diverse, with significant immigration from the Indian subcontinent enriching the town's cultural fabric.

Since 2012, Blackburn town centre has undergone substantial investment and upgrades. The Mall shopping centre has expanded, attracting new retailers like Costa Coffee and H&M[197], whilst the renowned Blackburn Market has been redeveloped and rebranded. A new health centre has been constructed in the heart of the town, and the Blackburn College campus has been modernised, transforming the town's skyline and attracting a diverse student population, both local and international. These developments have significantly revitalised the town centre, but more initiatives are needed to ensure Blackburn stands out amidst the national decline in high street confidence.

Further capital enhancements have also been underway, including the development of the Cathedral Quarter, a new bus station, and a leisure centre. Historically, Blackburn has offered a vibrant shopping experience, a thriving nightlife, and a robust leisure scene. However, ensuring a vibrant town centre - a community hub where people gather for interaction, discourse, work, rest, and play - requires an active placemaking approach, integrating and networking ideas with a DIY culture[198]. My contract in Blackburn commenced at the same time as the brand new Creative People and Places (CPP) programme was initiated by the Arts Council of England. Super Slow Way[199] was established and launched at

[197] Whilst Blackburn was establishing 'Clone Town' traits, attracting familiar brands to the high street, it was also supporting start-up businesses, and social enterprises, but nothing with a creative or cultural focus before the BIO campaign.
[198] The Science Museum has an interesting definition on DIY Culture connected to the context in which I refer to it here - A brief history of DIY, from the shed to the maker movement | Science Museum (accessed July 2024)
[199] https://superslowway.org.uk/ (accessed March 2024)

the same time as Blackburn is Open and other national initiatives such as Night at the Museum[200] and Get it Loud in Libraries[201], to animate libraries and museums at night.

Making and Manufacturing

Blackburn is a town with a rich tradition of 'making' and manufacturing, with around 15% of jobs in the manufacturing sector in 2012, more than twice the national average[202]. This strength in manufacturing is an advantage that helps the town prosper as the 'Made in Britain' campaign continues to develop. Keeping this tradition visible to Blackburn's residents as they go about their daily lives was central to our campaign, connecting the local population with their heritage and inspiring a new generation.

When I began working in Blackburn, I engaged with several key manufacturing businesses, including Crown Paints, Graham & Brown (wallpaper specialists), Cookson & Clegg (original manufacturers of British Army uniforms), Perspex, MGS Technical Plastics, and The Cardboard Box Company. Many of these major manufacturers were represented on local business forums and the Local Economic Partnership, facilitating their support for the Blackburn is Open initiative through existing local authority governance structures.

Art and Culture

My role as ‘Cultural Planner’ was based at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, overseen by the Art and Culture Manager. Designated as a ‘cold spot’[203] for the Arts Council of England, external cultural partners invested in the role, with the aim to explore art-based roles within the Council regeneration team. Being situated in the museum, the home of the Spinning Jenny, I was surrounded by manufacturing and industrial heritage. This historical context, juxtaposed with contemporary design and innovation ideas, served as a constant inspiration for the making traditions inherent to the Blackburn is Open framework.

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[200] https://www.culture24.org.uk/museums-at-night/ (accessed March 2024)
[201] https://getitloudinlibraries.com/ (accessed March 2024)
[202] Between 2010 and 2012, the manufacturing sector in Blackburn accounted for approximately 15% of all jobs, which was significantly higher than the national average of 8% during the same period. Regarding creative industries, the percentage of employment was lower compared to the national figures, with the creative industries in the North West region, where Blackburn is located, making up about 4.8% of the employment. (Office for National Statistics: Employees in the UK by industry: 2018 and Jobs in the creative industries and occupations in London and all other regions of the UK, 2010 to 2021)
[203] 'Cold spot' denotes areas of deprivation with lower social mobility, often rural, compared to urban areas, per 2017 index. (Arts Council England Rural evidence and data review 2019). Other terms used are ‘Left behind neighbourhoods’ and Arts Council of England now use the term Priority Places.

'From weaving to paper-making, mining to valve production, Blackburn with Darwen has always been a centre of industrial innovation and creativity. While cotton manufacture accelerated the growth of the borough during the Industrial Revolution, brewing, mining, paper-making, ceramic production and many other industries thrived alongside. In the 20th century, light engineering industries became increasingly dominant and companies such as Mullard and the Royal Ordnance Factory were two of the biggest employers in the area.'[204]

I played a role in the successful application process for establishing Super Slow Way, one of the first Arts Council CPP initiatives. Spanning the East Lancashire section of the Leeds Liverpool Canal, Super Slow Way continues to deliver strategically significant work. Its launch featured a commission, The Arc by Beth Derbyshire[205] (Fig. 4.3 and 4.4 below), *'a moving sculpture comprising a wooden structure resembling the typical terraced housing of Pennine Lancashire, placed upon a narrow boat. Inside, newly commissioned films explore the industrial and cultural heritage of the region.'*[206]

Other initiatives included Museums at Night, an annual national programme by Culture24 to animate museum spaces after hours. Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery participated to support the nighttime economy, eventually leading to the Night at the Museum music initiative by local promoter Pete Townsend, which remains a sell-out event.

In 2012, the year I began my role in Blackburn, several major cultural events took place that likely influenced my approach. Regionally, the Preston Guild[207], an event held every 20 years since 1542, took place. Nationally, the London Olympics and Paralympic Games culminated in the Arts Council-supported Cultural Olympiad, showcasing English art and culture on a global stage. Reflecting its expanded remit, the Arts Council of England's strategic framework was refreshed to 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone' in 2013, providing context and strategic alignment for my work in Blackburn town centre.

Heritage

Blackburn boasts a rich cultural heritage landscape, with numerous large-scale mills, the Leeds Liverpool Canal, and Victorian architecture, including Blackburn Town Hall and

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[204] Blackburn Art Gallery & Museum website, https://blackburnmuseum.org.uk/collections/industrial-history/ (accessed March 2024)
[205] https://www.bethderbyshire.co.uk/general-3-2 (accessed March 2024)
[206] https://publicartonline.org.uk/whatsnew/projects/article.php/The+Ark+by+Beth+Derbyshire.html (accessed March 2024)
[207] https://www.visitpreston.com/article/2755/Guild-2012-Events (accessed March 2024)

Blackburn Art Gallery and Museum. Additionally, several heritage buildings, such as the historic Cotton Exchange and Tony's Ballroom, remain underutilised. As Jane Jacobs famously noted, 'New ideas need old buildings,'[208] which became a key objective of the Blackburn is Open strategy.

Fig 4.3 Arc by Beth Derbyshire, situated in Blackburn town centre 2013

The opportunity

As the newly appointed 'Cultural Planner' for the Council, I had the opportunity to shape my brief as the job role was quite open and flexible. Having just worked on a region-wide cultural strategy and engagement programme, it was exciting to apply my energy, my ideas, my network and my knowledge to a smaller geographical area, providing a defined area - being a town centre - and developing a creative action-research model, with sustainability embedded within it.

With the support from my line manager, and other colleagues within the local authority, we slowly co-designed an approach that fully embraced both the opportunities and challenges,

[208] Jacobs, J. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Modern Library): 50th Anniversary Edition. Random House Inc, 2011. p.201

weaving in partners and mapping assets, that could help develop a town-centre cultural canvas or testbed. Due to my lack of knowledge and connections in Blackburn, I wanted to ensure anything I produced as a facilitator, a curator, a producer was about research - improving my knowledge and understanding of Blackburn's creative community who would essentially be the custodians of the St John's art centre.

Working as a team across culture and regeneration, we designed an approach to address the challenges, we strengthened the network of advocates through the various opportunities. For example, engaging the private sector who were already investing support for projects such as Blackburn Youth Zone and the emerging Blackburn BID. With a town that is distinct for its high rates of self-employment and numbers of people employed in manufacturing and craft, and with 'making' in its DNA, in 2013, Blackburn is Open was conceived with partners, to work with the town's enterprising population to help revitalise Blackburn town centre through arts and culture.

A personal reflection:
On March 18, 2013, Wayne Hemingway hosted the first workshop with various business leaders, Councillors, and council staff to promote a creative, culture-led approach to regenerating the town centre and enlivening the high streets. Wayne dedicated one trip per month to Blackburn to work with me to further develop ideas, advocate for the initiative, and promote our approach. We engaged with local creatives, attended events, and delivered inspirational talks at the college and in meetings, whilst also helping to host creative support sessions. The initial workshop coincided with the loss of my father on March 17, so I was unable to attend. However, this period became a time for me to invest in my passion for creative placemaking, a term I would come to understand more deeply in the following years.

Fig 4.4 Poster promoting the series of activities delivered as part of The Arc programme, in Blackburn town centre, 2013

INPUTS

Governance - A steering group was established, made up of senior managers and Directors within the Council, who would oversee the implementation of a 12-point plan with the aim of revitalising the town centre, improving the night time economy and attracting new investment. Initially devised as a 12 month pilot programme, the ambition and approach was championed by both the Deputy Chief Executive of Blackburn Council, Andrew Lightfoot, and independent designer Wayne Hemingway MBE.

> *"I meet creative people all the time who come from Blackburn and they are some of the most hard working and talented people you could wish to meet. We have the 'big hitters' like the acclaimed film director Michael Winterbottom and the director of The Manchester International Festival, Christine Cort, but also a small army of Blackburnians making a difference up and down the UK. Blackburn has always been*

bursting with talent and we want to do all we can to support this and let people know Blackburn is Open to them."[209]

Design - The Blackburn is Open initiative facilitated and promoted the implementation of ideas, both strategically and practically, and played a significant role in championing the importance of quality design and application in every aspect of delivery.

Fig 4.5 The development of the Blackburn is Open branding, maximising the use of the town's motto 'Arte et Labore' as seen on the Council's crest and Blackburn Rovers FC emblem. Design by Source Creative, 2013.

Collaborating with local designer Stephen Caton of Source Creative[210], our project trio co-designed all aspects of the brand identity and campaign, continually implementing brand value – from marketing materials, shop signage and internal presentation, digitally printed artefacts and public art – communicating Blackburn, not as the crap town as featured in the popularist book series, but as a modern, forward thinking, creative town (Figs. 4.5 and 4.6).

The motto of the town was established in 1856 and is Arte et Labore, correctly translated as 'by art and by labour' but often translated as 'by skill and hard work'. It sits proudly above the Town Hall and is the motto of the famous Blackburn Rovers Football Club featuring on its logo. Source Creative produced a brand new typeface for the programme, which was implemented across all the main strands of work - which will be explained in more detail in the following case study.

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[209] Wayne Hemingway MBE, HemingwayDesign (quoted in the Blackburn is Open Manifesto - Appendix P4.2)
[210] https://sourcecreative.co.uk/work/blackburn-is-open (accessed March 2024)

Fig. 4.6 Blackburn is Open bespoke typeface, designed by Stephen Caton of Source Creative[211]

Finance - Prior to the Blackburn is Open being established, I developed a logic framework titled 'A Town Centre of Creative Excellence (2013)' which was used as part of a funding application to the Arts Council of England (ACE)[212], outlining the aims, objectives, activities, expected outcomes and how each activity delivered ACE investment goals. Between 2013 and 2015, the initiative received £150k of funding from two different project grants from the Arts Council England, for 3 years' worth of activity. Blackburn with Darwen BC also financially supported the project and provided staff support from the Communications, Regeneration, Culture and Environment directorates.

> Please give us a concise description of the activity you are asking us to support?
>
> *Blackburn is Open is an innovative programme of projects, events and activities aimed to help shape a creative profile and offer for Blackburn town centre. This creative-led regeneration project aims to engage artists, designers, and makers in the heart of the town centre. As part of this growing programme, we would like ACE support to help deliver some key areas of activity; The Urban Room, The Festival of Making, a quarterly publication and a special activity for the First Thursday's programme.*
>
> Taken from ACE bid, 2015

[211] Ibid.
[212] In 2012, Arts Council of England's strategy 'Great Art for Everyone' was launched.

1) Empty Property business rate incentive scheme

This scheme will give a 100% discount on business rates for a 12 month trial period, capped at £10,000 per unit in a designated exemption. The discount is available on top of any other rates relief a business may be entitled to (e.g, SBRR) and is available to a new or expanding business which will occupy an empty retail unit.

2) Arte et labore: stimulating new creative businesses

This scheme will offer creative industries a 25% rent discount on the Council's vacant units in the intervention area and flexible lease terms, and is aimed as a catalyst to diversify the retail offer and encourage more footfall in the area. Partners will provide talented graduates and creative industry start-up entrepreneurs with town centre studio / incubator space from which they can create and sell work.

Alongside this we will develop an exhibition programme involving established living artists with links to Blackburn.

3) Bring on the Fab Lab!

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is conducting a feasibility study on hosting a Fab Lab in Blackburn, providing cutting edge technology to local businesses, colleges, creative professionals and resident artists.

4) A vibrant annual town centre cultural events programme

Establishment of an annual cultural events programme, comprising of:

- 4 major town centre events each year;
- A series of monthly one-off 'events' / attractions in public areas (themed and supported by sponsors / retailers);
- Themed street markets;
- Arts events.

5) Kick-starting the night time economy

To kick start the night time economy the Council will:

- Open Blakey's to casual customers on Friday and Saturday nights;
- Hold at least 12 functions in King George's Hall each year e.g. Club Tropicana and Utopia Reunion;
- Offer a business rate incentive to town centre licensees who join a night-time economy working group and commit to staging live acts alongside King George's Hall and Blakeys on a frequent basis;
- Establish 'Student Thursdays and 'live music Fridays' as regular themes for the town centre.

6) A zero-tolerance approach to enforcement and anti-social behaviour

To improve the perception of the town centre:

- The policing presence within the town centre will be increased;
- Issues in relation to HMOs and Shisha Café will continue to be addressed;
- Planning powers to halt the proliferation of HMOs have been adopted;
- The town centre street drinking ban will be rigorously enforced in the high profile primary retail areas.

7) 'Maxing' our own town centre assets

The Council will maximise the attraction and availability of key town centre assets – King George's Hall, Blakeys, Library and the Museum – to increase footfall into the town centre.

8) Easier access and free parking

The Council has initiated fundamental review of the town centre movement strategy to improve and simplify pedestrian and vehicle access into the town centre. Free After Three parking Monday to Friday will be introduced from November on all Council car parks.

9) Making it cleaner and greener

Enhanced street cleansing, increased litter bin emptying, better quality grounds maintenance and shrub maintenance will be provided. In addition, high quality planting schemes will be introduced throughout the year displaying a range of flowering herbaceous planting supplemented with winter/spring/summer bedding plants in the current planting beds and planters in Blackburn town centre.

10) Loving our heritage

A bid is being prepared for a Northgate THI. Northgate is the oldest area in Blackburn and was on the roman road between Ribchester and Manchester. The existing conservation area includes King George's Hall, Library, Cotton Exchange, courts and former Police Station, Town Hall and the College's Victoria building. Funding could contribute to improvements to Blakey Moor, Town Hall Street, Northgate properties and King George's Hall frontage.

In addition to the THI we will develop clear strategies for key town centre buildings working with owners to bring them back into use through a combination of practical support and / or use of statutory enforcement powers (given their listed status).

11) The BID and a new approach to governing the town centre

This is a business led initiative where local businesses and other stakeholders form partnerships to implement local improvements that benefit their business community. Businesses decide on the issues they want to address, the amount of funding to be raised and the services they want to implement. The successful the BID commenced on 1st January 2014 and will operate for 5 years, thereby providing additional resources for the town centre and an increase in stakeholder buy-in.

12) Effectively marketing 'the place'

A full place promotion strategy will be developed working with key influencers to spread consistent positive key messages about the town's image in national and niche media. This is not a re-branding exercise.

8

Fig. 4.7 The 12 Point Plan as illustrated in the Blackburn is Open manifesto, 2013 (A full manifesto is included in Appendix P4.2)

Assets - Understanding what assets are available for a project which enables local creatives and makers to take over spaces in the town centre, to demonstrate their talents and wares. I was aware of the range of spaces that could be utilised such as council-owned vacant shop units, cultural assets including the library, the Museum and Art Gallery and King Georges Hall. There were larger vacant buildings, including the old Cotton Exchange, Bentley's (a Council-owned empty building adjacent to the Museum and Art Gallery, used to be a nightclub called Bentley's), Tony's Ballroom and St. John's Church. And the spaces in between, including the public realm, the shopping mall and car parks.

The vision - co-created through conversations with a range of placemakers who became key partners and stakeholders in the campaign including artists, local business owners, and residents:

> *'Every empty, underused and misused space will be populated with activity based around Arte et Labore - skills, creativity and hard work.*
> *'Spaces will be filled with creative cooks, dressmakers, furniture makers, photographers, bakers, printers, jewellers and makers of all persuasions who have a passion for creativity, industriousness and hard work.*
> *'Empty buildings in the town centre will once more 'hum' with the sound of discovery and invention. A FabLab will also be developed in one of these empty spaces providing new opportunities to develop skill and industry.*
> *'A variety of trades and crafts were once in the centre of any town and that is where they should be again to maintain vibrant and living town centres'.*[213]

Pop-Up art centre - In January 2014, the Blackburn is Open pop-up art centre launched, utilising two vacant shop units owned by the council, located opposite the Town Hall. These spaces were transformed by staff from the local manufacturers Crown Paints and Graham & Brown wallpaper, showcasing their design and decoration skills. The opening event was attended by council members, senior colleagues, local business owners, media representatives, and partners, including the Arts Council of England and Blackburn-born Christine Cort, then Managing Director of the Manchester International Festival.[214] The pop-up art centre served as a vital resource for local creatives to discuss project and business ideas, where I offered advice, guidance, and connections to additional information or funding. It quickly became a dynamic hub for testing ideas, hosting discussions, and presenting maker markets and exhibitions.

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[213] Blackburn is Open Manifesto, 2013, Appendix P4.2
[214] Design guru Wayne Hemingway aims to boost town's culture | Lancashire Telegraph (accessed March 2024)

Fig. 4.8 Blackburn is Open pop-up art centre, Jan 2014 (Image credit: Richard Tymon)

Creative leadership - As a Cultural Planner funded by the Arts Council of England, my role was to enhance collaboration between culture and regeneration departments within the local authority. My task was to transform a former church, managed by the Council, into an art centre, despite the lack of initial feasibility or market research. Discovering that 27% of Blackburn town centre's properties were vacant, mostly retail units, I devised a strategy to use these spaces for research and development. With a limited budget and a need to manage expectations across the creative community and colleagues within the Council, I proceeded to commission a structural survey and architectural plans for St. John's Church alongside producing activities to understand the needs and ideas from Blackburn's creative and cultural partners.

Methodology

The Blackburn is Open initiative took place over a number of phases, navigated by a **creative action-research** approach. This approach enabled me, as the program lead, to observe, test, act, and reflect, but also to build confidence and trust with local artists and creatives, as well as the main partners (the Council and the manufacturing businesses) in taking a creative and design-led approach to regenerating the town centre. Inspired by Deveron Project's 'The Town is the Venue', Pop Up City, and Dan Thompson's Placeshaking

TED Talk, we focused on transforming vacant spaces into dynamic cultural hubs (Figs. 1.5, 1.6 and 4.8). By engaging with the community through workshops and events, we created a sense of ownership and collaboration. This iterative process allowed us to adapt our strategies based on feedback and insights, ensuring that the initiative was responsive to the needs and aspirations of Blackburn's residents. The creative action-research methodology proved instrumental in identifying opportunities for innovation and growth, ultimately contributing to the town's vibrant cultural landscape.

Utilising an evaluation-led approach, I developed a '**Town Centre of Excellence Framework'** logic framework to design a programme with clear objectives, and ideas to further test. (See Appendix P4.3a - BIO Phase 2 Project Plan 2015). The programme aims included:

- Using the town centre as a venue for high quality commissioning
- Artistic support, creative industry growth and developing entrepreneurs
- Work with creative professionals to advocate, influence and profile the future of Blackburn town centre
- Make Blackburn is Open sustainable

Concept	– Blackburn is Open facilitates ideas... business, events, exhibitions, product development, and helps take them to the next stage.
Make	– Blackburn is Open will help find space, partners, funders etc to make their idea happen, including the use of The Making Rooms
Test	– Ideas can be tested through pop up shops, prototyping at The Making Rooms
Launch	– Blackburn is Open will promote the idea through our By Skill & Hard Work zine, website, social media etc. We will signpost where you can actively sell your work or business idea. This may include taking on a shop unit, pop up shop, online or at a Makers Market.
Celebrate	– At the Festival of Making and at Best of Britannia or through the Creative Hive.

Fig. 4.9 Blackburn is Open action-research model 2015 (expand)

CREATIVE ACTION-RESEARCH

OBSERVATORY

As an initial research activity, in June 2012, I curated and delivered the **Founded in Blackburn** festival, a weekend-long event aimed at activating the emerging network and ideas within the community. By commissioning local artists to create low-budget artworks in derelict and often inaccessible spaces, the festival brought these areas to life. It centred around the touring project 'Mobile Republic'[215] by Abandon Normal Devices, which included a mobile caravan piece planned to tour Blackburn. This event provided a valuable opportunity to observe local dynamics, engage with artists like Daniel Weaver and Huckleberry Films (in collaboration with designer Stephen Caton of Source Creative), test new ideas, and begin understanding audience interests.[216]

Each event and activity was documented through photography and attendance figures, gathering insights, ideas and feedback to help inform the next creative research activity[217]. This formed part of the local Council's vision to improve the night time offer of the town, utilise under-used spaces and empty shops to host arts activities and to improve the perception of the town centre.

Campaign and Manifesto - The Blackburn is Open (BIO) campaign was promoted through a growing network and its website and social media channels. The pop-up art centre served as a platform for makers to initiate ideas for events, projects, and new businesses. The campaign's manifesto aimed to communicate its ambitions and encourage participation. An extract from the 2013 Blackburn is Open Manifesto (see Appendix P4.2) invited creatives, makers, and craftspeople to join the movement by ensuring quality, hard work, and creativity were central to all initiatives. The manifesto outlined criteria such as improving Blackburn's profile, providing inspiration and innovation, supporting the nighttime economy, and further enables collaboration, whilst creating a key advocacy document to share with stakeholders and potential partners.

Creative Hive network - In collaboration with Creative Lancashire, I established a new network for creatives, artists, designers and makers, as well as students who were studying art and craft at Blackburn College. The network aimed to gather research on the needs and

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[215] https://www.andfestival.org.uk/mobilerepublic/ (accessed January 2023)

[216] https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/9880447.festivals-fused-blackburn-summer-showcase/ (accessed March 2024)

[217] See Appendix P4.1b, P4.3c, P4.10 for data collection tables.

challenges of the local creative community whilst facilitating idea-sharing and peer connections, eventually becoming a sub-group of the established business network, The Hive (see Fig. 4.10 below).

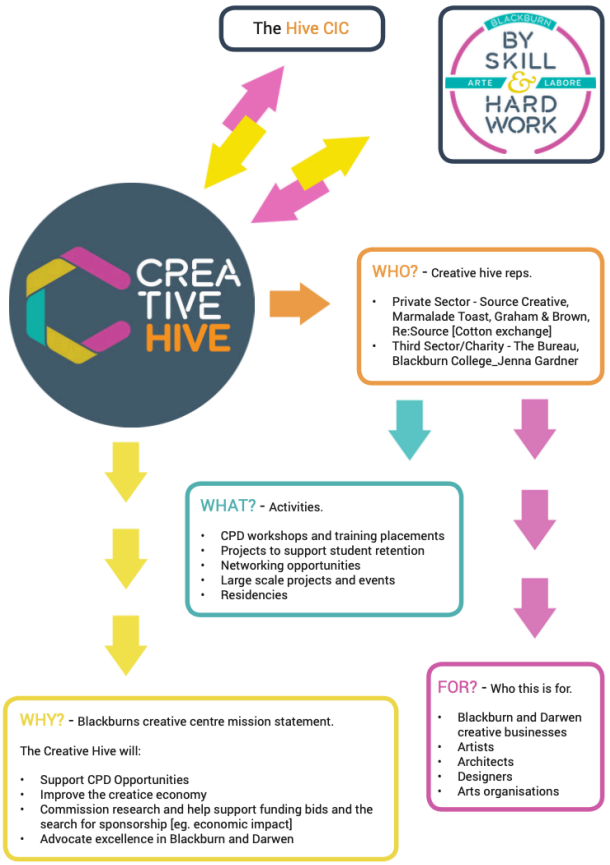

Fig. 4.10 A diagram demonstrating the potential to connect the Creative Hive with The Hive business network

Precedents - I researched several creative placemaking examples, such as the award-winning 'New Windows on Willesden Green' project, which revitalised Willesden High Road. Led by The Architecture Foundation and supported by the Mayor's Outer London Fund, this initiative served as an inspiration.[218]

The Blackburn is Open (BIO) initiative was an iterative action-research project that introduced essential 'observation' methods to address existing gaps. The creation of a creative network, the testing of spaces, and ad hoc cultural programming were crucial tools for developing the programme and securing funding for future phases. These efforts laid the groundwork for a sustainable creative ecosystem in Blackburn.

[218] https://issuu.com/cabinetofcuriosity/docs/new_windows_on_willesden_catalogue (accessed March 2024)

LABORATORY

The initiative was set up late 2013 with a grant secured from Arts Council England and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, delivering a test-bed of activities in the run up to Christmas (see Appendix P.4.3b for the full programme). Maximising on the late night shopping, Blackburn is Open organised a series of maker markets, workshops, film and events aimed to provide an alternative offer for creative professionals and families. In January 2014, the Blackburn is Open pop up art centre opened its doors launching the Blackburn is Open manifesto, and DIY activities commenced to be programmed:

- **ArtSpace -** A monthly 'show and tell', organised by local artist, Kerris Casey-St Pierre.
- **Drink & Draw** - A monthly social event of themed live drawing, organised by Blackburn is Open intern, Sophie Skellern. The small entrance fee covered the cost of hiring the models.
- **Papergirl,** originally initiated from Berlin, where art is created and collected from a global creative community, that is exhibited and then rolled up and distributed randomly to passers-by.
- **First Thursdays -** As well as inviting ideas from the local community, we also took inspiration from other towns and cities, nationally and internationally, and tested them ourselves. Cape Town's First Thursday programme – curating a range of evening activities every first Thursday of the month – took place for the first 12 months of the BiO initiative. The aim is to open after 5pm, providing a focal time for people to venture into the town centre and experience a vibrant evening of entertainment, shopping and hospitality. First Thursday's strengthened relationships, brought people out who would normally work from home, provided a non-exhaustive opportunity to further test the market for music, exhibitions, fashion trends, performances and workshops.
- **By Skill & Hard Work zine -** A new quarterly zine was produced to showcase stories from Blackburn's skilled makers - from chefs, artists, bike repair and taxidermists, music makers and future urbanists, the magazine was distributed to creative neighbourhoods in Preston, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool to help celebrate Blackburn's talent.

Blackburn is Open became widely accepted as a model of best practice for engaging local creative people to support the local creative economy and the prosperity of their town centre.

[re]create Blackburn, Sheffield Live Project - In collaboration with Sheffield University's School of Architecture, Master's students in architecture developed design research with

visible and tangible impacts on their work and proposals, shaping a better future for the town (see Appendix P4.4). The students occupied empty properties in Blackburn, creatively engaging local businesses, residents, and young people in discussions about heritage and geography whilst encouraging skill-sharing exercises to gain a deeper understanding of the town's potential. The publication 'Blackburn ReMade'[219] offered speculative ideas and aspirations for future place-makers. This award-winning live project significantly influenced and inspired BIO partners by providing high-quality visualisations for a broad audience of stakeholders and funders, attracting national partners to participate in BIO and the first Urban Room (detailed further on in the case study) and providing me with an invaluable collaboration with the University, cementing our already robust partnership. The first of two Live Projects in collaboration with Blackburn is Open, the project accelerated the development of initial research and visions for what would become The Making Rooms (explained further below).

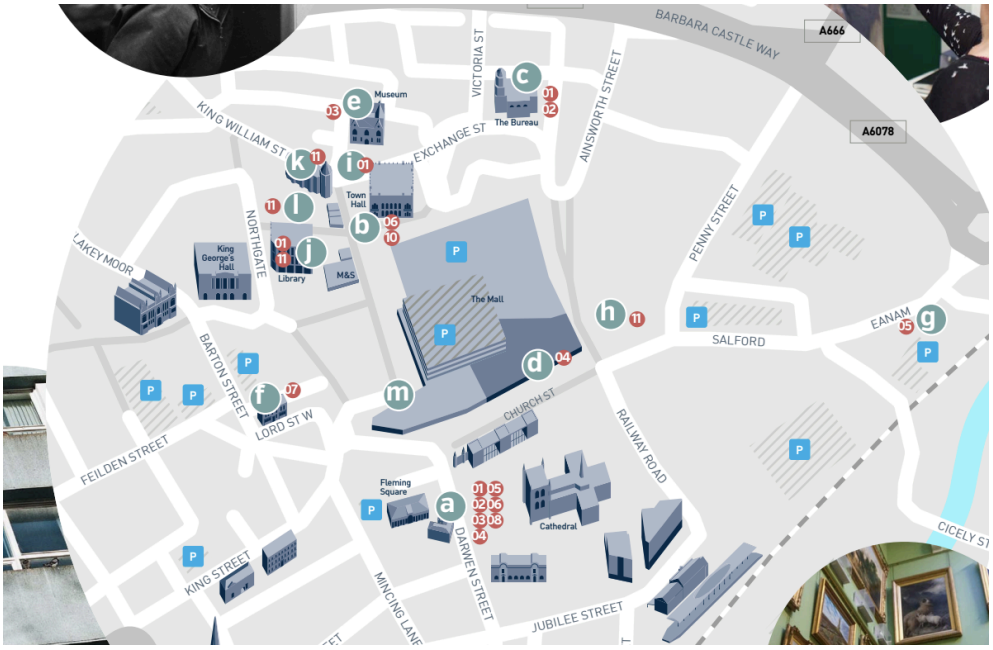

Fig. 4.11 The Found in Blackburn festival map taken from a section of the promotional leaflet. March 2017.

Found in Blackburn was a contemporary art festival that developed from the initial Founded in Blackburn festival and inspired by the various projects and activities that responded to hidden, derelict spaces across the town centre (see Fig. 4.11 above). With funding from the National Heritage Lottery, the aim was to continue to open doors to hidden spaces, collections and stories in the town centre, unlocking the potential for future

[219] Sheffield School of Architecture, Blackburn Remade. The University of Sheffield. 2014

developments and engagement. Inspired by PlacED's Hidden Liverpool festival,[220] this was to be the final event to be developed through the Blackburn is Open initiative in March 2017. Produced by BIO Intern, Sophie Skellern, the event increased footfall to a variety of spaces that would not normally be used for contemporary art exhibitions and performances. These included the stables owned by Thwaites brewery, adjacent to the Leeds Liverpool canal, Radio Lancashire's offices and Blackburn Cathedral. (See Appendix P4.7 for detailed programme)

The Cotton Exchange, a large-scale heritage building situated in the heart of the town's 'cultural quarter', was bought to be developed as an art and community enterprise centre. Claiming to be inspired by the BIO ethos of testing and trailing ideas whilst it carried out capital developments in its journey to become a beacon for cultural production, the charity continues to programme temporary, site-specific artistic responses to the heritage of the building, working in partnership with the region's festivals and local community organisations.[221]

The laboratory phase of Blackburn is Open embodied a 'have a go' ethos, testing new ideas in eclectic, second-hand spaces to elevate Blackburn as a hub for prototyping, innovation, and invention. Launched in late 2013 with funding from Arts Council England and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, the initiative offered a series of maker markets, workshops, films, and events during the holiday season to attract creative professionals and families. The pop-up art centre opened in January 2014 with the Blackburn is Open manifesto, nurturing collaborations between local makers and manufacturing partners. Key activities included ArtSpace's monthly 'show and tell', Drink & Draw thematic live drawing events, and the Berlin-inspired Papergirl, which distributed art to passers-by. The First Thursdays program, inspired by Cape Town, provided evening activities to enhance community engagement and test markets for music, exhibitions, and performances.

Blackburn is Open became a model of best practice for engaging local creatives, boosting the creative economy and town centre prosperity. The [re]create Blackburn, Sheffield Live Project enriched this initiative through collaboration with Sheffield University students, exploring the town's potential and culminating in the publication 'Blackburn ReMade'. This work attracted national partners and contributed to the development of The Making Rooms.

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[220] https://independent-liverpool.co.uk/blog/hidden-liverpool/ (accessed March 2024)
[221] https://exchangeblackburn.org.uk/ (accessed June 2024)

The **By Skill & Hard Work** zine showcased Blackburn's creative talent, reaching nearby cities (See Appendix P4.5c). The Found in Blackburn festival, funded by the National Heritage Lottery, was the initiative's final event in March 2017, revealing hidden spaces and stories whilst increasing footfall to unconventional venues for contemporary art.

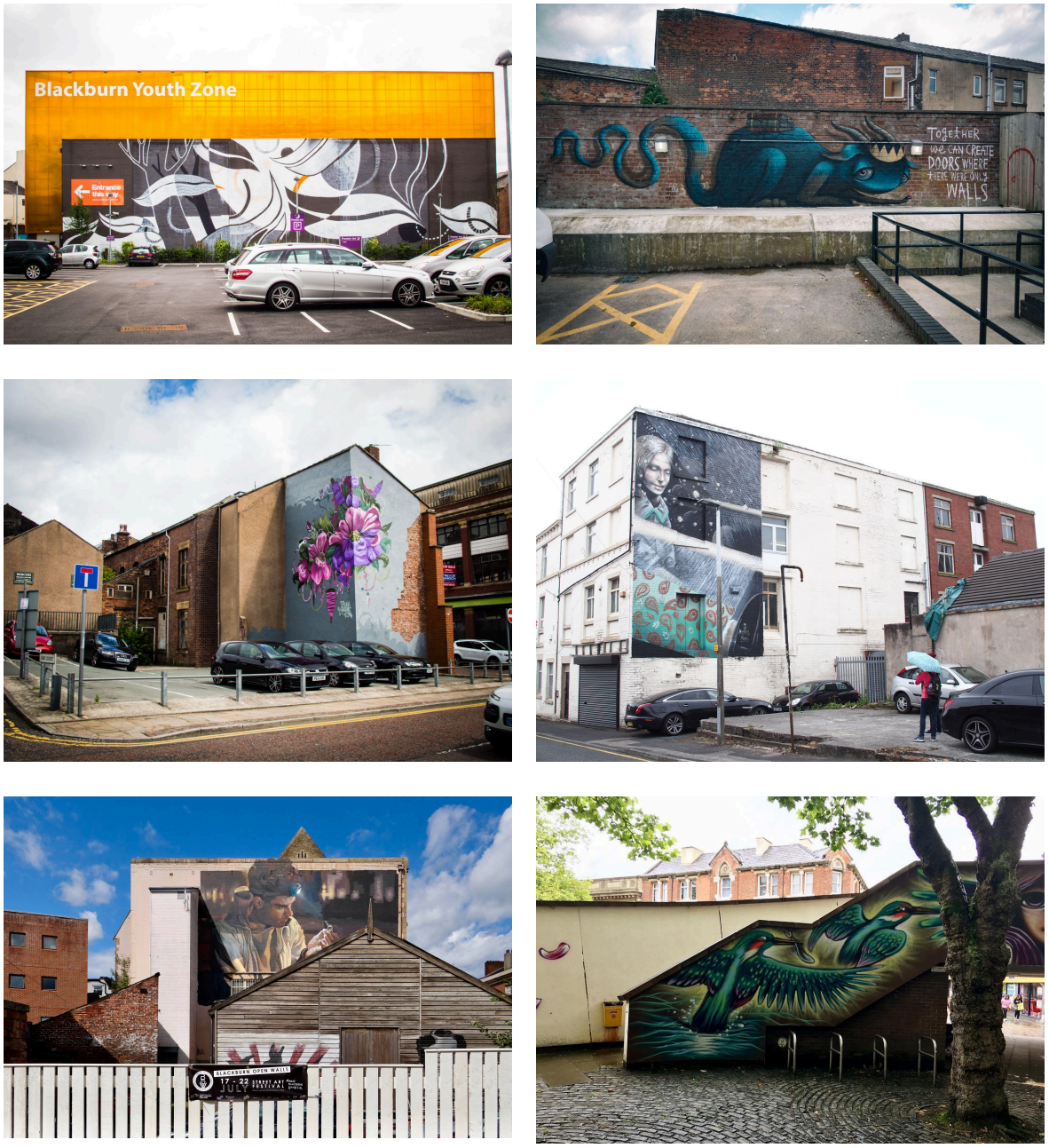
FACTORY

The Factory phase of the research was establishing long term plans, including business plans, for some of the initiatives and events that had been tested in the Laboratory phase. There was an incremental progression route for most of the ideas and activities that were established. As outlined in Chapter 3, Urban Room was developed as a concept inspired by the Farrell Review's recommendation that 'every town and city should have an Urban Room – a space in which local people can learn about the built environment'. Between October 2014 and June 2016, I led on the curation and production of three month-long architecture festivals, branded **Urban Room Blackburn**, that celebrated the art, architecture and public space with a focus on urban culture, experimentation and innovative practices to inspire new ways of thinking about the town centre. The aim was to bring together both community-driven activity and the regeneration projects led by the Council.

Urban Room Blackburn created space for conversation, participation and inclusive engagement enabling local people to find out more about their town, its heritage and its future. On the advice from public art consultant, Ian Banks, who was working with the Council on a series of public art commissions as part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, we discussed the opportunity to showcase the work Ian was leading on and the work of the Sheffield architecture students, and creating a forum to discuss and debate the role of art in public spaces through the BIO initiative.

The Urban Room concept felt appropriate and flexible, enabling me to curate a programme of events utilising a diverse range of spaces, some that were not normally accessible to the public, with local and national students, artists, architects and designers. It was also the ambition to develop it as a policy-making tool, to support Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's public art policy and widening it to enable more people, including residents and young people, to participate in early-regeneration phases and generally engage with Blackburn's architecture and public realm projects. (See Appendix P4.5a and P4.5b for the Urban Room Blackburn programmes) Whilst the project did not continue following my departure from Blackburn in 2017, its legacy continues to inspire placemaking initiatives in Blackburn and beyond.

Blackburn Open Walls became a key event in the Urban Room Blackburn programme. Initiated by Blackburn-born artist Hayley Welsh, local, national and international artists were invited to create pieces of new street art across Blackburn town centre. With a mission to #makeblackburnbeautiful, in July 2018 Hayley and her team of international artists successfully transformed the town into a contemporary art gallery for a third year, utilising large blank walls to strengthen relationships and build unification between communities (see Figs 4.12-4.17 below). The result was not only an art trail but it brought a community of street artists together, making Blackburn beautiful.



Figs. 4.12 - 4.17 - Images taken from Blackburn Open Walls between 2016 and 2018. (Image credits listed in the figures table at the end of the document)

The Blackburn is Open team also facilitated the development of a new community-led artistic enterprise, **The Bureau - Centre for the Arts**. Using St. John's church for meanwhile activities including exhibitions, events and club nights, quickly led to the evolution of the new social enterprise[222]**.** Creating space and allowing access to 'hidden' areas unlocked the potential for the town, and as a result the scale of ambition and commitment increased. The Bureau has been operating since 2015, delivering theatre, dance, visual arts and community workshops and also leads on the town's Festival of Light annual festival.

As Director of my previous social enterprise, Placeshakers CIC, I recognized the growing demand for a makerspace, which we established in a redundant old bank next to the museum. **The Making Rooms** opened in November 2016, showcasing how a town can blend the old with the new, heritage with innovation. Advanced manufacturing machinery now sits alongside proud industrial textile machines, symbolising this harmonious integration. I spearheaded the vision, business plan, and fundraising efforts for Blackburn's new makerspace on behalf of Blackburn with Darwen Council.

The Making Rooms[223] is promoted as Lancashire's first Fab Lab. This £1M development transformed an old bank into a creative digital fabrication centre, complete with workspaces, studios, and a café. Drawing inspiration from successful models like Blackhorse Workshop, Makerversity, and the RSA's Makerspaces, along with Daniel Charney's Fixperts, I led on the business plan development and fundraising to create a space that encourages creativity and innovation (see Fig. 4.18). The Making Rooms opened in October 2016 as a social enterprise, positioned as a catalyst for creativity and entrepreneurship in the region. By collaborating with Re-Form Architects, we developed a comprehensive vision and plan, successfully fundraising to make this project a reality. (see Appendix P4.8 for more detailed plans)

[222] https://bureaublackburn.co.uk/history-of-the-bureau/ (accessed January 2024)
[223] https://www.makingrooms.org/ (accessed January 2024)

Fig. 4.18 The Making Rooms presentation board, 2015

As the instigator behind the **National Festival of Making**, I crafted a narrative deeply rooted in the town's manufacturing heritage, multicultural community, and openness to future innovations (see FIg. 4.19 illustrating a vision for the festival from the Sheffield Live Project). My role involved co-designing the concept for the UK's first festival dedicated to celebrating the art of making. Collaborating with Lancashire's cultural festival producers,[224] we launched the festival in May 2017 in Blackburn town centre. Attracting nearly 40,000 attendees, the event took over the town centre and fulfilled the original aims of the Blackburn is Open initiative by utilising local assets to create something truly inventive and original. The festival's key programme, Art in Manufacturing, facilitated collaborations between makers and local manufacturers. Key cultural and heritage buildings hosted diverse making activities, whilst hidden spaces came alive with new visions and ideas. The Festival of Making now enjoys major partnerships with organisations like the BBC, has been named the reigning non-music Festival of the Year at the British Festival Awards, and is a highlight of the UK festival calendar. (See Appendix P4.9 for the 2017 evaluation report)

[224] The National Festival of Making was launched in 2017 and has since delivered an annual festival (with exception to the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 and 2021). I was a founding Director, and resigned shortly after the first festival was delivered in 2017. I led on a significant strand of work, leading on partnership development, original commission and projects with designer Henry Holland and film Director, Michael Winterbottom as well as securing investment and evaluation.

Fig. 4.19 Illustration from ‘Creative Capital’ Sheffield School of Architecture Live Project 2015[225]

The Factory phase of the research focused on establishing long-term plans and business strategies for initiatives tested during the Laboratory phase. This approach provided a clear progression path for many ideas and activities. A prime example was Urban Room Blackburn, inspired by the Farrell Review's concept that every town and city should have a space for the community to learn about the built environment. From October 2014 to June 2016, I curated and produced three month-long architecture festivals under the Urban Room Blackburn brand.[226]

Whilst these festivals celebrated art, architecture, and public space, focusing on urban culture, experimentation, and innovation to inspire new perspectives on the town centre, they provided opportunity to consult and engage the public and stakeholders on future initiatives, such as The Making Rooms. Urban Room Blackburn integrated community-driven activities with council-led regeneration projects, for example establishing sustainable businesses into the vacant units and integrating public art. This flexible concept shaped the event programme and aimed to utilise Urban Room as a way to create open dialogue with the

[225] https://liveprojects.ssoa.info/2015/blackburn-creative-capital/ (accessed August 2024)
[226] A short film showcasing Urban Room Blackburn https://vimeo.com/126264130 (accessed July 2024)

public about regeneration, planning and place-based policy-making, enabling residents, students and young people to engage in early placemaking efforts. Another significant outcome was Blackburn Open Walls, which transformed the town into a contemporary art gallery, enhancing community unity.

Under my curation and leadership, Blackburn is Open provided the vision, support, advocacy and direction to attract significant investment to realise large-scale transformational projects which have since been established as sustainable social enterprises, and facilitated dialogue with stakeholders in order to develop important partnerships which has also contributed to the development of an annual festival and high street makerspace.

STORY

From the start of my role in April 2012 to my departure in summer 2017, I meticulously documented and evaluated the Blackburn is Open (BIO) creative placemaking programme. This involved cataloguing marketing materials, artefacts, photography albums, and key documents, such as funding applications and evaluation reports. Despite the active website being taken down and the Facebook page being deleted after my exit, the Twitter account (now X)[227] remains accessible, alongside various independent websites and blogs created through different projects.[228]

The **By Skill and Hard Work** zine, curated by Blackburn with Darwen Council's Communications Manager, Faye Adams, played a crucial role in the BIO communications plan. It highlighted the local creative entrepreneurial community, showcasing makers and their processes. The programme's successes were further amplified through press articles, blogs, and presentations by strong advocates like Wayne Hemingway, Christine Cort, Patrick Grant, and local councillors and business leaders. Their efforts attracted regional and national attention, enhancing Blackburn's identity and supporting its evolution.

[227] https://x.com/byskillhardwork (accessed July 2024)
[228] Websites still available as of August 2024 - https://foundedinblackburn.wordpress.com/ , https://blackburncreativecapital.wordpress.com/, https://www.facebook.com/urbanroomblackburn (accessed July 2024)

Fig. 4.20 A social media post by Darren Henley, CEO of Arts Council of England, 2015

Following the first year, a visually engaging annual report was produced to celebrate achievements. This report, featuring timelines and graphical charts, demonstrated the programme's iterative nature and was used as a tool to advocate for continued funding and support from stakeholders, funders, and councillors - resulting in continued funding for both my job role, use of Council-owned properties and also strengthened partnerships with local businesses and cultural organisations. It highlighted the programme's impact on Blackburn's physical, cultural, and social identity, creating a sense of pride and ownership amongst locals.

> *"Blackburn is Open was launched as a key part of the Council's regeneration strategy to improve and revive the town centre. It recognised that in order to help our high street and the night time economy we had to take a step back and decide on a new whole approach. By giving help and advice to start-up businesses and entrepreneurs we've been able to get many new ventures off the ground and as a result seen a real reduction in empty properties. The scheme has also seen a wealth of activities and events taking place that has brought many people especially artists and creatives*

> *back into the town centre. [...] it has helped bring a new feeling of vibrancy and a sense that anything is possible."* Councillor Maureen Bateson 2013

Intern Sophie Skellern, a Blackburn College Fine Art graduate, significantly contributed to BIO. Her passion for the BIO ethos was evident in her 2015 article for The Double Negative, where she detailed the program's impact on local makers and creatives.[229]

IMPACT

The Blackburn is Open (BIO) programme used the 'Story of Change' methodology to create a legacy that includes six high-profile and sustainable business models, such as the National Festival of Making, The Bureau Art Centre, and The Making Rooms. This initiative demonstrated that creativity and artist engagement can have a sustainable impact within a regeneration context, improving Blackburn's town centre profile and perception. It won the UK High Street of the Year award in 2016, highlighting Blackburn's identity as a vibrant place to make and create. The programme significantly boosted economic activity, increased employment in the creative industries, and enhanced footfall and visitor numbers. Community ownership of events has flourished, with more residents participating in diverse cultural activities and cultural venues experiencing increased audiences.

The methodologies and partnerships developed during my time in Blackburn enhanced the town's placemaking ambitions, boosted the local creative community's confidence, and helped me grow personally and professionally. Serving as a Director of two Community Interest Companies, I also supported initiatives like The Making Rooms CIC and The Bureau Centre for the Arts CIC. The programme exceeded expectations and continues to shape Blackburn's social and economic landscape, with artists, designers, and startups influencing town programming.

Establishments like The Making Rooms solidify Blackburn's identity as a hub for new talent, whilst the Cotton Exchange programmes artistic responses to local heritage. Blackburn's cultural vibrancy now attracts new bars and restaurants, creating buzz day and night. Winning the Great British High Street competition in 2016 marked the town's transformation from 'Clone Town' to a recognised cultural and creative centre.[230]

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[229] Skellern, S, *Introducing: Blackburn Is Open.* Posted on 17/09/2015 by The Double Negative. https://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2015/09/introducing-blackburn-is-open/

[230] https://theshuttle.org.uk/blackburns-high-street-crowned-best-in-the-country-and-named-winner-of-winners/ (accessed July 2024)

	2013/14	2015	2016	2017
Observatory	Sheffield Live Project St. John's Church Creative Hive			
Laboratory	Urban Room Blackburn Bureau Centre for the Arts Artist takeover shops	Papergirl Fabricate Festival of Making pilot Blackburn Open Walls	Papergirl Hackburn	
Factory		Sheffield Live Project Urban Room Blackburn Bureau Centre for the Arts	Urban Room Blackburn Bureau Centre for the Arts CIC Blackburn Open Walls	The Making Rooms CIC Festival of Making CIC Blackburn Open Walls
Story	BIO Website & Social media	BIO Website & Social media BK&HW zine	BIO Website & Social media BK&HW zine	BIO Website & Social media

Fig. 4.21 Progression table showing how activities, projects and new enterprises moved through the CCE SYSTEMS model over time

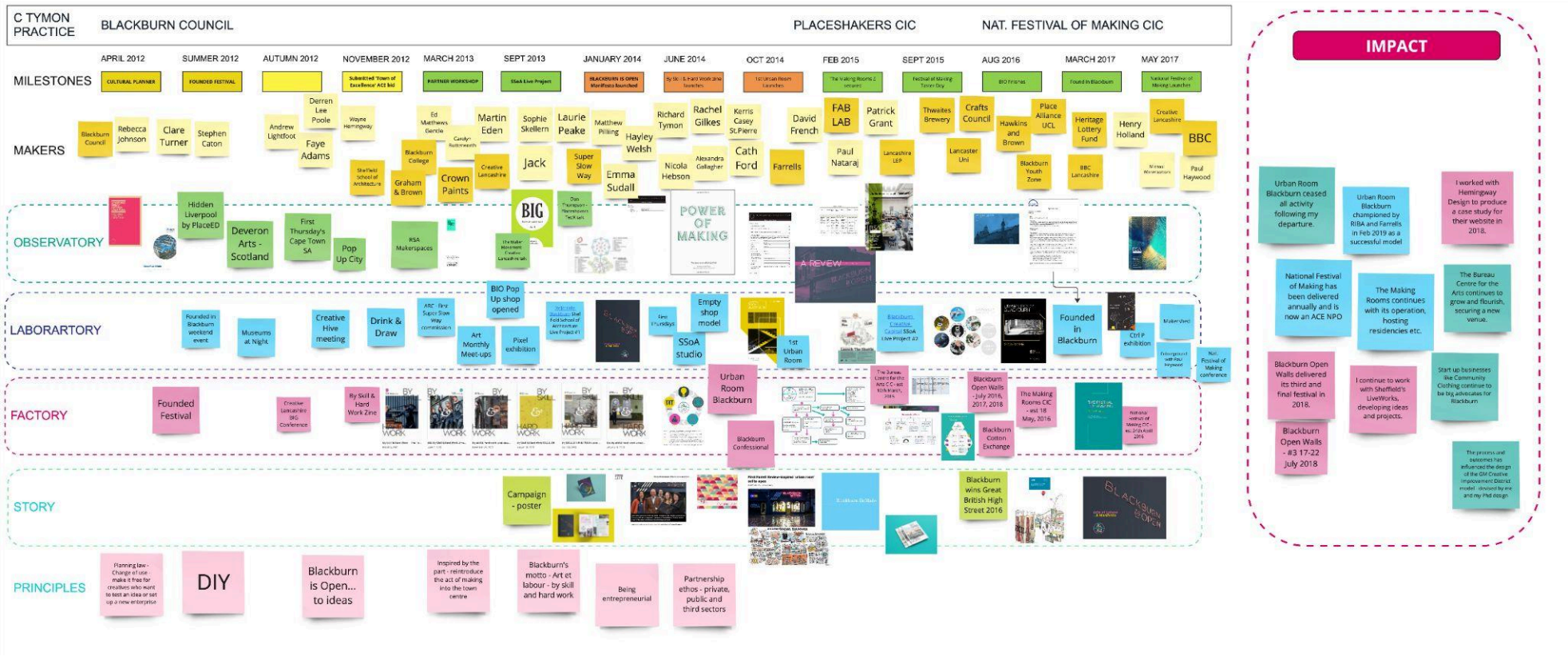

Fig. 4.22 Blackburn is Open impact timeline - mapping makers, process, outcomes (expand)

Blackburn is Open transformed a concentrated set of Council owned empty shops were transformed into start-up retail spaces and on-view studios for makers so shoppers, residents and visitors could experience 'performance making' and appreciate the act of craft, design and small-scale manufacturing. From a chocolatier, to T-shirt printers, to jewellery makers and a taxidermist, Town Hall Street and the surroundings started to come to life. Visions for the large-scale derelict buildings whose doors were kept firmly closed, including an old bank, the historic Cotton Exchange and St John's Church, were imagined with local people as hives for cultural, creative and making activity.

For nearly three years, Blackburn creatives were encouraged to initiate their own response to their town, to see it as a blank canvas or an open studio in which to create. With the dedication from the BiO team, emerging and established makers, artists and designers were empowered to have a go, and be reminded that failure was not possible, as prototyping an idea - be it a business, a shop, an evening event or a recipe - was a fundamental part of the manufacturing process, a key component of their industrial heritage and modern day productivity.[231] Its succession plan demonstrated the legacy created by this significant programme. (See Fig. 4.23 below)

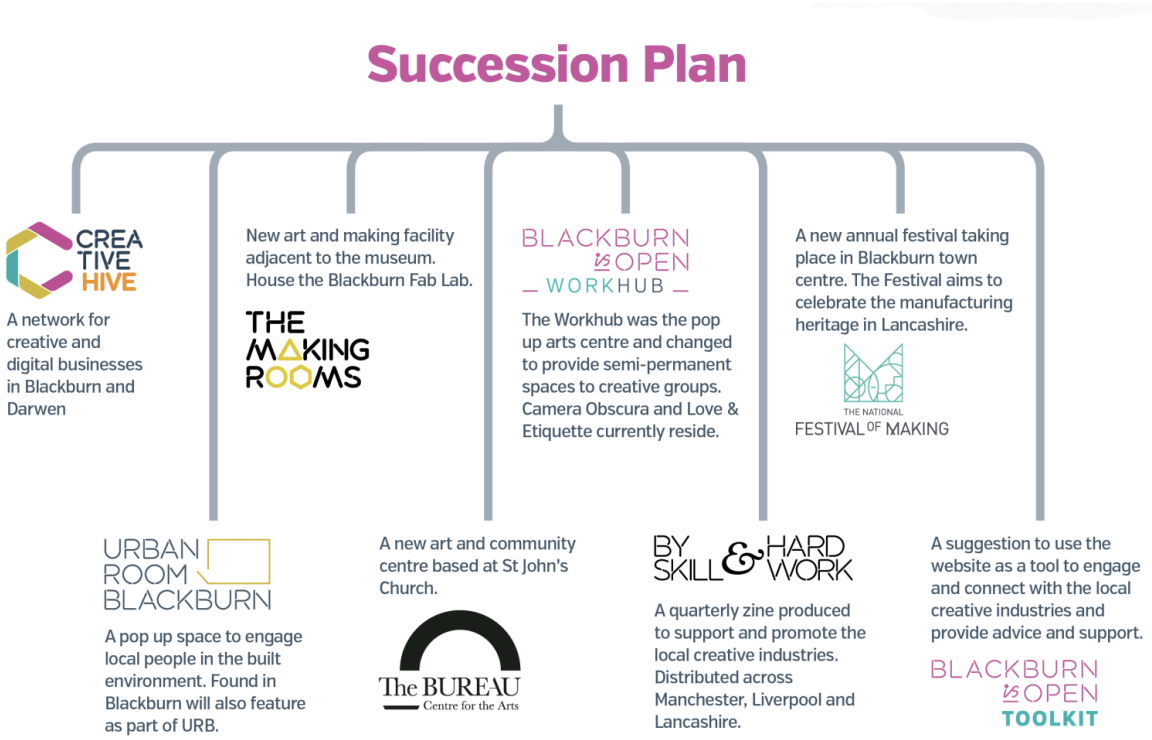

Fig. 4.23 Succession Plan 2017

[231] Tymon, C, Hemingway, W, Blackburn is Open blog 2019
https://www.hemingwaydesign.co.uk/blog/blackburn-open-blog/

PORTFOLIO

There has been a significant number of reports, studies, artworks and online interventions produced and continue to be produced as the Glossop Creates campaign has grown. As a portfolio of work, the key outcomes of this case study are listed below.

Portfolio Contents

- P4.1a Blackburn is Open timeline (20072024)
- P4.1b Blackburn is Open Data collection
- P4.2 BIO Manifesto
- P4.3a Blackburn is Open Phase 2 Project plan 2015
- P4.3b Blackburn is Open Blackburn Christmas Programme
- P4.3c Blackburn is Open 12 Month Evaluation
- P4.4 Remade Blackburn - Student Live Project & Studio
- P4.5a Urban Room programme 2014
- P4.5b Urban Room programme 2016
- P4.5 By Skill and Hard Work Zines
- P4.6 Conversations in Creativity Programme
- P4.7 Found in Blackburn programme
- P4.8 The Making Rooms presentation boards
- P4.9 National Festival of Making 2017 evaluation
- P4.10 ACE outputs

THE MAKERS

Contributors and credits

Lead & Direction

- Claire Tymon – Cultural Planner & Programme Director
- Rebecca Johnson - Cultural Manager

Key Partners & Advocates

- Wayne Hemingway – Designer, advocate, mentor, business partner
- Andrew Lightfoot – Deputy Chief Executive, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council – Regeneration, Planning & Culture Departments
- Ed Matthews-Gentle - Creative Lancashire
- Arts Council England – Funders & strategic partner

Design & Branding

- Stephen Caton – Source Creative (branding, typeface, visual identity, website)

Collaborators & Creative Contributors

- Sophie Skellern – Intern & project producer (Drink & Draw, Found in Blackburn, Papergirl)
- Jack - BIO Technician and Film Night producer
- Alexandra Gallagher - Artist
- Faye Adams – Communications Manager, Council (By Skill & Hard Work zine)
- Derren Lee Poole - artist, photographer
- Hayley Welsh – Artist, Blackburn Open Walls
- Ian Banks – Public Art Consultant
- Kerris Casey-St Pierre – ArtSpace organiser
- Cath Ford - Artist
- Emily Lord, Sam Fittock - Gypsy Carrot Productions
- Nicola Hebson - Dead Good Jewellery
- Rachel Gilkes - Social Entrepreneur - Chutney for Change
- Sheffield University School of Architecture – [Re]create Blackburn live project team
- Daniel Weaver, Huckleberry Films – Artists commissioned for early festivals
- Abandon Normal Devices – Mobile Republic project
- Elena Jackson, Lauren Zwadiski - Deco Publique
- Paul Nataraj - sound artist, researcher
- Paul Heywood - UCL, Artist
- Henry Holland - Fashion designer
- Michael Winterbottom - Film director

Organisations & Venues

- Matt Pilling, David French - Placeshakers CIC
- The Bureau – Centre for the Arts CIC
- The Making Rooms CIC
- The National Festival of Making CIC
- Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery
- Local manufacturers: Crown Paints, Graham & Brown, Cookson & Clegg, Perspex, MGS Technical Plastics, The Cardboard Box Company
- Laurie Peake - Super Slow Way (ACE Creative People & Places)
- Nicola Clayton, Jenna Gardner, Jamie Holman - Blackburn College
- Hawkins and Brown
- Blackburn Youth Zone
- Place Alliance UCL
- Urban Rooms Network

Funders / Supporters

- Arts Council England (multiple project grants)
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (funding & in-kind support)
- Lancashire Economic Partnership
- Crafts Council
- Lancaster University
- Thwaites Brewery

Media & Promotion

- Christine Cort – Manchester International Festival
- Patrick Grant – Designer, advocate
- Darren Henley – CEO, Arts Council England

While this list recognises some key “makers”, it cannot fully represent the large and diverse community of people whose involvement has been integral to the making of this project.

CASE STUDY: GLOSSOP CREATES (2017-2024)

Contents

Executive Summary
INTRODUCTION
- Timeline

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- Methodology

CREATIVE action-research
- OBSERVATORY
- LABORATORY
- FACTORY
- STORY

IMPACT
PORTFOLIO

Executive Summary

Glossop Creates is a grassroots initiative designed to support and energise the local creative community in Glossop, High Peak, Derbyshire. Launched in 2019, the campaign arose from the recognition of Glossop's vibrant creative potential amidst a void of structured cultural activities. I began with a student live project to facilitate discussions through creative workshops and pilot an urban room methodology, aimed at enhancing placemaking in the town. Despite challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Glossop Creates has evolved into a robust network of over 300 creatives. It now hosts annual events, produces zines, and offers residencies, all rooted in creative action-research. This success has attracted significant investment and established the CCE Framework as a proven model for creative placemaking, catalysing new social enterprises, including my own, Local.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2017 I have been working to develop creative placemaking initiatives in my hometown of Glossop, in the Peak District in Derbyshire. Through a self-initiated campaign I launched in 2019, Glossop Creates, I have been convening, curating, and directing events and activities, commissions and residencies, whilst promoting local stories and advocating for an improved cultural provision for our town. I have also tendered for a number of local opportunities with little success. The desire to act locally came from spending a number of years commuting 30 miles to Blackburn, and realising how disconnected I was to my own creative community, and discovering how I may use my placemaking skills to support my own community and town. I was aware there was a diverse range of creatives living and working in Glossopdale - it was a well-known fact that it had attracted employees from the BBC since the company moved its main premises to Media City in Salford.

Having established the Blackburn is Open campaign and launched the National Festival of Making (described in the previous case study), and being inspired by other placemaking initiatives with a local focus, such as Deveron Projects in Scotland (more examples provided in Appendix P2), I wanted to utilise my skills and experience to support and nurture a creative ecology and cultural programmes locally. Since its launch in 2019, Glossop Creates has been empowering the local creative community, including local artists, writers, designers and makers, to help lead the change it wants to see. Motivations included strengthening their own creative practice, navigating the challenges of the pandemic or playing a role in the local cultural provision or regeneration initiatives.

The first phase of the **Glossop Creates** campaign was launched in summer 2019 as a programme delivered through Glossop Creative Trust, with the intention of establishing it as a model and incorporating it as a case study within this PhD research. This phase was initially funded by High Peak Borough Council.

The second and third phases of the Glossop Creates programme have since been led through my new creative practice, Local Creative Project Ltd, which I established in October 2021 specifically to sustain and develop the work of Glossop Creates. Fig. 5.1 (below) illustrates the project timeline to date, mapping projects and milestones.

My vision was to collaborate with local creatives to develop paid opportunities as well as develop activities, events, workshops that my own children would enjoy and find inspiring. I wanted to create spaces and an ecology to test ideas, share skills and mentoring and develop a new commissioning programme to help sustain local employment and build new

audiences. Glossop Creates continues to be led by my own creative practice, Local, with a dedicated team and a potential new home. However, it has been shaped through a variety of opportunities and mishaps, fallouts and forgivings, as do most locally driven initiatives.

The objectives of this case study are to identify the various 'makers' involved in the project, examine the relevance of my role as the framework designer, and understand the necessary governance structures to activate the makers. The study outlines the approach and implementation of activities through the CCE action-research framework, highlighting the challenges and opportunities of initiating a creative campaign in a local town like Glossop. It emphasises the importance of an action-research framework in supporting such initiatives and aims to share the findings and their contribution to the development of the CCE framework.

Similar to the Blackburn case study, it is presented through the structure of the CCE Framework, with a visual timeline of activities and achievements, followed by a Context section, providing background information on the social and economic picture of Glossop. The study continues to identify the key elements of action-research - INPUTS - CREATIVE ACTION - STORY OF CHANGE, then concluding with references to the case study's Portfolio contributions.

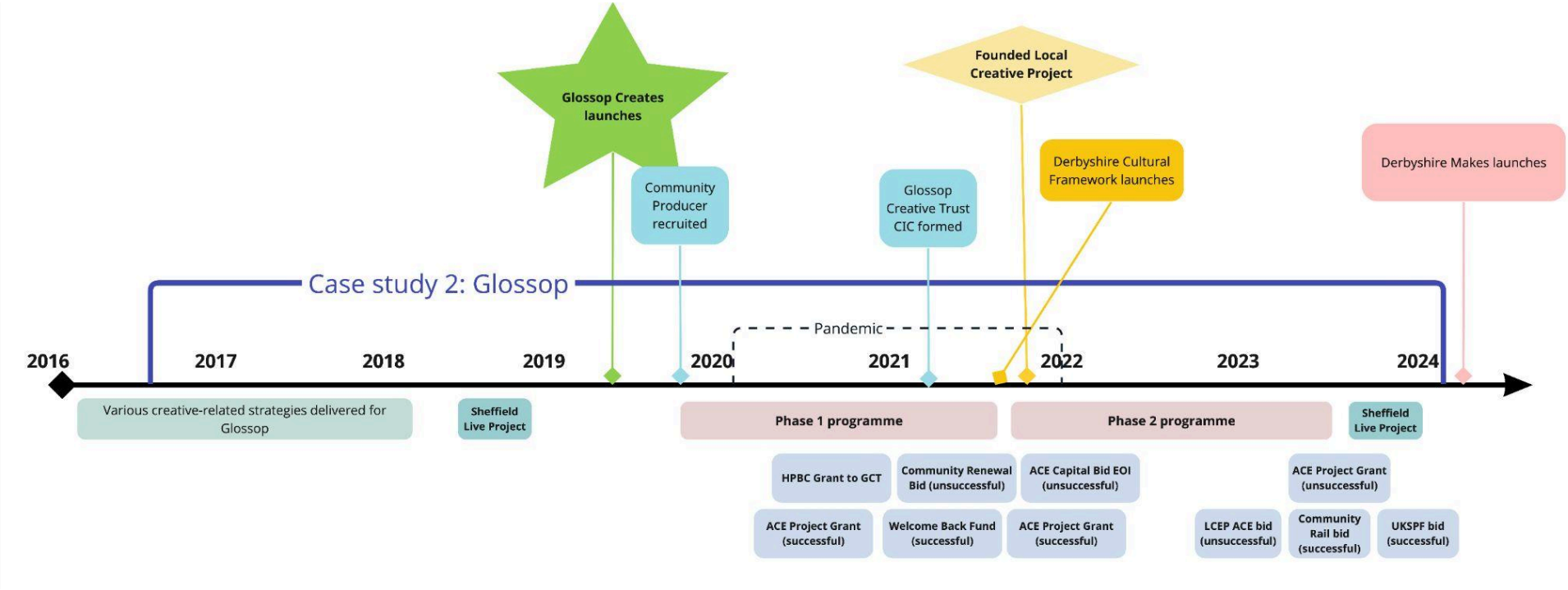

Fig. 5.1 Glossop Creates project timeline (expand)

CONTEXT

With a population of 33,000 (census), it is the second largest town in the High Peak, Glossopdale is located in the valley of the Glossop Brook in Derbyshire, and encompasses the main town centre of Glossop along with neighbouring villages of Hadfield, Charlesworth, Dinting, Dinting Vale, Higher Dinting, Padfield, Old Glossop, Whitfield, and Gamesley. In the summer of 2012, I moved back to my hometown, commuting over an hour each way to Blackburn, where I was honing my expertise as a creative placemaker. (See previous case study: Blackburn is Open.)

The origins of Glossop are found to the east of the present-day town centre. Old Glossop started as a small agricultural settlement and evolved into a mediaeval market town and administrative hub for Glossopdale. With its damp climate, access to fast-flowing water, and local wool, Old Glossop became a thriving textile town in the 17th and 18th centuries. The late 18th century marked the transition of textiles from a cottage industry to a factory system with the advent of cotton and steam power. Glossop rapidly expanded westward from Old Glossop along the watercourses, with new cotton mills and stone worker housing emerging in what was then called Howard Town. By the end of the 19th century, the town centre's Victorian architectural heritage was well established. The 20th century saw significant changes with the closure of the cotton mills, the loss of many mill buildings, and the disappearance of the chimneys that once defined the skyline.

During the Industrial Revolution, Glossop thrived as a mill town but, like many industrial towns, has since struggled to redefine its role and identity. However, Glossop possesses significant assets that, with the right mix of passion, commitment, astute planning, and strategic positioning, could help the town thrive once more. Glossop has the potential to become a leading small town for cultural activity and creative business - similar to those I observe from afar. By leveraging its connectivity to Manchester, high quality of life, rich industrial and civic heritage, and growing base of creative talent, Glossop can achieve renewed vigour and vibrancy, setting an example for other small towns seeking to find their purpose.

In the Glossop Design and Place Making Strategy, a Supplementary Planning Document to the High Peak Local Plan (December 2011) produced by Gillespies and Gerald Eve, the plan '*promote(s) the highest standard of urban design and architecture and is rooted in a careful*

analysis of the town centre and the characteristics that make it work and make it special. It provides a clear vision for how Glossop's town centre will look as it starts to attract an increasing amount of development and regeneration activity and a set of design principles to guide and manage future changes in a positive way.'[232]

With few strategy vision plans for the town, the plan outlines the overall vision for Glossop to be a creative and independent town on the edge of the Peak District, 'offering an experience to local people and visitors alike that is consistent with that reputation'.[233] There are eight supporting themes that underpin the vision and feel relevant today, thirteen years after its publication:

- A vibrant and creative community providing an exceptional quality of life
- Maintain and enhance the heritage of the town
- Attract and serve people from the local community and further away
- Provide and protect links to the countryside for the local community
- First stop for visitors to the Peak District
- Recognise Glossop as an independent and individual place
- Establish a reputation as a creative town
- Nurture a 'mosaic' of attractive experiences around the town

Glossop's Cultural Heritage

Glossop, a market town in Derbyshire, England, is rich in creative and cultural heritage, significantly shaped by notable figures such as Edmund Potter, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Vivienne Westwood, and Hilary Mantel (see table below for short biographies of Glossop's alumni). Other significant cultural icons include L.S. Lowry (1887-1976) and Royal Academy artist, Eileen Cooper (b.1953).

Edmund Potter (1802–1883) was a prominent figure in Glossop's industrial history. As a pioneering mill owner and industrialist, he transformed the town's economic landscape. Potter's family mill, the Dinting Vale Printworks, became one of the largest calico printing factories in the world during the 19th century.[234] He was also the grandfather of Beatrix Potter, the famous children's author and illustrator. His contributions to the town went beyond industrialization; he was deeply invested in the welfare of his workers, establishing

[232] *Glossop Design & Place Making Strategy,* an Supplementary Planning Document to the High Peak Local Plan (December 2011) produced by Gillespies and Gerald Eve
[233] Ibid. p.6
[234] https://glossopheritage.co.uk/ghtarchive/edmundpotter/ (accessed June 2024)

schools and libraries, which developed a culture of education and literacy in the community. Edmund Potter's influence laid a foundation for a thriving, industrious Glossop, making it a significant player in the textile industry.[235] As part of the Glossop Creates Pairings residency programme, artist Lauren Riley was paired with Edmund Potter, in which her print collection was created from.[236]

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, had a less direct but intriguing connection to Glossop. During his time in England, Wittgenstein visited the town, drawn by his interest in industrial communities and their socio-economic conditions. Although his stay was brief, Wittgenstein's reflections on the simplicity and complexity of language and life found a curious resonance in the town's industrious environment. His philosophical inquiries, centred around language, logic, and the nature of reality, influenced various fields, from cognitive science to linguistics, leaving an intellectual legacy that extended even to places like Glossop.[237]

Vivienne Westwood (1941–2022), the iconic fashion designer and businesswoman, was born in Tintwistle, a village part of Glossopdale. Westwood is renowned for bringing punk and new wave fashions into the mainstream. Westwood's designs often drew from historical and cultural references, blending traditional craftsmanship with bold, contemporary styles. Her upbringing in Glossop, surrounded by the rugged beauty of the Peak District, instilled in her a sense of rebellion and individuality that became hallmarks of her fashion philosophy.[238] Westwood's influence extended beyond fashion; she was an outspoken advocate for environmental and social issues, using her platform to champion causes such as climate change and civil rights.[239] Her creative spirit and commitment to activism have left an indelible mark on the cultural fabric of Glossop.

Hilary Mantel (1952–2022), the celebrated author, also has connections to the area - we attended the same primary school in Hadfield, Glossop and studied at the University of Sheffield (neither at the same time I hasten to add). Best known for her historical novels,

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235 https://calmview.derbyshire.gov.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=D1589%2F2&pos=9 (accessed June 2024)

236 https://www.laurenrileydesign.com/post/glossop-s-textile-heritage (accessed July 2024)

237 My knowledge of Wittgenstein has come from local artist and historian Michael Howard who has delivered talks and guided walks (Wanders) for Glossop Creates. Howard has authored articles in the KIN.DER zine p.12-13 https://issuu.com/kin.der/docs/kin.der-zine-issue1_2 (accessed January 2024)

238 https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/vivienne-westwood-punk-new-romantic-and-beyond (accessed June 2024)

239 Westwood, V, Kelly, I, *Vivienne Westwood*. Picador; Reprints edition 2014. p.10

particularly the Man Booker Prize-winning 'Wolf Hall' series, Mantel's writing is characterised by its meticulous research, rich character development, and profound psychological insight.[240] Her work explored themes of power, identity, and the complexities of history, reflecting a deep engagement with the past and its relevance to contemporary issues. Mantel's contributions to literature have garnered international acclaim, and her ability to bring history to life through narrative has inspired countless readers and writers. Her ties to Glossop add a literary prestige to the town's cultural heritage (and have since inspired our annual Winter Story Trail event).

Together, these figures illustrate the diverse and vibrant cultural heritage of Glossop. From industrial innovation and philosophical inquiry to revolutionary fashion and literary excellence, each has contributed uniquely to the town's identity. Glossop's creative and cultural legacy is a testament to the power of individual vision and the enduring impact of artistic and intellectual pursuits on a community.

Today, the town and its surrounding villages host an incredible number of creative and cultural entrepreneurs, too many to name individually, but including myself and my husband, photographer Richard Tymon. The opportunity to better connect with our creative community to develop a supportive cultural ecology, nurturing a contemporary offer whilst utilising our rich cultural heritage and inspire young people of Glossopdale to also explore and enhance their creativity, is what I decided I wanted to focus on next.

The opportunity

In August 2016, a tendering opportunity came up to deliver the Glossop Creative Industries Assessment (GCIA). I applied but the contract was awarded to Tom Fleming Consultancy, a London-based firm who work internationally as well as in the UK producing cultural strategies. My tender included an embedded research approach - establishing a space for conversation, similar to what I had initiated in Blackburn, to gather qualitative research as well as create a campaign for creative activation. From my own personal experience of moving back to Glossopdale, and as a creative practitioner, a curator, a producer and a director, there were not any obvious opportunities to meet other creatives and potential collaborators. But my approach wasn't the approach of the High Peak Borough Council, as the commissioners of the GCIA, were looking for. I later found out they wanted a report that

[240] https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/hilary-mantel (accessed June 2024)

focussed on data comparisons with towns with a similar high number of creatives and a set of recommendations.

Glossop Creative Industries Assessment: Objectives

1. What are the current strengths and future potential of existing cultural and creative industries in Glossop and its surrounding area? Including a snapshot of the current evidence base, current gaps and barriers to success, audiences and demand for culture locally, relationships to Manchester and Sheffield and the potential to attract businesses and individuals to locate in the area.

2. What can we learn from comparable towns? How should Glossop complement or compete with neighbouring areas including Greater Manchester? What would growth look like and what needs to be in-place to support it?

3. What role could the key heritage buildings play in promoting the growth of cultural and creative businesses? What are the infrastructure needs of the sector? Could these buildings (and potentially other infrastructural developments) be repurposed to suit the culture and creative sector and how the current proposals might fit?

Source: Glossop Creative Industries Assessment, July 2017: Tom Fleming

However, I was consulted as part of the consultants research where I shared my insights, generously providing ideas and examples from my own creative practice, where I was getting positive feedback in Blackburn. I understand my input to the GCIA featured highly in the set of recommendations, which may have also come from other research participants. The report recommendations were as follows:

1) A Five Year Vision for Glossop
2) A Glossop Creative Group
3) Four Creative Town Themes
    i) Creative Placemaking – maximising Glossop's distinctiveness
    ii) Nurturing creative industries – attracting businesses, creating jobs and boosting start-ups
    iii) Animation and buzz – Bringing Glossop to life throughout the year
    iv) Buildings and Spaces - Making the most of Glossop's Heritage assets

GCIA outcomes - Achieving a 5-year vision

Get this right and by 2022 Glossop will:

- Be recognised as a welcoming home for culture and creativity – a signature creative town for the Northern Powerhouse.
- Be a hub for independent cultural organisations and creative businesses – including co-working space in heritage settings.
- Have a year-round programme of arts activity across the town, connecting with young people and the whole community, utilising existing spaces and new fit-for-purpose infrastructure developed in historic buildings.
- Have a town centre thriving with a continual programme of cultural activity and seasonal events, connected to a thriving independent retail, food and drink sector.
- Have a growing economy driven by an increasing number of start- ups, businesses relocating to the area, freelancers and creative practitioners establishing and growing their businesses.
- Be a place where young people enjoy a rich cultural education and multiple pathways into creative employment.

Source: Glossop Creative Industries Assessment, July 2017: Tom Fleming

As my work in Blackburn reached its peak with the delivery of the first National Festival of Making in June 2017, I anticipated the arrival of the Glossop Creative Industries Assessment report and what the outcomes may mean for the local creative sector. Following another failed attempt to tender for another culture-related opportunity in September 2017 - to produce the feasibility report and market assessment for the future Victoria Art Centre (this time awarded to Purcell / Amion), I was soon approached by Mike Bull, the Chair of the emerging Victoria Art Centre (VAC)[241] project, a retired local government CEO who had recently moved to Glossop to live near his children and grandchildren and who had taken on voluntary roles with the local music festival. Mike invited me to discuss the opportunity of establishing a new 'creative group' who could take forward the recommendations of the GCIA report.

A personal reflection…

In August 2017, I decided to resign my services from the National Festival of Making, and all associated work in Blackburn - to focus on my own creative practice, and my PhD. My

[241] https://glossopvac.wordpress.com/ (accessed June 2024)

priority was to secure paid work - either through freelance opportunities or a new PAYE position. In October 2017, I secured a part-time role as Senior Creative Producer for FutureEverything, a Manchester-based creative and digital organisation and Arts Council of England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) whom I had admired as an innovative, future-facing enterprise. The remit of the role was to redesign their credible festival model from a biannual event to a modular event model. Alongside this role, I was consulting for Tameside Council to support a future culture-led regeneration strategy for Ashton town centre where I facilitated a Sheffield Live Project - The Ashton Platform.[242] I was at a major crossroads in my career, navigating a part-time PAYE position, struggling to maintain and secure sustainable contracts through my previous creative practice, Placeshakers and delivering on my PhD. The development of the work for Glossop, and its position, stayed with me and where I wanted to develop my practice-based research. I had reviewed the GCIA report for myself, and felt I had a lot to offer in my hometown of Glossop.

INPUTS

A baseline - The first phase of the Glossop Creates programme stemmed from the cultural strategy of the Glossop Creative Trust, in which I also designed in response to the Tom Fleming report and my own lived experience of being a creative based in Glossop, and my work experience working as a creative placemaker. These were my headline objectives (or reasons for progressing in conversation with those who didn't commission me to do the original assessment).

- A lack of a creative ecology - no organised opportunities to meet other creative practitioners based in Glossopdale. High Peak Borough Council does not have an Arts Development role or anyone specifically tasked with the remit of culture and creative industry sector making any support or resource from the local authority limited.
- No cultural infrastructure including tourism and placemaking - Glossopdale does not host a museum or art gallery, a heritage centre or tourism office. There are a couple of neighbourhood libraries, cycle and walking trails and live music venues. There was (in 2018) a volunteer-run What's On website and an ad hoc cultural programme of music events.
- Priority is CIDs for LA but no plan or commitments - the Tom Fleming report was commissioned as a response to the large number of creatives living and working in Glossop, but no insight as to how best to support the sector. Apparently Buxton (the

[242] https://liveprojects.ssoa.info/2017/the-ashton-platform/ (accessed March 2024)

neighbouring town) was a cultural priority for the local authority, and Glossop was a creative industry priority.

- Lack of creative and cultural provision for young people and families - since moving back to Glossop in 2012, as a family we had very little connection with the local area. We would get our cultural offering from Greater Manchester, Lancashire (due to our previous work) or go deeper into Derbyshire to visit historic venues.

Governance - The GCIA report recommended the establishment of a creative group. I assumed this would be Glossopdale Trust, a local organisation who had been leading on producing the local music festivals and had been consulted on the future of the Town Hall for a Heritage Lottery application. This was a membership organisation whom I had reached out to in 2015 (ish) as a way for me to get involved in local projects, but I received no response to my enquiry.

In early 2019, the commencement of Glossopdale Trust becoming the custodians of the recommendations of the GCIA report and realigning their strategic position to become a wider creative placemaking organisation, the Board had a reshuffle and I was employed as a local placemaking consultant to support the organisation in its refocus. Glossopdale Trust rebranded as Glossop Creative Trust (GCT) in June 2019, and successfully applied for Community Interest Company status in February 2021.

Following a series of shared objectives and potential duplication of efforts, it was suggested (by me) that a Memorandum of Understanding was implemented between GCT and High Peak Borough Council. The MOU would ensure a shared vision for the future of Glossop's cultural strategy and strategic alignment would exist between the two organisations. The MOU would also enable easier partnerships for investment, fundraising and external partnership working. An MOU was implemented in June 2020.[243]

People resource and skills - In the first instance, I reached out to a small number of people inviting them to be part of this initial process. With some financial support from HPBC, we were able to ensure our time was paid for as we set out to design and develop a vision, a programme, a communication plan and a brand identity.

Finance - Between November 2018 and September 2019, a notional grant of £5000 was secured through High Peak Borough Council, which was used as match funding for an Arts

[243] https://democracy.highpeak.gov.uk/documents/s17342/Appendix%20A.pdf (accessed September 2023)

Council of England grant of £14,700, that was secured in 2020. Funding has been secured via Welcome Back Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) and a further ACE grant for £29,500 to Local, for Glossop Creates activity. Additional small-scale funds from The Bureau, Community Rail Network and sponsorship from Specsavers have supported specific activities. Finally, through a social enterprise model, Local has provided staff time to manage and deliver Glossop Creates, as support in kind and invested £500 for a recent Student Live Project.

Stakeholder map

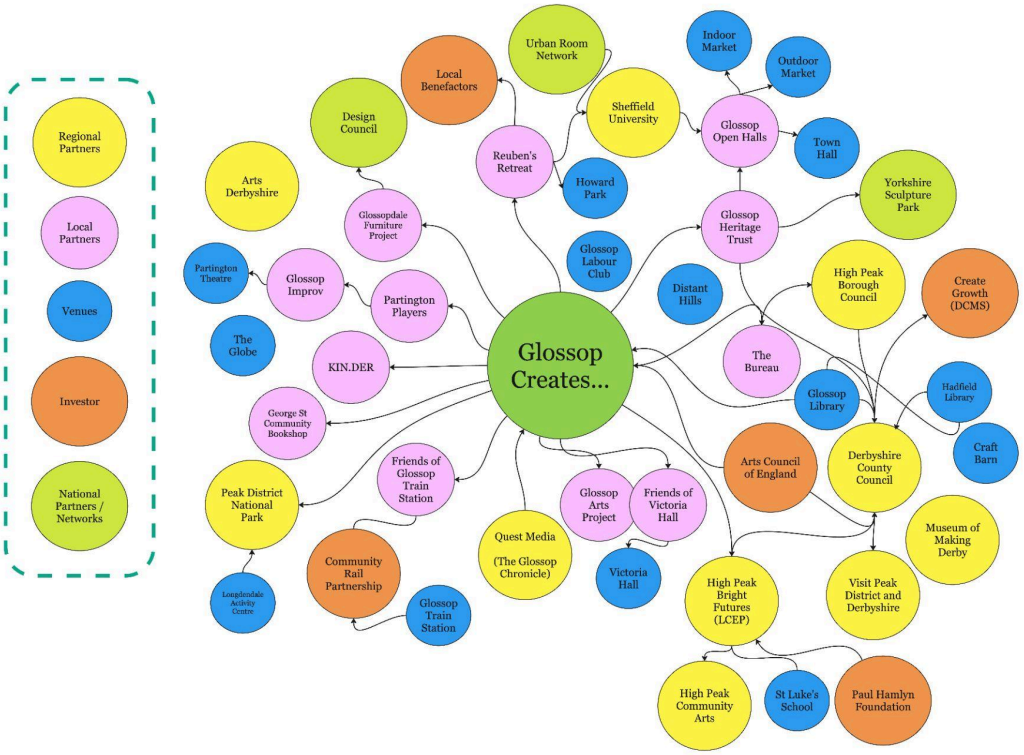

Fig. 5.2 Stakeholder map for Glossop Creates (expand)

Communications Plan - identifies three main beneficiary groups: stakeholders, participants, and the audience. Stakeholders provide the necessary funding and support to increase participant activity. Participants, in turn, benefit from this heightened activity, enhancing their creative output. The audience sustains interest and engagement, ensuring the success of participants' activities. The strategy focuses on inspiring and connecting all these groups to boost the visibility, quantity, and quality of creative work in Glossop and by Glossop residents. Key local creatives, including artists, craftspeople, designers, creative business owners, and hobbyists, are integral to this effort (Fig. 5.2 illustrates the mapping of partners in the Stakeholder map above) whilst this activity primarily targets local creatives, it also

encompasses community groups, local resources, support organisations, and the public audience (See Fig. 5.3 below). The overarching message is: *'We want to support you to do great things in Glossop and beyond. We can connect you to others who want to do the same.'*

Audience group	Examples	What do they want	What do we want	Strategy	Tactics
Stakeholders	> Funders > Councils > Press	"I want to know what this project will achieve"	Support & funding	Personal outreach	> Proposals > Face to Face > Press releases
Participants	> Local creatives > Community groups > Support organisations > Local resources	"I want to find support for what I do"	Increased visible activity	Inspire and connect	> Inspiration and networking opportunities (on and offline) > Workgroups (on and offline) > Listings > Profiles
Audience	> Local residents > Potential visitors	"I want to find good stuff to do and buy"	To support participants	Reach out, provide information and become the place to go	> Provide listings > Become a known and trusted brand > Reach out via PR, social and email

Fig. 5.3 Outline Comms plan - June 2019

Design - Similar to Blackburn is Open, good design plays a big role in a successful creative placemaking programme. Contemporary, fun and engaging branding helps to build trust in the quality of the offer, the programme and the experience. And as we operate in the creative industry in which design sits, it is a valuable tool for everyone involved.

Methodology

It is through the Glossop Creates plan, the CCE Framework took shape. With a baseline developed but no plan for what next, the discussion as to who the ‘Creative Group’ would be and how it would be governed was one I was invited to be part of.

Sheffield Live project - Glossop Connect - Prior to establishing a formal approach or research methodology, I saw it as an opportunity to engage Sheffield School of Architecture and pitched to host a student Live Project to provide inspiration, support me to create more

local connections, further develop the research and development for a vibrant creative economy in Glossop - connecting the various projects (including Victoria Arts Centre proposals, Glossop Open Halls and the adhoc cultural offer) with the independent creative sector and cultural tourism opportunity (inspired by Deveron Art Project's methodology 'The Town is the Venue').

Sheffield Live Project Brief - Glossop
September 2018

In September 2016, High Peak Council commissioned Tom Fleming Consultancy to deliver a new Creative Industries Assessment for Glossop. The report provides an assessment of how culture and creativity can bring economic and social benefits to the Derbyshire town of Glossop. The report acknowledges, Glossop is blessed with some significant assets which, with the right combination of passion, commitment, astute planning and positioning, could help the town to thrive again. Glossop can become a leading small town for cultural activity and creative business. It can utilise connectivity to Manchester, its good quality of life, industrial and civic heritage, and growing creative talent base, to give renewed vigour and vibrancy where other small towns are struggling to find a purpose.

Alongside the delivery of this report, there are a number of parallel initiatives underway which support the creative regeneration agenda for Glossop. The Victoria Arts Centre Board have recently commissioned and published a Feasibility Study to transform Victoria Hall into a new arts and performance space; Glossopdale Trust are leading on the redevelopment of the Glossop Open Halls project.

The birthplace of fashion designer Vivienne Westwood and location for popular TV show A League of Gentlemen, Glossop has exciting potential to develop a unique narrative and brand. With a community of incredibly talented and skilled individuals and businesses who are dedicated to improve Glossop's cultural ecology and build local capacity to create a genuine sense of place and distinction, we encourage this Live Project to go wild with proposals and ideas as well as help us explore the following questions.

- How can we coordinate existing cultural and entrepreneurial activities to successfully promote Glossop?
- How do we facilitate people's ideas to improve the town and prioritise these?
- What is the role of the Council in the transformation of the town centre?
- Who else do we need to get involved? Who has personal connections who can help shape and influence change?
- How do we create excitement and encourage participation amongst the local community?
- How do we measure the impact of our actions, and use this to attract funding, partnerships and more people to get involved?

References:

- Glossop Design and Placemaking Strategy - Gillespies (December 2011)
- Glossop Creative Industries Assessment - Tom Fleming Consultancy (July 2017)
- VAC reports
- HLF bid - Town Hall
- High Peak Growth Strategy (2017)

Drafted by Claire Tymon, 2018

As part of the Live Project publication, Fig. 5.4 is showing the Urban Room pop-up display sited in the market arcade, with a table-top map inviting members of the public to map their ideas, feelings, connections etc.

Fig. 5.4 Glossop Connect Urban Room (Image credit: Glossop Connect Live Project team 2018)

The student report included the following description of their approach:

> *"We began by talking to local creatives in order to truly understand the context within which we were working. From these discussions, it became apparent that there were many pockets of creative activity in Glossop, but there was little interaction between them. We, therefore, needed to bring these creative groups together and push for the evolution of the Glossop creative industry. We did this by developing a community owned brand, under which the creative community could be collectively identified, whilst acting as a platform for collaboration. The brand emphasises physical and social connections through collaboration and engagement, celebrating local talent and heritage."*[244]

[244] https://liveprojects.ssoa.info/2018/glossop-connect/ (accessed January 2024)

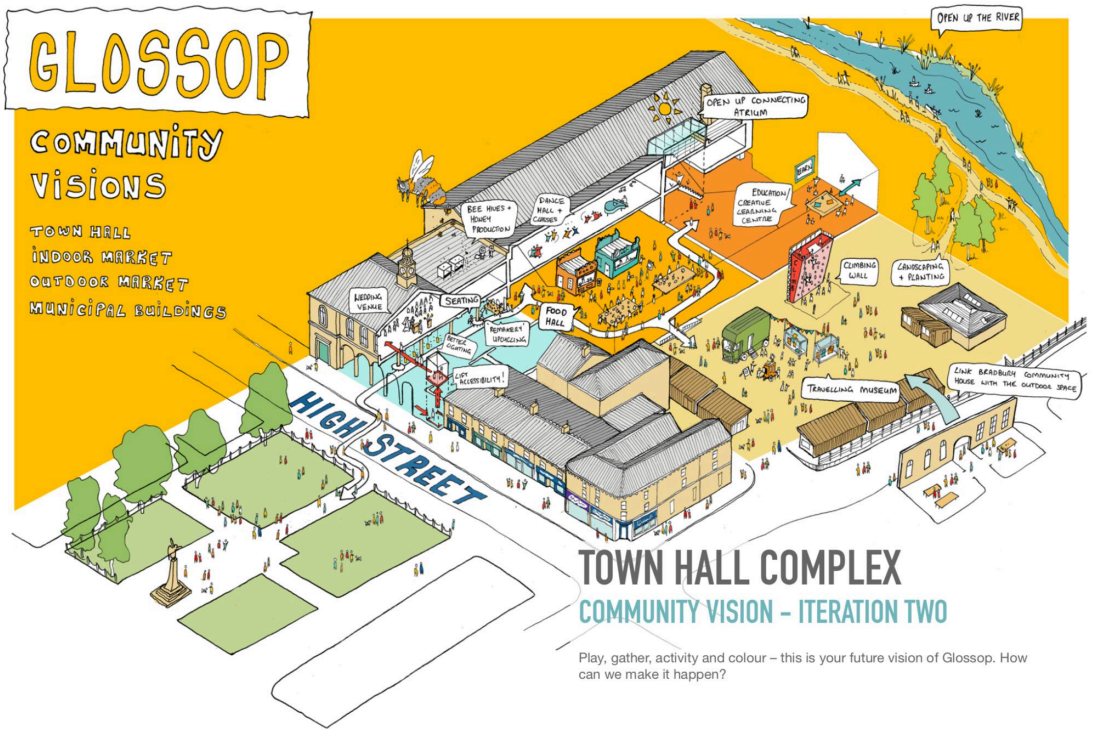

Fig. 5.5 Glossop Connect illustration, showing community visions for the future of the Town Hall Complex (Image credit: Glossop Connect Live Project team, 2018) (expand)

> *"Our cultural map evolved as a rich tapestry of memory and experiences, providing a tool for engagement. Alongside this, we created the Urban Room, a physical space which can foster these discussions, a place where people can go to understand and get involved in the future of their town."*[245]

The students produced the findings and proposals in a compilation of five booklets including research, an urban room manual, public engagement methods, as well as strategies for the future of Glossop:Connect, forming a framework to assist in the future development of Glossop's creative vision.[246] Their proposals were developed throughout the duration of the project as an iterative exercise, through a collaborative co-designed process, combining their ideas with those of the public (see Fig. 5.5). The process of the live project and its outcomes provided me with the confidence to initiate conversations with Glossop Creative Trust (then known as Glossopdale Trust) and the local authority, leading to my proposal for a new creative placemaking strategy for the town.

[245] ibid.
[246] The Glossop:Connect outputs can be viewed here - https://issuu.com/glossop-connect (accessed January 2024)

PLACE Strategy - I created a propositional paper that was positioned as a PLACE strategy, to consider the outcomes of the Glossop Creative Industries Assessment, the Victoria Art Centre vision and the Sheffield School of Architecture student Live Project, ‘Glossop Connect’. (I called it a PLACE strategy as I was unsure what people’s understanding of placemaking was but this would have been a better term for it).

Creating a sense of place, building community capacity and nurturing a creative ecology all contribute to the success and sustainability of the town’s vision, profile and succession. Placemaking is a complex and highly contextualised process, which has been developed and adopted by architects, planners, developers and local authorities as a way of enhancing the experience of a place. If not applied carefully and approached as a textbook exercise, the results can lack local relevance.

The Glossop PLACE strategy provided an outline approach that would support the 'creative group' in recognising the opportunities to transform innovative ideas into positive actions for the future of Glossop town centre and the wider area. By working collectively with individuals, groups and organisations to develop creative solutions and partnerships, the aim was to support and implement high quality community and business ideas and support their growth and success.

AIMS of the PLACE strategy

- Embrace a creative-led regeneration approach, both in future capital and community projects
- Empower the creative industry sector to take a lead, provide inspiration and deliver ambition
- Transform spaces into places of interest and intrigue, then invite everyone to explore, vision and enjoy
- Invite national and international talent to support delivery, ensuring the local drive it forward

Creative Action-learning approach - introducing Glossop Creates - In order to involve other creatives to support the development of the strategy or vision and co-design the deliverables (related to the recommendations in the GCIA report), I invited Rebecca Rae Evans (service designer and tech podcaster), Anthony Bullevant (graphic designer) along with the Chair of the GCT Board to initiate a campaign that was to become Glossop Creates. Rather than duplicate the methods employed through my work in Blackburn, I wanted to ensure the needs of Glossop’s creative community were considered through a place-based

approach, as Blackburn and Glossop are different places with different demographics, geography, challenges, economic factors, and opportunities. Glossop Creates was established in 2019.

> *Glossop Creates is a new campaign aimed to support and empower Glossop's creative community*, to provide tools, space and opportunity and create a sense of hope, whilst taking action for the future of the town. The GlossopCreates! Manifesto will be a declaration for change-makers, created through new commissions, mentoring and building confidence between artists, partners, and audiences. Supporting the recovery of the local economy, our work takes inspiration from the local community, heritage and natural environment.*
> **Our creative community includes local artists, writers, musicians, curators and makers.* (ACE bid, September 2020)

The model developed for Glossop Creates has been iterative and developed from three strands in phase 1 to five in phase 2 and 3.

Glossop Creates Programme 2021-2022

Objectives and activities:

1. BUILD and STRENGTHEN the Glossop Creates campaign providing a support network to help sustain business:
    a. increase confidence within Glossop's creative economy
    b. nurture new creative, independent and enterprising ideas, and collaborations
    c. inspire the creative community to lead change

    Activities - 3 network events, mentoring programme for 5 creatives, online and offline maker markets
2. Capturing the STORY of Glossop in 2020 through a series of creative commissions, whilst VISIONING NEW FUTURES for the northern post-industrial town:
    a. provide employment opportunities for local creatives
    b. curate an online gallery of work to help deliver the values of the Trust
    c. raise the profile of participating artists and creatives

    Activities - 3 creative residencies, creative storytelling, micro-commissions for online engagement
3. ENGAGE local residents and businesses in future opportunities in Glossop, SUPPORTING the town's recovery and adapting to social and economic changes:
    a. wider community engagement activities
    b. develop new opportunities for future community engagement activities
    c. increase positive social experiences

    Activities - establish an Urban Room with workshops and exhibitions

Source: Arts Council of England application November 2021

A reflection…

The activities delivered as key action-research deliverables in the first phase of work are outlined in the observatory section of this case study. However, it is important to highlight that, during this first phase, the first COVID pandemic lockdown occurred in March 2020 putting a pause on all Glossop Creates work as I had to focus on my employment at FutureEverything, where I had been made Executive Director in June 2019.

A Framework

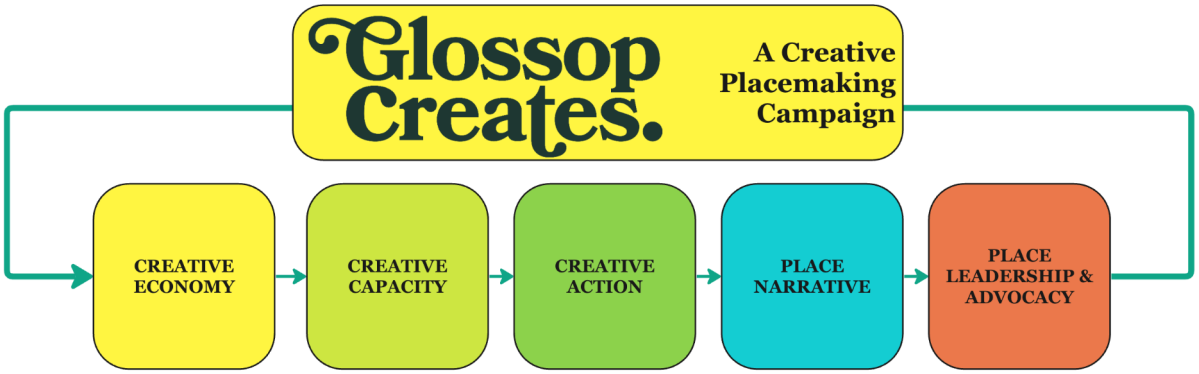

Fig. 5.6 Glossop Creates CCE Framework Pillars

In December 2018, it was proposed the established Glossopdale Trust would rebrand as Glossop Creative Trust and refresh its Board membership to include a diverse range of skills. With financial support from High Peak Borough Council, I was informally commissioned to support the development of a strategy (or framework) in which the new Creative Trust would lead on, to help strengthen partnerships, investment opportunities and Glossop's new place brand.[247] (Fig. 5.6 illustrates the development of the CCE LOGIC Framework - and expanded in Fig. 5.7)

Glossop Creative Trust Framework

Vision - Glossop to be recognised as a centre of cultural excellence, inspired by its community, and both its heritage and natural environment

Mission - To raise the cultural ambition for Glossop town centre, facilitating ideas and visions for spaces and buildings, with and for the community

[247] Appendix P5.3 outlines the development of the PLACE strategy - which was renamed the Creative Glossop Framework with five key strands and strategic objectives. And when the start of the CCE Framework was developed.

1. Create a sense of place, enhancing the physical, cultural, and social identity to define Glossop (Glossopdale) and support its ongoing evolution in order to increase a sense of pride and ownership in the town and surrounding areas, provide an inclusive and diverse offer and attract investment.
We will do this by… creating an inclusive and exciting brand identity, attracting regional and national PR, and driving innovative placemaking practices.

2. Build community capacity to enable, drive and deliver cultural ambition in Glossopdale and empower local leadership to help create a more sustainable future and ensure wider engagement is achieved.
We will do this by… working with partners to build skills and confidence and respond to new ways of working. We will support and facilitate ideas from the community and connect to what resources already exist.

3. Build a better and stronger cultural ecology, to enhance and promote our current cultural and heritage offer, whilst supporting new cultural attractions (venues, festivals, events) and encouraging economic growth.
We will do this by… capitalising on local assets - buildings, spaces and experts, supporting and facilitating the development of new, high quality cultural experiences, advocating best practices to partners and investors and attracting funding for community-led projects.

4. Nurture new creative, independent and enterprising ideas, collaborations and businesses to improve economic growth and attract talent, entrepreneurs, and encourage new business.
We will do this by… identify and develop spaces for creative business including co-working spaces and workshops, signpost to funding and business support for creative industries.

5. Ensure the work of the Glossopdale Trust in leading this strategy remains relevant, sustainable, inclusive and strategic to ensure the success of this project
We will do this by... recruiting a committed and proactive Board who feel ownership of this work, support its implementation and continue to invest in its future development, invest in Board training and leadership and continue to review and evaluate the project aims and objectives. And celebrate success!

Authored by Claire Tymon, February 2020

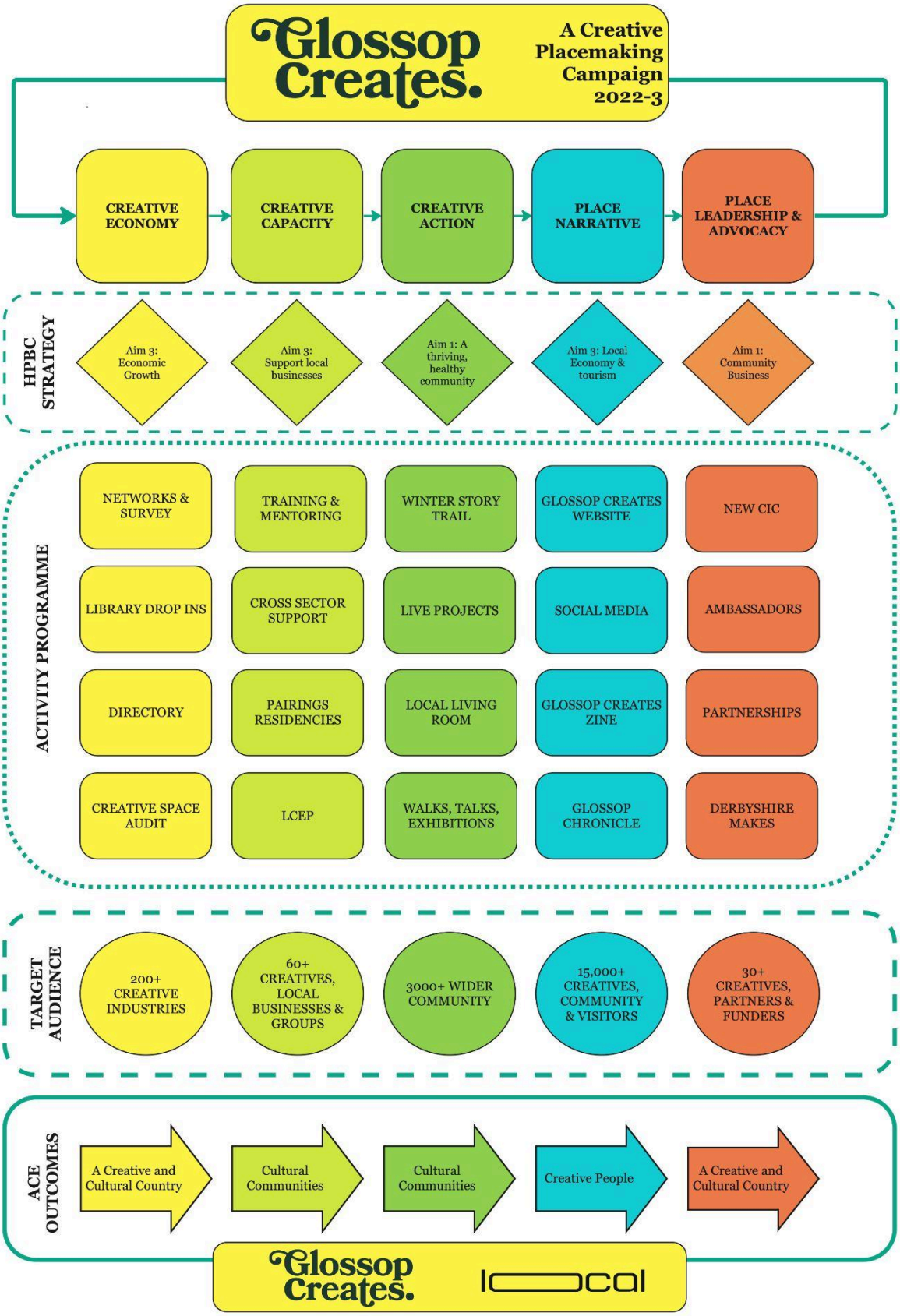

Fig. 5.7 A Framework for Glossop Creates placemaking campaign (expand)

CREATIVE ACTION-RESEARCH

OBSERVATORY

The Glossop Creates ethos was similar to the Blackburn is Open manifesto. To nurture and facilitate the needs and aspirations of the creative community, in order to build confidence, platform local talent and provide a pipeline of opportunities connected to the local economy - whether that be cultural or regeneration-led. Therefore, the activities Glossop Creates was to initiate and deliver required a nurturing environment, space to test and shape ideas and create collaborations.

Summary of 'Observatory' outputs, since 2018:
Networking events - 15 events, ave attendance 35
Mentoring - 13 pairings
Training - 6 sessions, ave attendance 6
Directory - 60 creative businesses
Network membership - 325 creatives / creative businesses
Annual survey - 3 total
Pairings commissions - 8 commissions / residencies
New partnerships - 12 partners

As mentioned in the section above, the methodologies I implemented included:

- **Thematic networking events** - three themed groups were formed, independent food and drink businesses (supported by local entrepreneur Thom Hetherington and), grassroots music network (supported by Dark Peak Music Foundation) and a creative network. Later on, we developed a network for writers and performers, connected with the Winter Story Trail. The network events provide an opportunity for the Glossop Creates team to share funding and/or commissioning opportunities, knowledge on local developments, share news from other cultural organisations and hear feedback through conversations and/or feedback sessions - that would further enhance our research and understanding of the local creative ecology. The events also provide an opportunity for local creatives to share their projects or events, to showcase their talent - through performance, readings, visual art presentations, or just to socialise with like-minded people. And develop new relationships and collaborations.

- **Mentoring and training** - through a monthly library drop in sessions and local mentor pairings (we paired a local mentor with a local mentee), and hosted ad hoc training sessions for fundraising, social media and project management. Through the one to one conversations, we are able to gain a deeper understanding on the needs, challenges and opportunities from the local creative community, and how we could utilise this information to help shape our own programme and attract funding to deliver services required to meet the needs of the local creative community.
- **A new online creative directory** - as part of the initial Glossop Creates website, we invited local businesses and freelancers to create a business profile, developing a directory of local creative businesses. The objective was to create a place where anyone could find a local creative business, especially to support local businesses during the pandemic. This also enabled the Glossop Creates team to understand the type of creative businesses that existed in the area, and the types of products and services they were offering. And where there may be gaps in provision.
- **Creative survey** - initially the survey was developed to support a funding application to Build Back Better where the local council were successfully awarded £2m for the Town Hall / Market Hall development. Within two weeks, we gathered feedback from 76 surveys and continue to use this as a baseline for the GC programme evaluation. We continue to deliver the survey each August, although we have now removed many of the covid-related questions.
- **Creative residency programme** - I initiated a programme called Pairings where we pair creative practitioners with issues that matter - or more recently, the residencies have been in partnership with local community and voluntary organisations. We are able to secure small pots of funding by partnering with social enterprises. The Pairings aim to create a partnership between a creative and a social business - who may not normally recruit the services of a creative practitioner. The brief is open, the research is led by the creative through the residency. The aim is to use the residency to create a more substantial project proposal - which we can then apply for funding to the most suitable funder or investor. Further details on the Pairings is provided in the Factory section of this chapter.

These five activities are now part of a toolkit we utilise in other creative industry-focussed work (see Fig. 6.5). The challenges I soon became aware of, in which I think are of interest to the readers of this case study are as follows:

- A gap between the needs of the independent creative community and those with decision-making capacity

- Lack of skills and knowledge of the creative industry sector and wider cultural sector within the local authority (no evidence of applying to Arts Council of England for capital or revenue projects)
- A lack of understanding for the role and value the local creative sector can play in creative placemaking - the local authority would continue to recruit external consultants to deliver work where the skills were present within the local community
- A lack of respect for me as an independent creative consultant, producer and placemaker - my knowledge, skills, experience and network
- External factors - covid recovery campaigns, Levelling up plans, community renewal etc

LABORATORY

As mentioned in the Observatory phase, each strand or method delivered as part of the Glossop Creates programme aims to increase the team's knowledge and understanding of the place, the needs of the local creative community, enhancing connectivity either within the creative community and/or between creatives and locality, for example, a local business or community group. This knowledge translates into evidence of need, with the aim to attract and increase investment in the local creative and cultural sector, make smarter, informed decisions on priorities and opportunities, for example, how vacant buildings can be utilised for cultural provision, and support innovative ideas.

Our role as creative placemakers sometimes shifts from facilitators to deliverers and producers, so we can shape and test new ideas - whilst continuing to research and build information about our local creative community and establish a stronger cultural ecology. With investment from Arts Council of England and a mix of public and private sector partners, we've been able to test and shape the following projects and activities with the aim to create replicable models or projects that work for our local communities.

Summary of Laboratory outputs, since 2018:

- Creative co-work space - 1
- KIN.DER zine - 3 zines
- Wanders - 6 walks
- Creative commissions - 5

KIN.DER - a creative cooperative space in the heart of the town centre, we partnered with Dark Peak Press and Lauren Riley to develop a new shop, print studio and conversation space. This became the home of Glossop Creates for 12 months, between October 2021 and October 2022. As an open plan space (and a shop where the public can enter and hear meetings and conversations), it became unsuitable for the Glossop Creates team, as we needed a mix of private and public space as well as space to host workshops and exhibitions. However, it provided us with a central home for 12 months, working in a collaborative environment which helped us build profile and trust, and develop ideas organically through those ad hoc conversations. KIN.DER[248] continues to grow and develop as a print studio, and provides space for 3-4 creatives in an open-plan space. As a space, they take part in many of the town's festivals and events and host their own artistic exhibitions and happenings, establishing itself as a key cultural venue in the town.

KIN.DER zine - creating a new, free zine to share local stories, platform local writers, and provide an alternative platform for critical thinking and contemporary issues. (See APPENDIX P5.6) I had hoped the zine would continue to be produced by the KIN.DER team, securing seed investment from a local business, however, this has not happened and would rely on me / the Glossop Creates team to continue to commission the artefact for future production. Due to the lack of investment in Glossop Creates (my attention has been to focus on the completion of the PhD), this has not been a priority for the initiative.

Wanders - a series of creative-led walks, designed by the walk 'maker', curated by Glossop Creates, created with participants, 'the walkers'. A gentle, accessible stroll taking the group of walkers on a local trail inspired by Glossopdale's heritage, landscape or a creative discipline. Wander's have been made by Tim Campbell Green (who also goes by the alias Robert Hamnett), a local archaeologist; Michael Howard, a local art historian and artist; Suzanne Hill, a local hill walker and forager and Lauren Riley, a local designer. Lasting between 1.5-2 hours, each Wander produces a collaboration between the lead creative and the group, inviting contributions, sharing stories and making new friends. We have recently secured funding to develop a series of Wander guides to be printed and distributed, or downloadable from the Glossop Creates website, contributing as a visitor economy product or experience. (Fig 5.8 below outlines the Wander branding)

[248] https://kin-der.co/

Fig. 5.8 Wander Walks promotional designs

The ideas facilitated through the Laboratory strand enable us, and the creative community, to research and test new ways of working or producing new work, products and services. We are able to nurture the ideas through the substantial research and observational approach myself and the team take, listening to creative community needs and desires, and discovering ways to address those needs through co-designing solutions.

FACTORY

Since my work began in Glossop in 2017, numerous projects, products, and services have been developed and established - not just by the Glossop Creates team, but others in the creative community. Over the past six years, we've seized various opportunities to create replicable events and projects, whilst also strengthening partnerships, advocacy, and leadership. For me, the success of the Glossop Creates approach is evident in the outputs produced by the Factory. These sustainable actions and products result from building trust and confidence, granting informal permission to create and deliver enterprising projects and initiatives, leading by example, and showcasing the impact of people's efforts.

Summary of Factory outputs since 2018:

- Winter story/art trail - 3 events
- Artists / Authors commissions - 75 commissions
- Creative enterprises - 4 new enterprises
- Website - 2 versions

New Creative Enterprises - The first organisation to develop through this work is the Glossop Creative Trust CIC. Whilst the Glossopdale Trust already existed as a constituted group, there was no clear strategic remit for the organisation and little evidence of

enterprising activity. Whilst I am no longer involved with GCT, I understand that it continues to support the local creative community via the What's On website and supports local grassroots music initiatives.

Whilst KIN.DER is not a company but a partnership between Dark Peak Press and Lauren Riley, it continues to be a trusted creative partnership in the town that hosts the shop and studio space, and delivers print services for local and regional independent, creative and ethical businesses and workshops.

As of April 2024, a new Dark Peak Photography Festival CIC has been established following the inaugural festival launching in February. Led by local creative The Drone Lass, Carys Kaiser, who has received some mentoring support from the Glossop Creates team, the festival is an incredible addition to Glossop's growing cultural programme.

And finally, my own creative practice, Local, would not have happened without Glossop Creates. The incentive to establish an organisation, with staff, was to sustain the capacity and creative leadership required to continue supporting and nurturing the local creative economy.

Sharing the experience of setting up a new group, or a new business, or enterprise, supports others who may have an entrepreneurial idea to establish it in a business proposition. There is increased support - financial and mentoring - for new business start-ups from the government, but the challenge is that artists, designers and creative professionals don't relate their practice to these opportunities. Working with partners like Arts Council of England, Derbyshire County Council and East Midlands Chamber of Commerce, we have provided additional support sessions to break down the barriers to access support and finance.

Website - The Glossop Creates website acts as a central hub for the programme and campaign, a place to host a directory of local creative businesses and freelancers; a space to share stories through a blog; a space to promote activities, events and happenings; and features on things to do in the local area - produced by the local creative community. To ensure there is good communication between businesses and creative practitioners, the Glossop Creates website's primary function is an online directory profiling creative freelancers and independent businesses. The website has now been developed as a white

label and enables us to create replicable websites for other places. This was achieved with In Tameside[249]

Creative Residencies - I am passionate about developing creative residencies with partners who would not normally consider working with artists, designers, makers etc. The Pairings programme has been good for this, and I now consider the Sheffield Live Projects as part of the Pairings methodology (see Appendix P5.7 for Pairings brief). Since 2021, we have hosted eight Pairings residencies. In brief, these include:

- Textile and Print-based artist, Lauren Riley paired with the heritage of Edmund Potter and Dinting Vales Works, the world's largest calico printing factory in Glossopdale (2021-22)
- Multi-media artist Richard Knox paired with the heritage of Glossop Town Hall (2021-22)
- Environmental artist Sarah Males paired with the Bureau, Glossop's wellbeing charity (2022)
- Archeologist Tim Campbell Green paired with Glossop's archeology, establishing 'The Big Dig' public event (2023)
- Sound artist Clare Savory paired with the Peak District National Park, producing 'Longdendale Tales' - https://longdendaletales.humap.site/ (2023)
- Sheffield School of Architecture live project paired with local charity Reuben's Retreat (2023)
- Sculptural designer Liam Hopkins of Lazerian paired with local charity Glossopdale Furniture Project, producing 'The Birdhouse' co-designed with the local community[250] (2023)
- Visual artist Evie O'Connor paired with Friends of Glossop Train Station, with support from Community Rail Network fund (2023-24)

Fig. 5.9 Pairings logo, designed initially by Richard Knox

[249] https://www.intameside.co.uk/
[250] https://lazerian.com/blog/glossop-creates-transforming-glossops-spirit-into-sustainable-art/

In September 2023, we self-funded a student live project with Reuben's Retreat, a local charity who supports families with children requiring respite care or bereaved families who have lost children. Ten years ago the charity bought the old Woods Hospital (where LS Lowry died on 23 February 1976) and have offered for Glossop Creates to utilise a whole wing of the building whilst they fundraise to redevelop it into accommodation for families.

Due to our lack of artist studio provision in the town, we commissioned a student live project to consider different scales of modular and moveable studios that can be erected in large, abandoned spaces - as there are different types of spaces like this across the town. Due to the lack of funding and team capacity, the plans are on hold and I plan to take the learning and feedback from this project to inform a bid to Innovate UK, enabling us to purchase materials and establish a plan to move it into the Factory phase.

Winter Story Trail - Glossop had a regular 'Art in the Windows' annual event over a number of years but stopped in 2014 due to lack of volunteer capacity. To re-establish an annual cultural event for the town that promotes and profiles local creative talent, and with the Welcome Back Funding opportunity, we kick-started the concept with the Winter Art Trail in 2021 and then utilised the template event format and took our learnings to develop a follow up event, the Winter Story Trail in 2022 and again in 2023. The concept involves commissioning original, site-specific short stories (up to 300 words) - pairing the author or poet with a local high street business in Glossop town centre. 24 stories are commissioned, creating an advent trail and social media campaign, showcasing the author, the business and the story on each day of December. Each story is also recorded and hosted on Soundcloud.

The aim is to attract families and local residents and visitors to complete the trail whilst increasing footfall to the high street, encouraging people to shop locally and support local businesses. A specially commissioned 24-word poem is produced, with each word being allocated to each story - so to complete the trail, you reveal the hidden poem. The event is launched as part of the annual Glossop Christmas light switch-on event at the end of November. (Fig 5.10 illustrates the project map)

Fig. 5.10 A Winter Story Trail map (2022)

The project is labour intensive - liaising with 24 different writers and 24 different high street businesses, printing the stories and installing them, creating a map and distributing them (usually to the local bookshops, the library and KIN.DER), marketing and promoting the event, evaluating the outcomes and producing both the story book and the audio trail. We've developed a workbook that includes the functions of producing the event, for example, schedules, briefs and risk assessments, to help make the production more efficient.

In May 2024, we hosted a Glossop Creates network event at Victoria Hall, where we have been assisting the Friends of Victoria Hall in establishing a new charitable organisation and developing a business plan. This follows a surprise capital grant from the central government for immediate repairs and redevelopment to transform the building into an arts centre. During the meeting, it was announced that the Dark Peak Photography Festival successfully applied to establish itself as a Community Interest Company. The rapid development of culture and creative enterprise in our town is extraordinary and transformational, especially considering the limited cultural offerings and connectivity five years ago.

STORY

Our aims through the Glossop Creates storytelling is to:

- Profile and platform local creative talent, with the aim to attract them more business
- Profile and platform Glossop / Glossopdale as a creative, cultural destination for locals and visitors
- To promote a sense of place and identity, building pride in place within our local communities and those who are from Glossop but may not live here anymore
- Share the impact of our work, locally and nationally, promoting the outcomes of our 'town as the venue' approach.

Summary of Story outputs:

- Glossop Creates blog posts -
- Weekly page in the local newspaper, The Glossop Chronicle, since 2022
- Regional press coverage secured
- National press coverage - 3
- Facebook followers - 1400
- Instagram followers - 1920
- Evaluation reports - 4
- Award nominations - 1
- High profile stories - 1

For Glossop Creates, the Story methods include:

- **Partnership with The Glossop Chronicle** - we have a very special and unique opportunity through Quest Media who own The Glossop Chron and High Peak Radio. We have a dedicated page in the local newspaper (distribution circa 3000) where they get an exclusive story or set of stories which are drafted by Glossop Create's PR manager, an independent freelance writer, and are presented as a branded feature. (See Fig. 5.11)
- **Glossop Creates blog** - the Glossop Creates website has a blog feature, where we post news about projects, activities and events, as well as share funding and commissioning opportunities to share with our networks.
- **Glossop Creates Newsletter** - we share a newsletter with our network when we feel we have a body of information and news to share. On average, we share between 4-6 newsletters a year.

Fig. 5.11 - Examples of the Glossop Creates pages in The Glossop Chronicle (2022)

Fig. 5.12 Photograph of a street art mural of Vivienne Westwood by local artist Deggy, taken on a Wander Walk led by Martha Camarillo (Image credit: Richard Tymon, 15 May 2023)

IMPACT

Since 2017 and the publication of the Glossop Creative Industries Assessment (Tom Fleming), Glossop has developed a creative placemaking campaign, resulting in the local creative community feeling more connected and more confident in their own business and practice in a post-covid society.

In order to test ideas in the Laboratory phase, in particular the development of a Creative Innovation District model (as explained in Chapter 2), which is what the Glossop Creates campaign is aiming towards, I believe there are a number of requirements or needs to provide an environment for initiating and testing ideas. My learning for this was developed through Blackburn is Open, however, Glossop Creates is a self-initiated programme with limited support from the local authority. My reflections include:

- Access to affordable or free space - to co-create, to engage, to ideate, to experiment, to showcase or perform, to demonstrate.
- Access to start-up finance or creative bursaries - this could help fund creative time for R&D, hiring space, marketing support, or workshop materials.
- Permission to ‘have a go’ in different spaces - this might be required from the local authority or a landlord, or local businesses.

Similar to Blackburn is Open, Glossop Creates continues to develop as an inclusive and accessible brand, communicating a collective endeavour to energise and coordinate Glossop’s creative ecology into actionable missions. (Illustrated in the detailed timeline in Fig. 5.13) Also leaning on the town’s creative diaspora was something I wanted to do, following the success of this approach in Blackburn with Wayne Hemingway and Christine Cort. However, with the pandemic delaying this approach, and our infamous diaspora both recently passed away (Vivienne Westwood and Hilary Mantel), there is an excellent group of active advocates who are keen to get more involved and support the campaign.

Impact on creatives - During the past three years the Glossop Creates team has developed a deeper relationship and profile with many of Glossopdale's creative businesses. Glossop Creates support ideas, campaigns and shone a light on those businesses who were struggling and utilised our networks to tell stories, promote their online shops and encourage collaboration. For example Dark Peak Press developed an idea to start a campaign to support high street businesses, called Love Glossop Support Local.

Some of the creatives who have taken part in the Glossop Creates activities have acknowledged that their practice has improved and/or benefited as a result of their involvement in Glossop Creates. Lauren Riley, an artist who undertook the first Pairings residency, secured a Develop Your Creative Practice (DYCP) grant from Arts Council of England to further develop her research and practice in response to Edmund Potter. Martha Camarillo, who led a Wander walk about Vivienne Westwood's influence on the town, has secured a role with Factory International, and states this was achieved through her opportunity to lead the Wander walk and demonstration of her creative producer skills. And Deggy, a local artist, achieved his first street art piece.[251]

> *"So lovely to be back in a room full of creatives this evening at Glossop Creates Creative Network Meeting... I left feeling inspired at the potential in creative communities to transform and reinvigorate places"* - Daniel Booth, Reubens Retreat.
>
> *"Brill Glossop Creates meet up! So many diverse exciting projects happening in our town"* - Clare Savory, Pairings Residency artist.

I recently interviewed local artist, podcaster and producer, Clare Savory, one of the recipients of the Pairings residency programme. Appendix P5.9 provides a full transcript, but in summary our conversation revolved around the intersection of artistic research and entrepreneurship, with Savory sharing her personal journey of transitioning from a podcast production business to exploring more artistic and experimental research projects. We discussed the challenges and opportunities of navigating this intersection, including the importance of delegating tasks, collaborating on other creative aspects, and nurturing creative collaborations between artists, designers, and businesses. Savory emphasised the need for Glossop Creates in supporting local artists in Glossop, creating a space for artists to connect and mingle, and promoting local artists and creatives. It was really helpful for me to hear Savory's reflections whilst acknowledging the impact of our efforts on the town's art community and the need for artists to provide feedback on the initiatives' effectiveness.

The takeaway actions from our exchange are as follows:

- Consider providing more curatorial support during Pairings to nurture project and partnership development.
- Explore continuing to offer mentoring pairings between local creatives but ensure adequate support.

[251] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-64126200

- Clarify the specific focus and boundaries of what Glossop Creates does and does not provide.
- Consider offering training sessions on topics like funding applications, marketing skills, and goal setting.
- Explore the possibility of speed networking or pairing events focused on collaboration.

“Glossop Creates really opened my eyes to the opportunities for creativity and collaboration across my local area. I always equate the work they’ve done here to panning for gold, they shook the tray and all these nuggets - these brilliant, talented people - rose to the surface, and, like never before, I could see the potential on my doorstep. I used their website to advertise my skills as a filmmaker and animator, and - almost immediately - by coincidence an animator was needed for a local Christmas project. Doing this work gave me more confidence in my own ability; I’d never really done anything that prominent and community-facing before… and it led me to further opportunities collaborating with other local creatives, whether as part of their own projects or on my own. Through things like the Glossop Winter Art Trail I found a local artist, Michael Cooke, who is now creating the poster for a short film I made in Glossop, with Glossop-based actors and crew. Something I don’t think I would’ve done if it wasn’t for Glossop Creates.”

Owaine Paciuszko, Animator, Filmmaker, Artist, Writer

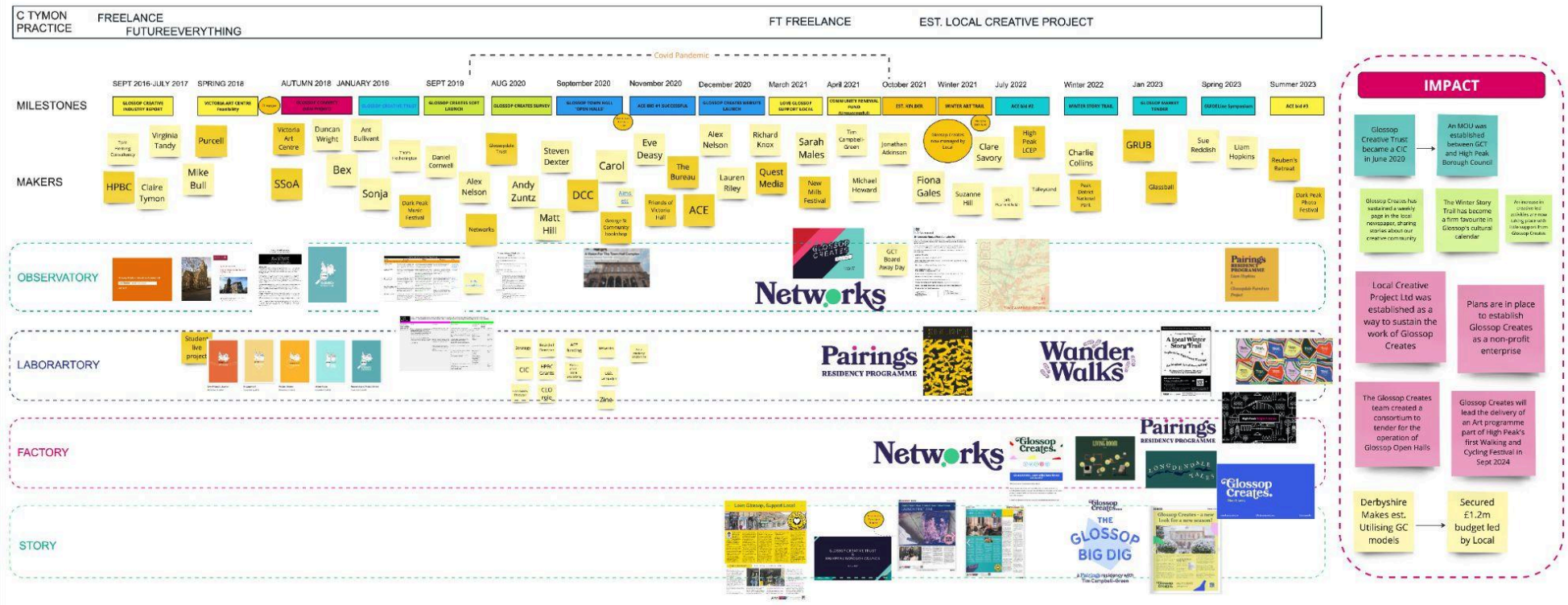

Fig. 5.13 Glossop Creates impact timeline - mapping makers, process, outcomes (expand)

A progression route

The programme research methods in relation to the CCE Framework strands:

	YR1 / Phase 1 2020-2021	YR2 / Phase 2 2021-2022	YR3 / Phase 3 2022-2023
Observatory	Survey MOU	Survey ACE report	Survey Levelling Up White Paper - Culture-led regeneration
Laboratory	Temporary Website Residency Mentoring Winter Art Trail	KIN.DER Studio space Wanders Pairing residencies	LCEP* GUIDEline symposium Glossop Market consortium tender
Factory	GCT CIC	New website Mentoring Winter Story Trail Local Creative Project Ltd	Pairings residency KIN.DER studio space Wanders Winter Story Trail & zine Derbyshire Makes ACE Place Partnership application GC Framework
Story	Advocacy document	Website Newsletter Stakeholder Report Quest Media partnership KIN.DER Zine	Website Newsletter Stakeholder Report NP11 conference Quest Media partnership

Fig. 5.14 The table demonstrates how the methods or tools have gone through a process of being tested to become a confident, replicable tool or product (May 2024)

To progress toward a more sustainable and successful future, Glossop Creates aims to increase PR efforts to share the programme's learnings and achievements. This will involve setting output-driven targets to maintain momentum and clarifying team roles and deliverables whilst recruiting volunteers to support a progressive business and governance model.

Strategically positioning Glossop Creates within Derbyshire, High Peak, and the East Midlands is essential. Additionally, creating spaces to sustain practice and collaboration,

providing peer-to-peer support, and developing audiences are priorities. Implementing smarter commissioning models, such as contracts and reflective meetings, and diversifying income streams connected to the business model will be crucial. Lastly, improving relationships with partners and investors, including the local authority, LCEP, and Victoria Hall, will enhance the initiative's impact and reach.

Glossopdale will remain geographically challenging amongst the various political administrations, however, as a project, we are embracing the location through strategic partnerships with Community Network Rail (the rail transport network easily connects Glossop with Greater Manchester), the Peak District National Park and Derbyshire County Council (Glossop will be one of six 'maker hubs' part of the new Arts Council of England Place Partnership funded festival, Derbyshire Makes, from 2024).

From August 2023, the plan is to implement a cooperative governance model to help sustain Glossop Creates, establishing the project as an independent social enterprise, owned by the local creative community.

Fig. 5.15 A series of banners for Glossop Creates events (2023)

Work still needs to be done to strengthen the relationship between the local authority and the work produced by the Glossop Creates programme, ensuring there is strengthened connection between each other's work strands and priorities. Unfortunately, following various emails to the local authorities regeneration and community teams, sharing recent programme outputs, research findings and future plans, there has been no acknowledgement or recognition of the work we lead on in our local community. The only

communication we have had was a request for a letter of support for the Glossop Levelling Up Fund application.

The Creative Civic Engagement Framework provides a critical tool to help build and develop the programme and its future governance. Capacity building will be required throughout the next phase of development, in which the Framework can support.

PORTFOLIO

There has been a significant number of reports, studies, artworks and online interventions produced and continue to be produced as the Glossop Creates campaign has grown. As a portfolio of work, the key outcomes of this case study are listed below.

Portfolio Contents

- P5.1a Glossop Creates Miro timeline
- P5.2a Glossop Placemaking Strategy (Draft) 2019
- P5.2 Glossop Creates Advocacy presentation
- P5.3 Glossop Creates Framework
- P5.4 Town Hall Vision
- P5.5 Winter Story Trail evaluation
- P5.6 KIN.DER zine
- P5.7 Pairings brief
- P5.8 Glossop Creates Phase 3 Proposal
- P5.9 Clare Savory Interview Transcription

THE MAKERS

Contributors and credits

Lead & Direction

- Claire Tymon - Founder, Director (Local Creative Project Ltd)
- Steven Dexter - Creative Producer (2021-2024)

Key Partners & Advocates

- High Peak Borough Council – Initial funder
- Glossop Creative Trust – Phase 1 host organisation
- Local Creative Project Ltd – Phases 2 & 3 lead organisation
- Richard Tymon – Photographer
- Virginia Tandy

Creative Contributors & Collaborators

- Eve Middlemiss - PR and storytelling
- Tim Campbell-Green - Archeologist, Pairings residency and Wander Walk
- Suzanne Hill - Walk lead
- Matt Hill - Writer
- Clare Savory - Sound artist, *Pairings* residency (Longdendale Tales)
- Lauren Riley – Artist, *Pairings* residency (Edmund Potter project)
- Michael Howard – Artist & historian (Wittgenstein research & guided walks)
- Ghislaine Howard - Artist
- Richard Knox, KIN.DER – Zine contributors & editors
- Dark Peak Photography Festival organisers inc Carys Kaiser
- Michelle Lyons - brand design
- Playmaker - Website design and host
- Sarah Males - artist, *Pairings* residency
- Sheffield University School of Architecture - Glossop Connect Live Project & Reuben's Retreat Live Project
- Ben Metcalfe - BenJac Design
- Chellie Carroll - Illustrator
- Evie O-Connor - Artist, Pairings residency and mentee
- Sue Reddish - Artist
- Artists, writers, designers, makers, and over 300 members of the creative network
- Brian & George Fell - Artists
- Julie Hesmondhalgh - Actor and storyteller
- Tess Gee - Artist and illustrator
- Matt Hill - Singer songwriter, Artist

Organisations & Venues

- The Glossop Chronicle (Not Really Here Group)
- Friends of Glossop Train Station (FOGS) - *Pairings* residency host
- Local creative businesses, shops, and studios across Glossopdale - host to the many projects and networking events
- Heritage and cultural sites in Glossop, Hadfield, and surrounding villages
- Peak District National Park - *Pairings* residency host
- Glossopdale Furniture Project - *Pairings* residency host
- Reuben's Retreat - Student Live Project host

Funders

- High Peak Borough Council (initial phase and via UKSPF)
- Local Creative Project Ltd (self-financed through my social enterprise model)
- Arts Council of England
- Specsavers (sponsors of the Winter Story Trail)

While this list recognises some key "makers", it cannot fully represent the large and diverse community of people whose involvement has been integral to the making of this project.

CASE STUDY: THE MAKER'S MILE, ROCHDALE (2022-2023)

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CREATIVE action-research
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- LABORATORY
- FACTORY
- STORY

IMPACT
PORTFOLIO

Executive Summary

Located in Rochdale, on the outskirts of Greater Manchester and known as the birthplace of the modern cooperative movement, **The Maker's Mile** comprises a series of visionary proposals, briefs, and a framework for a Creative Innovation District, based on the CCE Framework. The Maker's Mile addresses challenges related to wayfinding, creative networks, asset management, and event programming, spanning the route from Rochdale Train Station to the Town Centre.

The Maker's Mile builds on the groundwork laid by the Rochdale Creative Consortium and Urban Room Rochdale, aiming to integrate and enhance existing efforts whilst exemplifying contemporary cooperative values such as collaboration, democracy, and co-design. By working closely with public sector partners, local cultural organisations, the Rochdale community, and Sheffield School of Architecture's Live Project team, the Maker's Mile involved arts-based public engagement and presentations at Rochdale Riverside. The project focuses on developing a framework for a new Creative Innovation District, bridging the gap between Rochdale's heritage assets and cultural networks, through co-production and storytelling.

INTRODUCTION

Between 2019 and 2024, my creative practice, Local, has been instrumental in shaping the cultural and creative landscape of Rochdale in Greater Manchester. Our work has catalysed several significant initiatives, including the implementation of a series of Urban Room interventions. These interventions have culminated in the development of a comprehensive toolkit for Urban Room Rochdale. Furthermore, we played a pivotal role in the establishment of Rochdale's inaugural Creative Innovation District, named 'The Maker's Mile,' and supported the Rochdale Creative People and Places programme, Culture Coop, by providing a robust framework for Artistic Excellence.

As an Arts Council of England (ACE) Priority Place, Rochdale has seen its cultural partners come together through a new Culture Compact. This place-based network is dedicated to enhancing the local cultural, heritage, and creative ecosystem. Additionally, the formation of a new Art and Placemaking team within the Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) underscores a strategic focus on cultural development.

In December 2021, Local was commissioned to develop a vision for Rochdale Town Centre. This vision led to our successful tender for the creation of Rochdale's Creative Improvement District (CID) (renamed as Creative Innovation District to better align with the Borough's emerging Mayoral Development Zone, Atom Valley).

Our Urban Room Rochdale and CID contract aimed to centre the themes of making and makers, with 'The Maker's Mile' serving as a vibrant showcase for these principles. We emphasised the importance of cooperative principles and the role of makers within Rochdale's cultural landscape. Moreover, our strategy incorporated 'meanwhile use' and engaged the town as a dynamic venue for creative activities, drawing on insights and learnings from similar initiatives in Blackburn and Glossop.

In summary, the work outlined in the brief seeks to leverage Rochdale's rich heritage of making and cooperative values, providing a creative environment that supports innovation, collaboration, and sustainable cultural development. The outcomes of the CID strategy are designed to embed these principles deeply within the fabric of Rochdale, aligning with broader regional development goals and contributing to the Borough's cultural renaissance. (Fig. 6.1 illustrates the key projects and milestones)

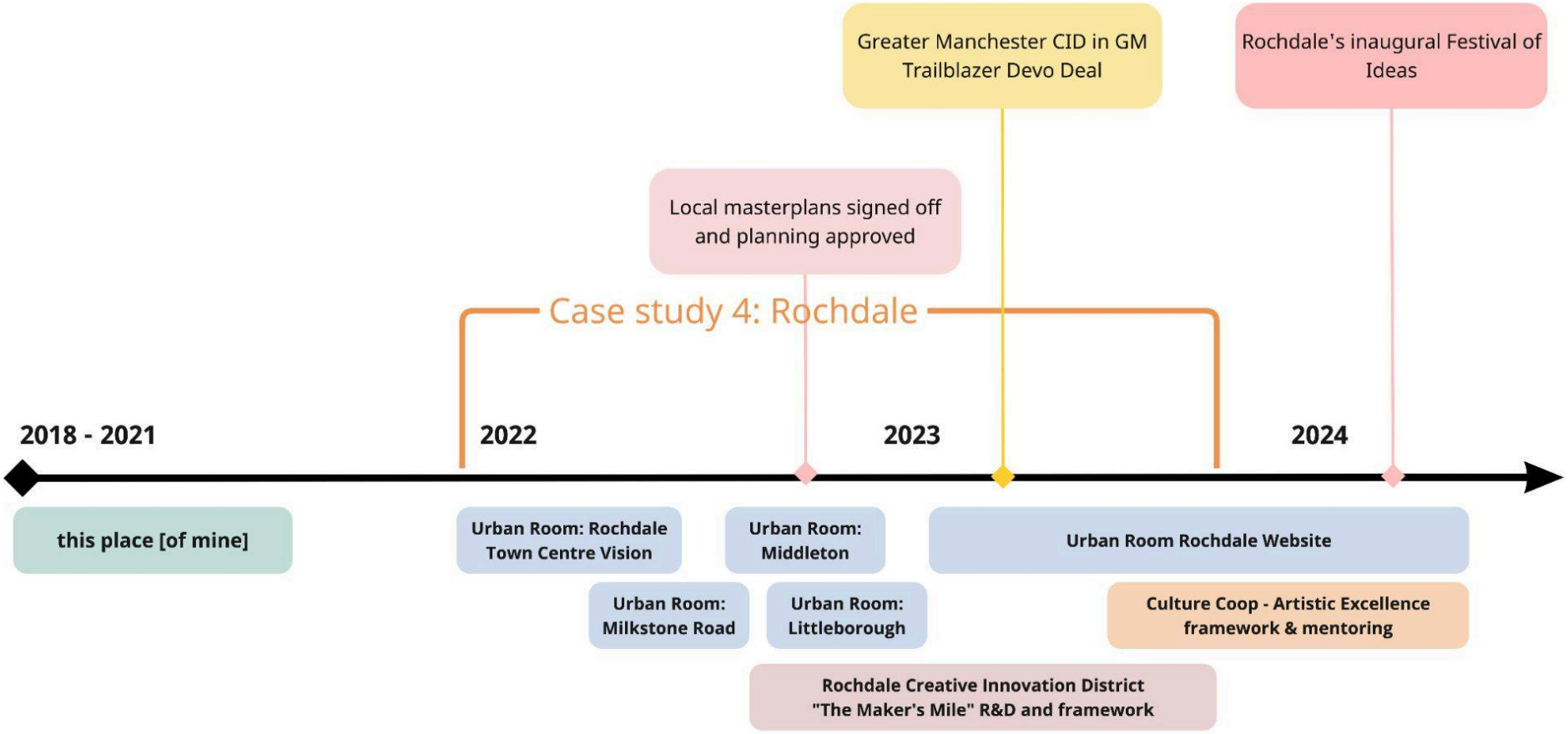

Fig 6.1 Timeline of my practice-based work in Rochdale

CONTEXT

Rochdale is one of the ten boroughs that make up Greater Manchester. Rochdale's recorded history begins with an entry in the Domesday Book of 1086 as 'Recedham Manor' and became a centre of northern England's woollen trade, and by the early 18th century was described as being 'remarkable for its many wealthy merchants'[252]. In the 19th century it became a mill town and centre for textile manufacture during the Industrial Revolution. The borough consists of four townships, each with their own distinctive town centre - Heywood, Littleborough (also known as the Pennines), Middleton, and Rochdale. In the 2021 census the town had a population of 111,261, compared to 223,773 for the wider borough.

In common with the majority of towns across the UK, Covid accelerated the general shift from a predominantly retail-led environment and a need to reinvent them as places that people want to live, work and play. As part of the council's response to the ongoing Covid situation and the changing dynamic of town centres, there is a need to better understand public perception and requirements of what they want to see in the Borough's four main town centres.

The Borough has ambitious plans as part of Greater Manchester's North East Growth Corridor (Atom Valley[253]) that promotes the significant opportunities for new employment and housing growth in the north of the conurbation, supported by key sub-regional town centres and regeneration in Rochdale borough. This growth location has the potential to deliver around 1,500,000 sq.m. of new employment floorspace, thousands of quality jobs and thousands of new quality, low carbon homes linked to sustainable transport.

The home of the cooperative movement (the first successful co-op was formed in 1844 in Rochdale, Lancashire), the Borough is currently a Priority 1 Levelling Up Fund area, in need of significant economic recovery, growth, improved connectivity and regeneration. Rochdale is the 15th most economically-deprived local authority in the UK (2019 IMD). Nearly a third of its population live in deprived areas with high unemployment (4.4% compared to 3.9% nationally). Residents of its most deprived areas tend to have low levels of education and skills and poor health compared with regional and national averages. 21% of residents have a long-term health condition or disability.

[252] Godman, Pam (1996). Images of England: Rochdale. History Press Limited
[253] https://www.atom-valley.co.uk/

Rochdale town centre has many assets and has been the focus of a significant programme of investment in recent years. New transport infrastructure, education, retail and leisure facilities have been delivered alongside a significant programme of heritage-led regeneration. Historic Drake Street has seen some improvement through the Heritage Action Zone programme, the river has been opened in the town centre, and a new Rochdale Riverside shopping and leisure development opened in April 2020, which has attracted an increased number of visitors and high quality retail and leisure businesses. Other independent businesses have sprung up to meet new demand created by the Transport Interchange, Metrolink tram and Number One Riverside (large-scale building housing public services such as the library and archives).

In 2023 following a £20m restoration programme, Rochdale Town Hall was reopened as a nationally significant visitor attraction flanked by new high quality public realm and programmable space. However, like many urban centres, Rochdale town centre continues to face issues of connectivity, severance and dilapidation, compounded by and contributing to negative perceptions of the town. Investing in culture to create a more coherent, connected and attractive town centre was advocated as a way to address these issues with a compelling economic logic.

Research conducted as part of the Rochdale Cultural Asset Review (Feb 2021) highlights a need for (amongst other things):

- affordable creative workspace (artist studios, co-working space)
- flexible grassroots spaces for small projects, exhibitions, events and performances
- access to advice, information, training and networking for artists
- increased connection, coordination and visibility of the existing and developing cultural and creative offer

A key recommendation of the review is to create a masterplan for a new town centre cultural district to incorporate existing/new assets, new creative workspace, activity space, public realm and wayfinding to address market gaps, improve footfall, experience, access, sustainability and impact. With shared ambitions as the GMCA Creative Improvement District (CID),[254] Rochdale aims to support places to develop a sustainable business core for creatives that offers economic and social advantages through a framework approach identifying and leveraging assets and opportunities for culture-led regeneration programmes, driven and supported by the place and its residents.

[254] Discussed in Chapter 2.

Following the completion of a series of draft strategies to help guide development and delivery of events and festivals, visitor economy and early evening economy, the Rochdale Cultural District will be closely aligned and add value to these strategies. As an Arts Council 'Priority Place' and UK Government 'Levelling Up for Culture' place, the strategic alignment to put creative enterprise and cultural ambition to help enhance the town centre, attract visitors, strengthen business, create jobs and deliver community pride, well-being and social value.

A reflection…
It is interesting how we find connections with the places in which we work or practice. I have several personal connections to Rochdale, establishing it as a place of meaning beyond any work brief. Both my older sisters were born in the borough of Rochdale as my Mum was living in Rochdale, and then Heywood, between 1970 to 1977. I also lived in Todmorden, a couple of miles North of Rochdale, between 2005 and 2011 in which Rochdale was our local town centre. These personal connections come in useful when delivering community engagement activities, as you can build trust and validate your reason for talking to local people about the future of their place.

The brief
In September 2022, Rochdale Borough Council commissioned a framework for a Creative Innovation District For Rochdale town centre. With an ambition to connect the train station with the cultural venues in the town centre, the name of The Maker's Mile was used as a working title, which we'd now like to keep and embed as a vision to establish the Creative Innovation District.

The development of the Creative Innovation District was inspired by a report 'Creative Improvement District', commissioned by GMCA in 2019 and produced by CLES.

The Cultural Development Fund 2 (CDF2) was launched by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to promote economic and social recovery from the impact of COVID-19, and regenerate communities through capital investment in place-based creative and cultural initiatives. The programme is administered through Arts Council England (ACE) and supports places to achieve the following outcomes:

- Unlock local economic growth and productivity
- Become more attractive places in which to live, work, visit and invest
- Strengthen local leadership, partnerships and capability

The Rochdale CDF2 project is focussed around the development of Rochdale Cultural District although it aims to have a boroughwide impact through development of wider networks and programmes that connect across the borough. It was developed in response to the borough Creative and Cultural Asset Strategy and will deliver 3 priority actions of which one is to establish a Rochdale town-centre Creative Innovation District incorporating existing assets, new spaces and improved public realm. Invest in signage, branding, paving, lighting, art, programming and marketing to improve attraction, wayfinding and experience, knit together development zones and make new connections across the town through culture.

The invitation to tender focussed on establishing a Rochdale town-centre Cultural District incorporating existing assets, new spaces & improved public realm. It was hoped that through the project and linked programmes, there would be an investment and coordination in signage, branding, paving, lighting, art, programming and marketing to improve the attraction, wayfinding and visitor experience. By knitting together the various development zones and creating new connections across the town through culture and creativity. The activity would be geographically focussed to an area within Rochdale Town Centre, incorporating the existing and potential creative and cultural assets. The brief outlines a number of potential outcomes of a cultural district programme, including:

- enhancing existing organisations, collaboration and assets
- finding new creative uses for town centre and high street assets
- enhancing public realm and public art opportunities
- developing creative place branding, signage and digital assets
- promoting and platforming talent
- connecting with and supporting development of creative entrepreneurs, artists and new enterprise
- positively influencing policy and partners
- new creative programming, participation and events

The following activities were not within the direct scope of the contract, but together with the aforementioned efforts, they constitute the complete CDF2 programme of work: reconfiguring and reimagining Rochdale's Touchstones to establish a flagship hub at the heart of the Rochdale Cultural Improvement District and piloting an innovative, cooperative-inspired Borough-wide Culture Compact.

The brief outlined a suggested approach to support its focus on the initial development stages of Rochdale Cultural District:

- Opportunity assessment and scoping,
- Stakeholder engagement, advocacy and partnership development
- Facilitation, visioning and storytelling
- Project development and action/delivery framework
- Governance and resource development

It concluded that the appointed consultant would assess resources and partnerships in order to consider and make recommendations for the optimum business model, leadership and delivery approach for Rochdale Creative Improvement District from 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2025. In July 2022, Local won the contract to develop the Rochdale Cultural District, and work commenced in September. My role was to lead on this project on behalf of Local, with support from Local's Executive Producer, Steven Dexter.

INPUTS

An important input to this work was the existing toolkits, models and manifestos I have previously created in the development of Cultural Districts[255]. Brought learning from our own experience of establishing CIDs and the knowledge, understanding and networks from our work creating the Urban Room engagement strategies and delivery of the engagement programme in Rochdale, Middleton and Littleborough from January 2022.

As the contract commenced for the Cultural District (later termed as the Creative Innovation District), Rochdale's new Culture Compact was in the process of being established, in which I was invited to be a member. The process of the forming of this new network and governance came at a time that the Director of the new CPP initiative, Culture Coop, was starting in post and a Public Practice[256] post commenced at the RDA. The Compact also included membership from the Rochdale Borough Culture Network (RBCN) and the Rochdale Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP), the Co-Lead for Culture at Your Trust - who manage the borough's cultural facilities including Touchstones art gallery and museum in Rochdale town centre. The new Compact was facilitated by the previous Head of

[255] When I refer to Cultural Districts in this instance, I am referring to what has since become termed Creative Improvement District - a development of my work in Blackburn and Glossop, and now identified as a model for Greater Manchester. In Rochdale, we re-termed it 'Creative Innovation District' to align with the branding of the Borough's flagship project, Atom Valley.
[256] Public Practice is a not for profit, bringing built environment skills to the public sector. https://www.publicpractice.org.uk/

Culture with support from a consultant from Counterculture, implementing a sociocracy governance model to embrace the cooperative principles that were born from the borough.

Partnerships had already been established with Rochdale Business Improvement District and the Heritage Action Zone project manager from our work on the Urban Room Town Centre Vision. Additional inputs include:

- Library of place-based strategies and frameworks (shared drive)
- A copy of the Arts Council of England Cultural Development Fund application
- Meeting and workspace at Fired Up, a co-working space operated

Methodology

The methodology employed to develop Rochdale's Creative Improvement District was the CCE Framework. Although the contract was initially short-term (six months with a three-month extension), I leveraged my practice's extensive knowledge and experience of working in Rochdale town centre to create an action-research plan. This plan focused on addressing gaps in our understanding, particularly regarding the Council's systems and processes for implementing a creative improvement district model. This involved meeting with cross-department leads and attending the Towns Board meetings (town centre governance leadership board), and establishing a 'co-design' research group.[257]

I created a series of **diagrams** to help illustrate the dependency across the CDF as part of my initial tender (including Fig. 6.2, 6.3 and 6.5). This helped me to visualise the brief, and how the different elements were connected (or not).

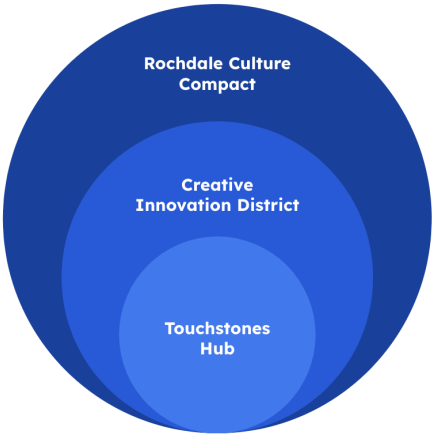

Fig. 6.2 A diagram to show the relationship between the three main areas of the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) application.

[257] See Appendix P6.1 Final CID Report for a draft Terms of Reference for the group to continue after my contract ended.

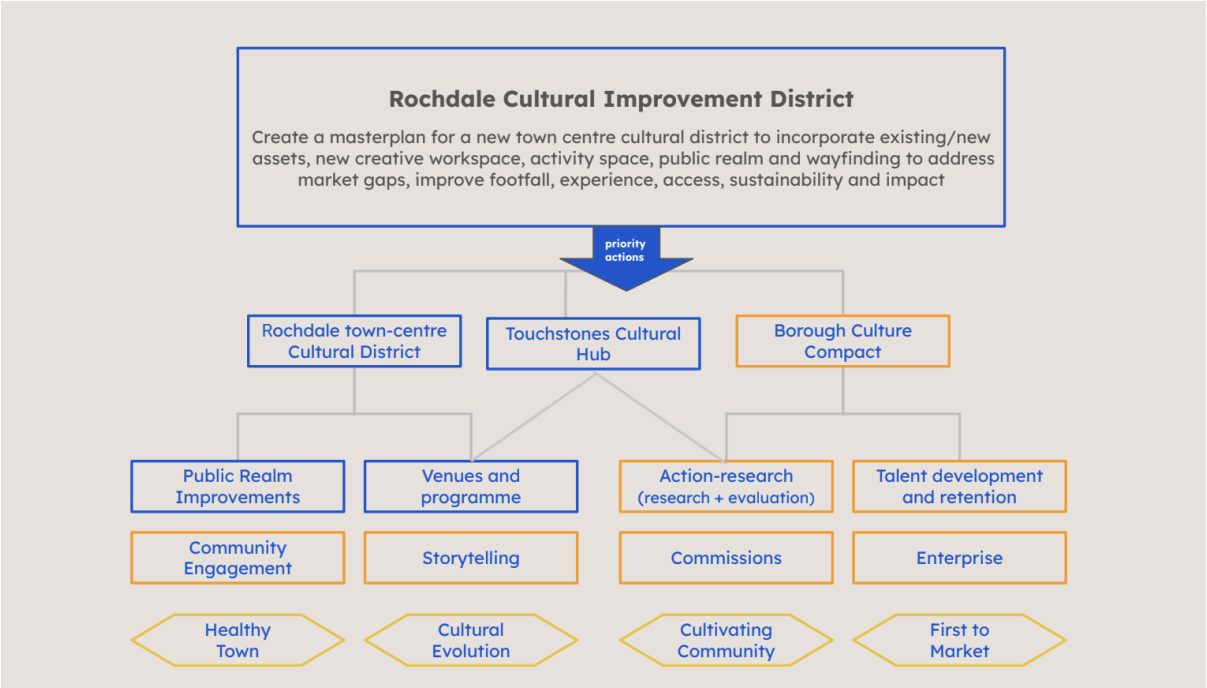

Fig. 6.3 My interpretation of the brief and what is included in the Cultural District.

Fig. 6.3 outlines the different elements of the programme, with the orange boxes depicting what is included in the Creative Improvement District (CID) brief. The blue boxes are out of scope of the brief but understanding how they may be designed and delivered was integral to the success of designing the CID Framework. The yellow markets at the bottom show the alignment to the Town Centre Vision work, which we had previously been commissioned to work on in a separate piece of work. This shows a demonstration of our understanding of the CID work and its connection to the wider vision and strategy.

Using my knowledge, experience and understanding of the context of Rochdale, and bringing this together with the previous cultural district work I had experience of developing (outlined in the previous case studies), I provided a possible logic model (Fig. 6.4) and toolkit as part of our (successful) tender (Fig.6.5).

MISSION	AIMS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	MEASURES	OUTCOMES
The vision is embedded in the place… SPACE AND PLACE	Create a sense of place, enhancing the physical, cultural, and social identity to define Rochdale and support its ongoing evolution in order to increase a sense of pride and ownership in the town and surrounding areas, provide an inclusive and diverse offer and attract investment.	Place brand and narrative Communication plan Creative campaign Coop manifesto	Map spaces with permission Website Stories (zines, exhibitions, films)	Spaces Brand PR Partners	Civic pride Sustainable assets P+ profile Visitor spend Business rate +
To build a better and stronger… CREATIVE AND CULTURAL SECTOR	Nurture Rochdale's creative, independent sector and encourage their enterprising ideas, collaborations and businesses to improve economic growth whilst also attracting talent, young entrepreneurs, and attracting new business.	Creative collaborations Skills and talent dev Co-work / studios £Invest for start-up	Networks Directory Creative advocates	Creatives £invest Jobs Activities	Young people Jobs created and secured Increase income
To engage, encourage and empower… COMMUNITY AND AUDIENCES	Build community capacity to enable, drive and deliver cultural ambition in Rochdale and empower local leadership to help create a more sustainable cultural future and ensure wider engagement is achieved.	Skills and confidence Connect resources and partners Participation	Artist residencies Community engagement	Participants Project days Partner£ Business engagement	Health and wellbeing Cross-sector investment / resource
In order to design and deliver an outstanding… CULTURE PROGRAMME	Build and strengthen the current cultural and heritage offer utilising Rochdale's cultural attractions (venues, festivals, events) and assets including the canal and green spaces to encourage economic growth.	Programme local assets and venues Facilitate new experiences	Exhibitions Festivals Public art Town of Culture	Audience Organisations PR £invest	Community Participation External Partnerships
To create a lasting… LEGACY	Ensure the Rochdale CDF creates a lasting legacy, and the wider partnership leads the strategy ensuring it remains relevant, sustainable, inclusive and strategic to ensure the success of this opportunity.	Evaluate Build ideas Celebrate success	Evaluation framework Partnership agreements	£invest Frameworks Evidence base	Regional significance Investment

Fig. 6.4 A 'Local' Logic Framework for a Cultural District, adapted for Rochdale town centre

Fig. 6.5 A Local Toolkit - outlining the five platforms which have been implemented into the CCE Framework

CREATIVE ACTION-RESEARCH

OBSERVATORY

Existing observations had already been established through previous projects and activities I had been involved in. As mentioned in Chapter 2, whilst I was working as Director at FutureEverything, I initiated a GM-wide youth engagement project titled ‘this place [of mine]’ (TPOM) which was delivered in five different places, Rochdale being one of them between July 2019 to March 2021 (see Appendix P3.3 for the TPOM advocacy document). The integration of this work meant that I had developed a strong working relationship with the Head of Culture, and various town centre actors - including the BID manager as well as cultural partners from M6 Theatre and Touchstones. This project gave me a strong understanding of the regeneration programmes as well as a GM-wide perspective and cultural policy picture.

From January to July 2022, my new creative practice, Local, was contracted to deliver the consultation on the town centre vision. Utilising our Urban Room methodology, we situated ourselves in an empty shop unit on Riverside (the new retail centre) for a week-long residency during the Easter holidays, meeting and talking to local residents, businesses and visitors, as well as hosting art-led walks and meetings with Council members and officers. (Appendix P6.1 provides the outcome and the findings of this work)

Building on our knowledge and understanding of Rochdale Town Centre following our work on Urban Room Rochdale and the Town Centre Vision strategy (Fig. 6.6 illustrates the outcome of this work) provided me with the confidence to vision what a Cultural District would entail for Rochdale, and ensuring not to lose the existing research and ideas development that already existed.

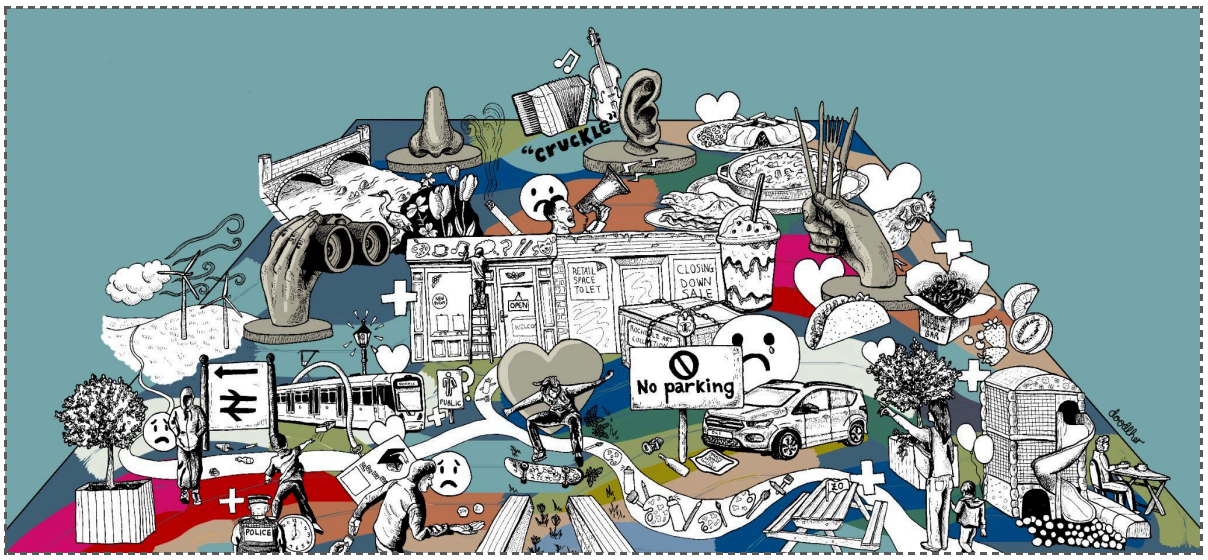

Fig. 6.6 Illustration by Doodlher (Vic Whittaker) following her Urban Room residency

New opportunities were presented that would seek to support the development of the CID. We were invited to present to the Towns Board, a strategic group which had been established when the Council was bidding for the Towns Fund. The Board is Chaired by a member of the private sector and includes a range of senior partners
During the development of the Culture Compact, we Contributed to discussions on procurement

Questionnaire - Utilising the annual survey I had designed and implemented for Glossop Creates, I worked with The Audience Agency who had been contracted to undertake the evaluation for the CDF programme, in designing a questionnaire for the local creative and cultural community in the borough, to enhance our understanding of their business and/or creative practice including their concerns, priorities and needs. Unfortunately, the survey was not circulated during the course of our contract so we were unable to gather this level of information.

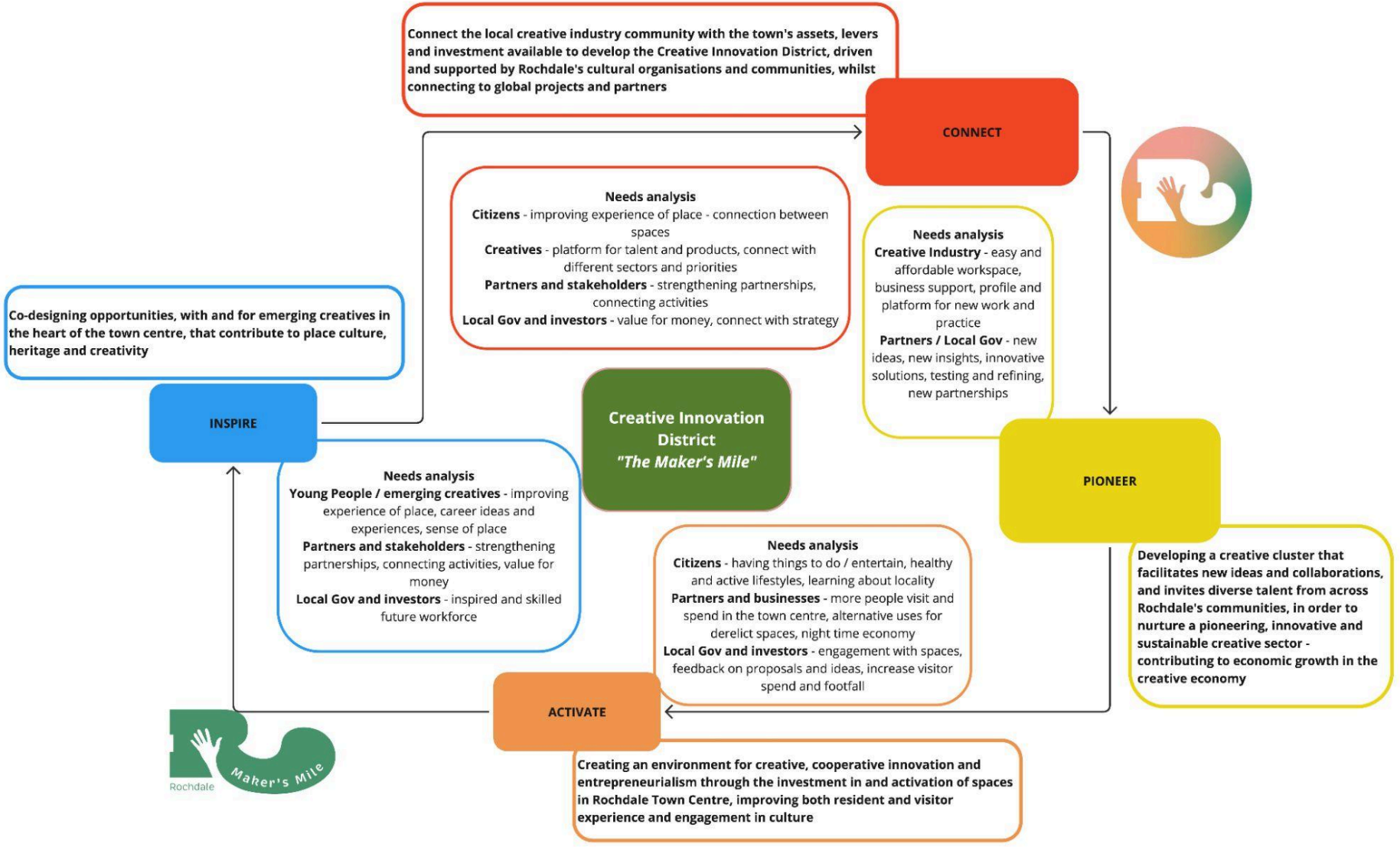

Fig. 6.7 Mapping the needs analysis for the CID (expand)

LABORATORY

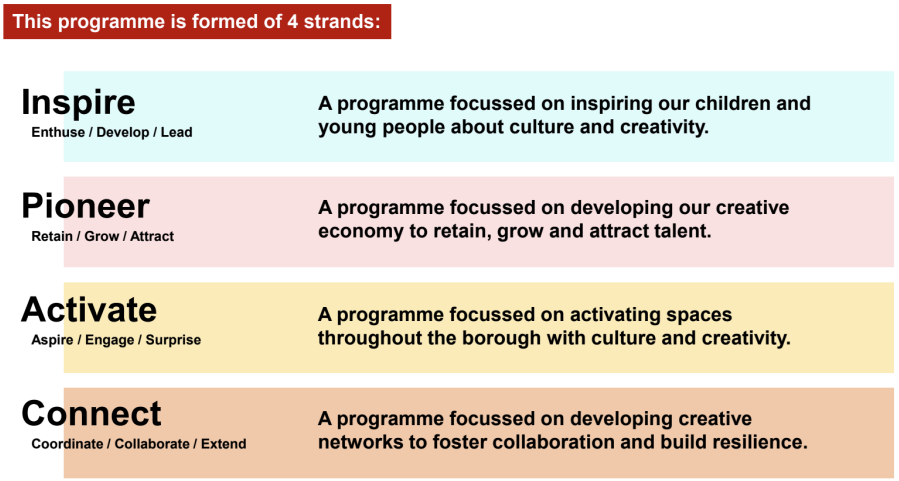

Fig. 6.8 A slide depicting the four strands of the Create Innovation (CDF) programme (design by Oliver Boaler, March 2023)

The **Create Innovation Programme** was formed of four strands: Inspire, Pioneer, Activate and Connect (Fig 6.8), providing a framework for a Laboratory approach, collaboratively sharing and testing new ways of working. Created in collaboration with the Rochdale Culture Compact in March 2023, the aim is to regularly review and revise the Create Innovation Programme activities, using it as a framework to attract and strengthen partnerships and attract further investment to ensure sustainability of the programme's outcomes. Fig. 6.7 maps the needs of the different target groups aligned with the 4 strands for the CID.

An additional strand has been created titled 'Empowerment', and forms part of Rochdale's Place Priority Plan and will be led by Rochdale Culture Coop, the Creative People and Places programme.

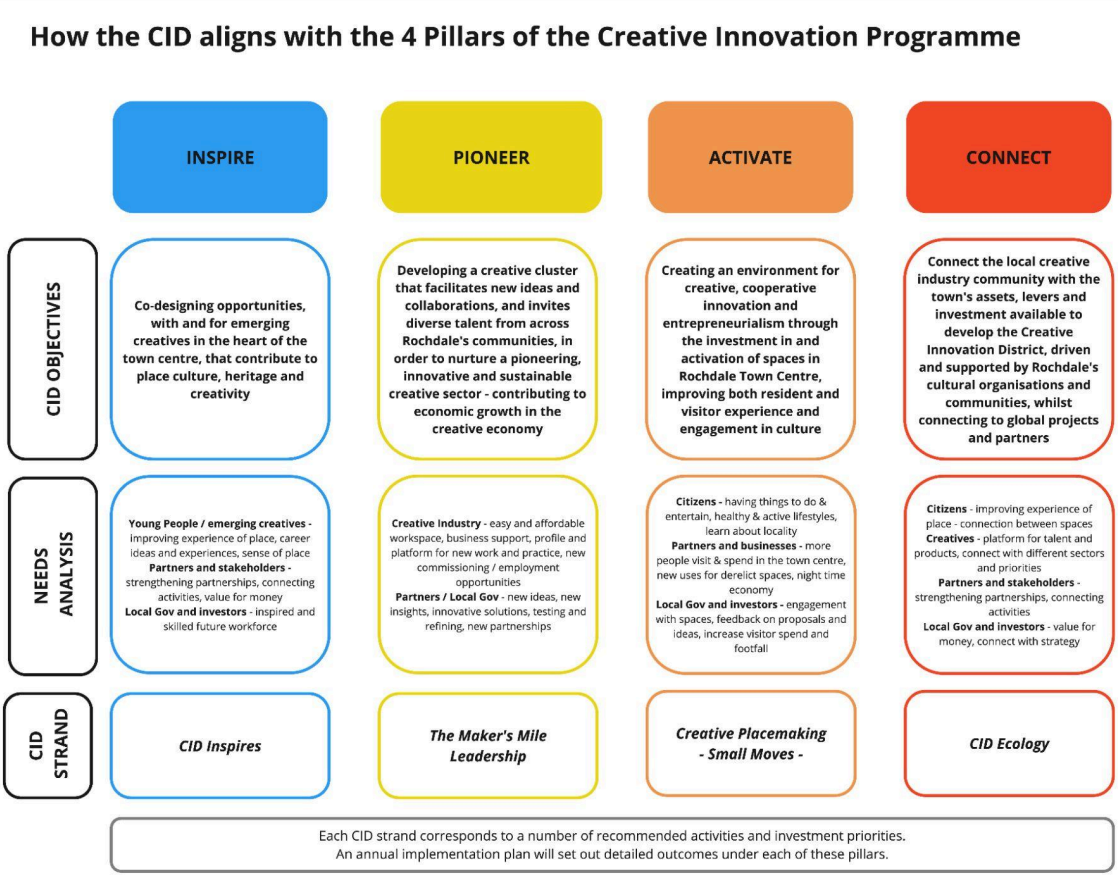

Fig. 6.9 Mapping how the CID model aligns with the 4 pillars of the Create Innovation programme (expand)

SSoA Live Project

In September 2021, Local co-commissioned a Sheffield School of Architecture student live project with Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale Development Agency, to support the development of the Creative Innovation District (CID) model and branding for 'The Maker's Mile'.

Sheffield Live Project - The Brief

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Arts Council England (ACE) has awarded a Culture Development Fund Grant (Round 2) to Rochdale Cultural Development Consortium to deliver a three-year programme of work across Rochdale Town Centre, including development of Rochdale Creative Innovation District. The amount awarded is approx £4.2m over the period 2022-2025.

We are at the very start of this exciting work!

We have a vision to establish a Rochdale town-centre Creative Innovation District incorporating reimagined spaces, improved public realm and an engaging events programme. We have investment for new signage, branding, paving, lighting, art, programming and marketing to improve footfall, wayfinding and experiences, knitting together development zones and making new connections across the town through culture.

Rochdale's new Makers Mile (working title) is a creative-led area plan to implement the emerging ambitions of the Creative Innovation District, comprising a catalogue of projects that aims to celebrate Rochdale's unique character, building resilience in existing assets and address gaps between development. The potential projects need to be co-designed in collaboration with the wider community including artists, businesses and students.

Outline Schedule
Monday 26th September 2022 - Live Project Introductions
Wednesday 28th / Thursday 29th September 2022 - initial site visit; tbc with client
Thursday 3rd November 2022 - Live Project Presentations
…all other meetings, visits and events to be arranged by the Live Project team.

Location
Rochdale, Greater Manchester
Live Project Brief by Claire Tymon, July 2022

Sheffield Live Project - Process & Outcomes:
The students worked with the local authority and met with colleagues from Rochdale Development Agency to gain a good understanding of the town centre's assets, the opportunities for cultural exchange and delivered a series of community engagement workshops at Riverside Rochdale, in a vacant shop unit (where we had originally hosted an Urban Room). Their design project came in the form of a reimagined identity pack and a collection of 'small moves' that were achievable for the creative consortium to realise with the help of consultants, local artists and the community. It was important the students didn't provide resolved and polished design components but rather initial concept briefs to support local artists and the public to take creative ownership and take forward with the client team (Local and Rochdale Council).

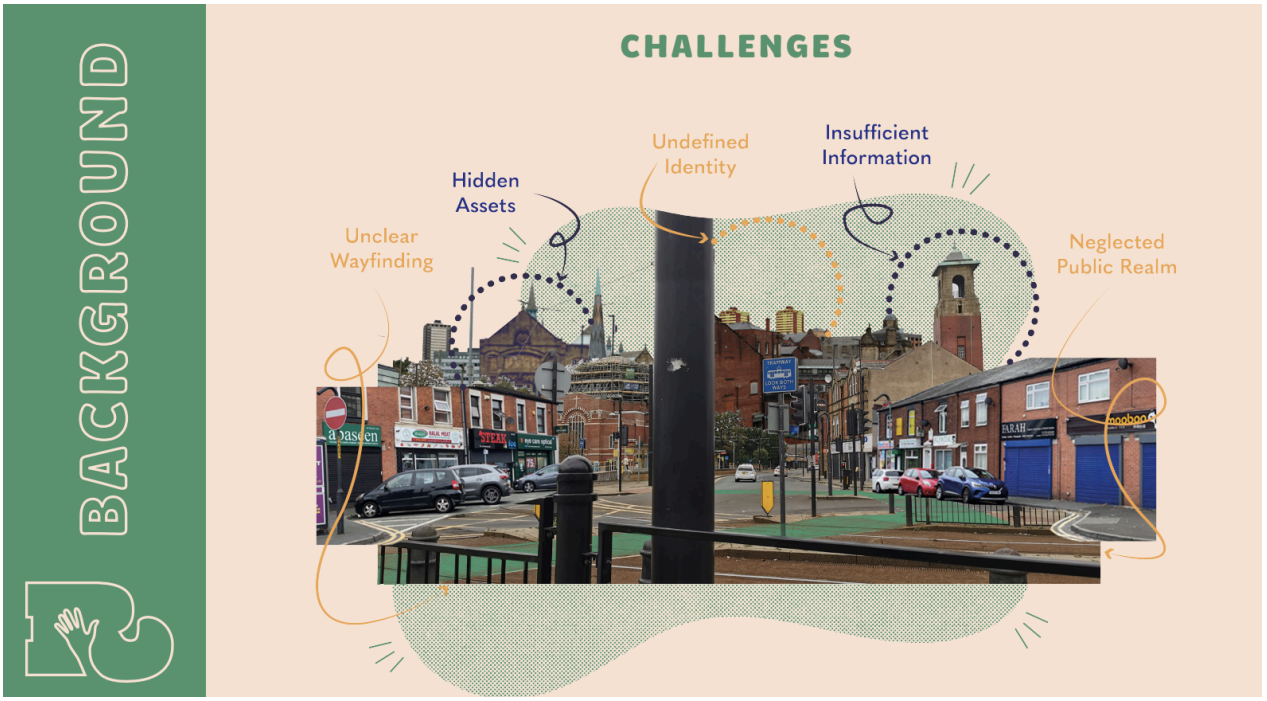

Fig. 6.10 Rochdale Maker's Mile - a slide identifying the challenges and need for the CID plan (credit: SSoA Live Project team)

The Live Project design responses were developed through three main outputs:

1. A series of four zines that act as pocket-sized accessible, colourful and informal items to describe and promote our small move designs to the public and the wider creative scene beyond Rochdale.
2. A series of accessible toolkits, which exist as easy-to-use points of reference for the council, that can be exchanged between groups when commissioning further design work or formatting future briefs.
3. An identity kit which includes a series of branding, website, and social media mock-ups and guidelines to encourage future ownership by the creative community in Rochdale.[258]

The work developed (examples in Fig. 6.10 - 6.12) across the Live Project supported the structure of final The Maker's Mile CID framework and produced invaluable visuals and designs for the final report, supporting the long-term plans to establish and connect the creative identity of Rochdale both physically and digitally and establishing greater connection between the council, creatives, and locals.

[258] Quoted from the Live Project case study - https://liveprojects.ssoa.info/2023/rochdale-makers-mile/ (accessed January 2024)

Fig. 6.11 Poster created by the Sheffield Live Project team (2022)

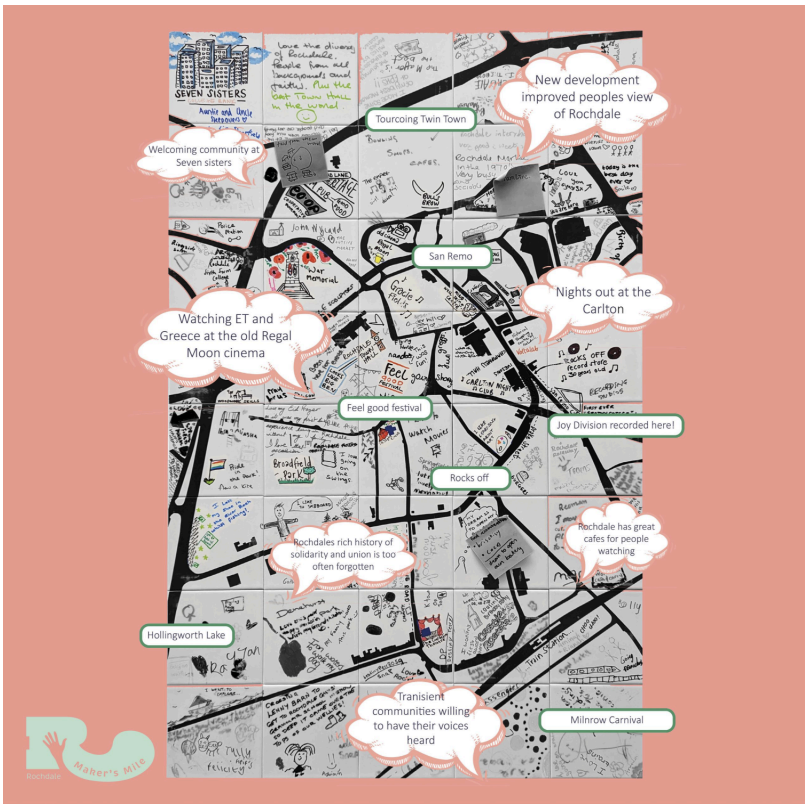

Fig. 6.12 A community engagement activity ‘Make Your Mark’ using tiles to explore design-led ideation (credit: SSoA Live Project team)

FACTORY

The Factory becomes a catalyst for innovation, resilience, and long-term impact, underpinned by a collective support structure and a dedicated team. The Create Innovation Programme, launched in collaboration with Rochdale Culture Compact in March 2023, serves as a foundational element of this vision, focusing on attracting and strengthening partnerships to ensure the sustainability of creative initiatives. This includes a series of initiatives like the Creative Innovation District (CID) and Urban Room Rochdale, developed through local collaboration and student engagement, aiming to reimagine and enhance Rochdale's town centre with creative and cultural projects that build resilience and community engagement.

Designing the Rochdale CID - 'The Maker's Mile'

The Maker's Mile was a brand that was developed informally to provide a public facing brand to the Creative Improvement District. Through a series of conversations, it was decided to use the description Creative Innovation District, replacing the word 'Improvement' to develop further alignment with the innovation strategies and connecting with Atom Valley - a key priority for the borough. And to have further distinction between the CID and the BID.

Bringing together the work produced through the Sheffield Live Project, the ideas developed through our research and development phase, and mapping the existing opportunities and activities planned via the various partnerships, the CID Framework took shape in early 2023. When the Create Innovation framework and its four strands emerged, this provided the CID with a structure to utilise, ensuring all the pieces would come together, including:

- The evaluation framework
- Communication and marketing plan
- Governance
- Roles and responsibilities
- Budget alignment

The Maker's Mile Framework

Vision

Rochdale town centre is an engine for creative enterprise and innovation, weaving together spaces, talent, imagination and stories

Aims

The aims of the Creative Innovation District are:

- Co-designing opportunities, with and for emerging creatives in the heart of the town centre, that contribute to place culture, heritage and creativity
- Developing a creative cluster that facilitates new ideas and collaborations, and invites diverse talent from across Rochdale's communities, in order to nurture a pioneering, innovative and sustainable creative sector - contributing to economic growth in the creative economy
- Creating an environment for creative, cooperative innovation and entrepreneurialism through the investment in and activation of spaces in Rochdale Town Centre, improving both resident and visitor experience and engagement in culture
- Connect the local creative industry community with the town's assets, levers and investment available to develop the Creative Innovation District, driven and supported by Rochdale's cultural organisations and communities, whilst connecting to global projects and partners

The CID would be made up of four strands:

1. CID Ecology - Nurturing a creative community ecosystem, encouraging collaboration, creative explorations and platforms for new work
2. CID Inspires - Inviting emerging artists and young people to contribute ideas, learn new skills and embrace creativity in new enterprising ways.
3. Small Moves - Creating new cultural experiences, with and for local audiences and visitors, through public art, programming and storytelling
4. The Maker’s Mile Leadership - Embracing a cooperative and creative leadership model, to cultivate the vision, values, partnerships.

What can be achieved with a Rochdale Creative Innovation District?

The CID will achieve a number of strategic priorities for place, local communities and the creative economy, by nurturing an ecosystem and delivering activities aligned with the Rochdale Borough Council’s corporate plan and the CDF outcomes.

CREATIVE ECONOMY

- Increased number of artists, makers, creatives and C&C sector businesses supported

- Increased sense of belonging and community cohesion/civic pride
- Increased collaboration between Cultural and Creative sector leaders
- Increase in the space with flexible non-standard leasing and conditions, ensuring the creatives can occupy and stay
- New, refurbished, and repurposed other creative floorspace (libraries, galleries, visitor hubs, learning centres, heritage, and C&C business space)
- Increasing revenue streams and sustainability for creative and arts organisations
- Strengthened cultural partnerships

LOCAL COMMUNITY

- Increase community engagement in the C&C sector via school programmes and public engagement programmes
- Increased training opportunities and programmes within educational establishments
- Increase in residents pursuing creative employment
- Improved perceptions of the area by residents, businesses/investors
- Increased civic pride in local cultural assets increases and cultural assets

PLACE

- Increased dwell time for local people and visitors in the town/city
- Increased footfall from locals and people coming into the area
- Increased numbers of people engaging with cultural digital experiences, activities and specific events
- Increased sense of belonging and community cohesion/civic pride
- Targeted place branding and marketing campaign to drive local engagement and visitor attraction
- Stronger organisations in well-networked ecosystem
- Increased annual visitor spend

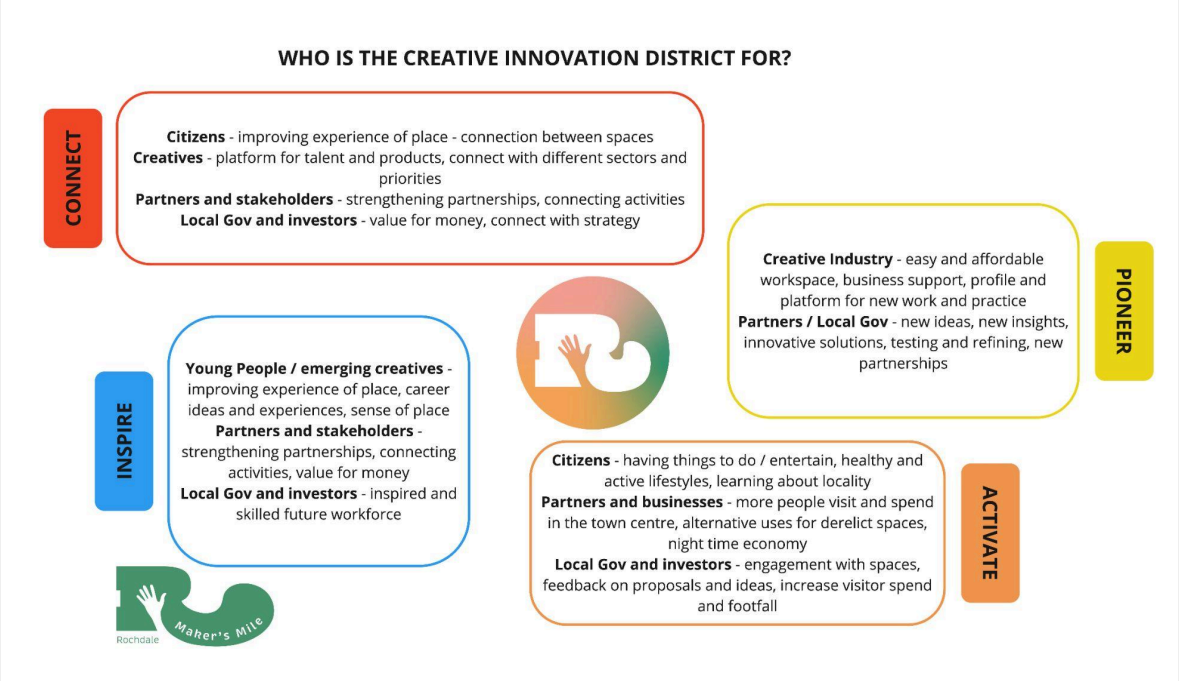

Fig. 6.13 Mapping beneficiaries across the four strands (expand)

Activity Plan

Short term (in the next 6 months)

Small Moves - interventions in the public realm across a number of sites for small, possibly temporary interventions to help and support visitors to the town navigate their way around the town centre. Funding has been secured to initiate this and can be rolled out to future developments when they go live.

A Maker Incubator space(s) - utilise empty units on Drake Street and in the town centre to host artist and maker residencies. The residencies will provide the creatives an opportunity to test working in the town centre, act as a shop-front to their business and practice, introduce the makers to business support and industry/collaborators / supply chains, and provide alternative activities to engage in on the high street.

Urban Room Rochdale - alongside the incubator space, we propose establishing a semi-permanent Urban Room in an empty shop, in the library or another venue to ensure the wider public and local community have access to, and can contribute to the development of ideas, proposals, and visions, and can participate in conversation, training and delivery. As part of the Urban Room programme, we can establish a regular event focussing on architecture and the built environment, and commission curated walks and talks to keep the conversations going, inviting new perspectives.

Creative Innovation Network and Labs - bringing together artists, designers, makers, curators, students with cross-sector and industry organisations to initiate ideas and opportunities.

Online Showcase and Engagement - utilising online tools and platforms to promote, showcase and sell work and services from local creative businesses and artists. Attract audiences to events and workshops. Tell stories, promote the process of making.
Placemaking Plan / Public Art Strategy - an advocacy tool that promotes the vision of joining up the creative economy, visitor economy and circular economy.

Medium term (6-18 months)
Business rates relief / Landlord levy - work with the Council's Business Rates team, landlords and studio providers to create a model that encourages creatives and independent businesses to 'set up shop in Rochdale'.

A Commissioning Framework - working with STAR Procurement and others, a commissioning framework will be developed to support and sustain creative, innovative projects and ideas, protecting the IP of those involved and encouraging new ways of working, partnering and commissioning.

2-3 signature projects - demonstrating creative / innovative projects (Factory International) - can be launched as part of the new Festival

PR / Awards - promote good practice and share stories, apply for awards and speak at events to promote the approach and innovation in our processes and projects - to help attract partnerships and investment for long-term ambitions, proposals and sustain the successes

Code of Conduct
We are committed to providing an environment in which all individuals are treated equally, respectfully, professionally, and free of harassment and racism, in person or virtually.
We seek to create spaces for discussion where those traditionally marginalised feel welcome and celebrated.

We believe these principles should be upheld throughout the co-production processes at

each phase of development. We call upon all partners and participants to uphold these standards by adhering to this Code of Conduct.

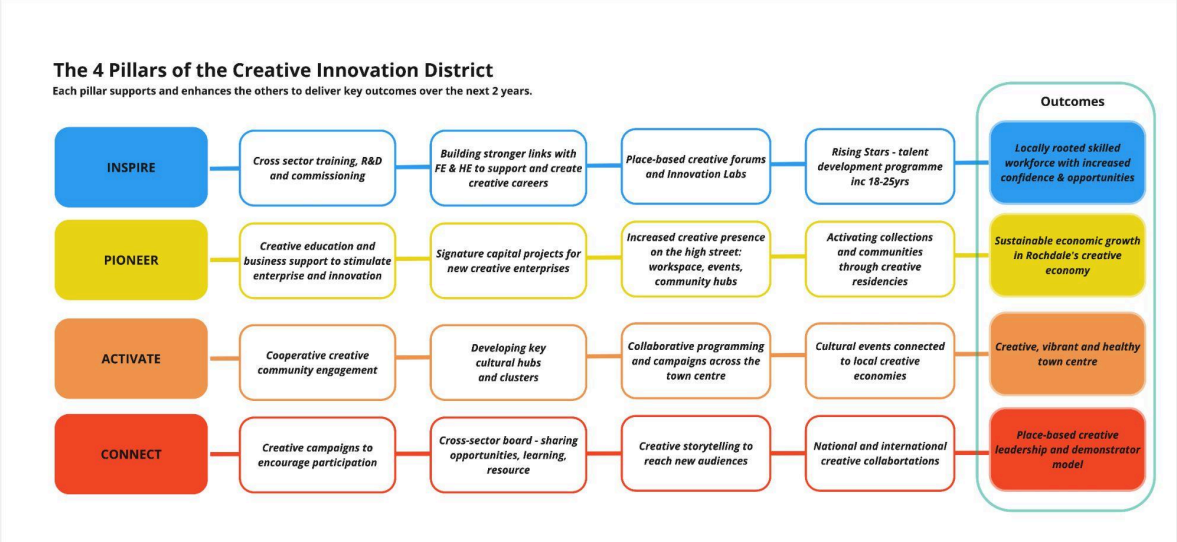

Fig. 6.14 Mapping activities against the 4 pillars of the CID model and the outcomes (expand)

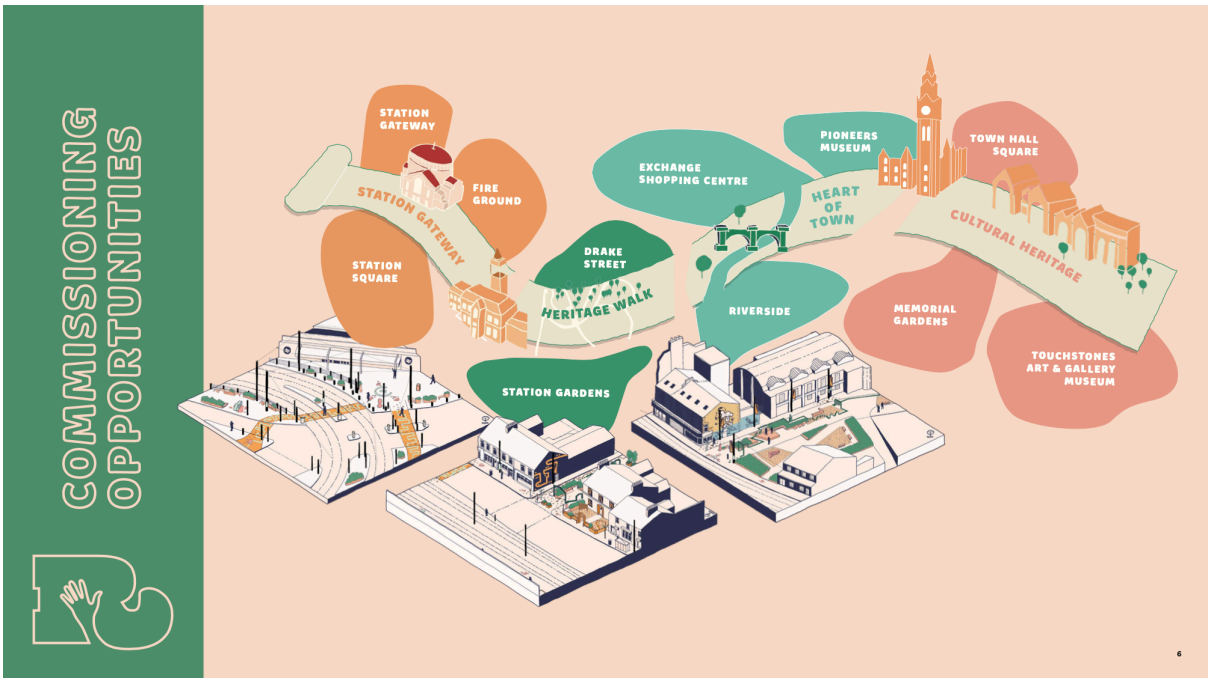

Fig. 6.15 Mapping the culture-led opportunities along the Maker's Mile, combining design from Sheffield Live Project and Claire Tymon, March 2023

Urban Room Rochdale

Whilst Urban Room Rochdale (URR) is an independent strand of work, it plays a crucial role in The Maker's Mile framework and delivery plan. It provides a Community Engagement toolkit for Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale Development Agency, showcasing our dedication to enacting active community participation. This toolkit is the culmination of implementing Urban Room methodologies across four consultations, which focused on three masterplans (Station Square, Middleton, and Littleborough) and a town centre vision over 18 months between 2022 and 2023. These consultations were pivotal in shaping a coherent approach to urban planning and community engagement in Rochdale.

Local led the design and delivery of each consultation, meticulously identifying key projects and principles within each masterplan. We facilitated a programme of action-based research activities and engagement, helping to develop an extensive body of knowledge and community insights into the local built environment and planning processes. This approach ensures that local voices are central to the development narrative and that planning processes are transparent and inclusive.

The Urban Room methodology we have developed is remarkably flexible and adaptable to different locations, allowing it to function as either a pop-up or a more permanent engagement facility. In 2022, Rochdale Development Agency commissioned a website to act as an online engagement platform and archive for Urban Room Rochdale. This provides a digital resource to use in the physical urban room events and activities, but also enables those who are not able to attend the in-person events to contribute online.[259]

Across the Rochdale events, we creatively utilised a variety of spaces, including a redundant bike shed, empty shop units, and a library space. We also hired a stall at the Littleborough Christmas Light Switch-On event and occupied space in Middleton Arena, demonstrating our commitment to being visible and accessible to local people. By meeting the community where they are, we ensure maximum engagement and participation.

URR stands as a testament to our innovative approach to urban planning and community involvement. It not only supports the development of The Maker's Mile but also establishes a robust framework for future urban engagement initiatives. Through this work, we have set a new standard for community collaboration and empowerment in urban development, ensuring that Rochdale's cultural and creative future is shaped by those who call it home.

[259] https://www.urbanroomrochdale.com/ (accessed July 2024)

Fig. 6.16 Photograph of the mapping exercise in the Urban Room (Image credit, Claire Tymon 2022)

Fig. 6.17 Photograph collage of the Urban Room Rochdale (Image credit, Richard Tymon 2022)

STORY

Whilst this was a defined contract with specific deliverables over a 9-month period, there isn't the same scale of opportunities for sharing the outcomes of the work as there was in the previous case studies. The main method for sharing the process and outcomes of the work was through an end of project presentation - delivered to the emerging Culture Compact group and Arts Council of England staff, who funded the project. I invited the group to provide feedback and initial thoughts and reflections on post-it notes which were then written up and provided back to the client team as part of a final handover.

During the course of the project, a number of methods for sharing and reflecting on the design process of the CID project were implemented:

- A visit to Stockport's Culture Development Funded programme, meeting the project team from the local authority and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) to share processes and learnings.
- Ongoing Culture Compact meetings, sharing findings, learnings and opportunities to connect different work strands.
- Presentation to the Towns Board, providing inspiration and advocacy for the CID model.
- Ongoing conversations with GMCA.
- Sheffield Live Project - student final presentation had limited audience but key members of the RDA team leading on Placemaking were committed to advocating the outcomes of the work to their wider team and the Council.

IMPACT

Findings and learnings

The journey to implement the Creative Civic Engagement Framework in Rochdale, as highlighted by this case study, underscores the transformative potential and the complex challenges inherent in such ambitious undertakings. Despite facing significant hurdles, such as the departure of key client leads from the Council and Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) and the initial struggles in mobilising the Culture Compact group, the project has made impressive strides in revitalising Rochdale's town centre as a vibrant hub for creative enterprise and innovation.

Rochdale Town Centre is increasingly recognized as an engine for creative growth, skillfully weaving together spaces, talent, imagination, and stories. Through collaborative partnerships, the Creative Innovation District (CID) is poised to enhance cultural tourism, refine marketing strategies to improve cohesion, and enrich wayfinding and visitor experiences. The CID is also crucial in integrating plans for residential, commercial, and heritage development zones, forging new connections across the town through culture and creativity.

In my recent conversation with Pete Courtie, the new Head of Art and Placemaking at the RDA, he shared insights into how the deliverables identified in the Framework are being actualized. The newly established Placemaking team has been instrumental in supporting Rochdale's dynamic and committed creative community through various initiatives.

> *“The deliverables for Rochdale's Creative Innovation District have focused on supporting a dynamic and committed creative community through various initiatives. The team has successfully activated and enhanced public spaces in Rochdale Town Centre to boost resident and visitor engagement. These include building on the Richard Street Studios initiative to develop new creative hubs on Drake Street.*
>
> *“By collaborating with cultural organisations across the borough, such as Breaking Barriers and Culture Coop, they have animated underused spaces, showcased innovative projects, and gathered public feedback on creative collaborations across diverse sectors. The initiative has emphasised participatory urban design, incorporating community feedback into developments like the Touchstones refurbishment and new future housing projects. Public art and cultural interventions being planned and implemented to reflect local engagement and place-based opportunities, such as the Town Hall Square programme and events such as Feel Good Festival and the Festival of Ideas and Innovation.*
>
> *“Additionally, the project has connected the local creative community with Rochdale's assets and investments, leveraging support from the RDA and utilising the work to support broader funding bids. This includes establishing effective governance, launching the brand and marketing campaigns through Rochdale Creates to highlight the district's achievements, and fostering national and international cultural exchanges. The RDA, along with the Culture Compact, has overseen these efforts,*

ensuring alignment with broader creative and heritage initiatives, thus positioning Rochdale as a hub for creative enterprise and community pride."[260]

Despite these successes, challenges remain. There is still a disconnect between implementing ideas and their influence on local policymaking. Bridging this gap is crucial for translating these learnings to the Greater Manchester policy level through the Combined Authority and sharing good practices amongst other CDF-funded programmes. As a small creative practice, there was an expectation that we would play a longer-term role in implementing the CID. However, despite offering several times to assist with a proper handover of our work, tools, and findings, this was not accepted.

This case study focuses on the development, rather than the implementation, of a Creative Innovation District. As a practice-based researcher and creative practitioner, I found it challenging to complete this contract, especially having to present a theoretical framework that hadn't undergone the level of testing I would have liked. However, as of June 2024, just over a year since the contract's completion, I have observed the achievements emerging from Rochdale, such as the Town Hall launch and the inaugural Festival of Ideas and Innovation in March 2024, as well as the ongoing success of Create Rochdale LCEP.

Whilst there were leadership challenges, particularly regarding the CID's integration into the Towns Board as envisioned by the previous Cultural lead in April 2023, the ongoing work has established a strong foundation for future governance. Despite a six-month gap in staff recruitment and continuity issues, the project has produced a collaborative relationship with Culture Coop. Following our work on the CID, we were commissioned as artistic advisors for the Culture Coop team, supporting them in establishing an Artistic Excellence Framework, a principle all Creative People and Places programmes must report on.

The Urban Room Rochdale website is now live, and we are providing training to the Culture Coop team and staff at Touchstones, both governed through the Your Trust charity. Additionally, following twenty years of partnership work with Sheffield School of Architecture's Live Project programme, the RDA is now initiating contact with SSoA to create more opportunities for student engagement with future placemaking projects. I understand that a potential Live Project will further enhance our Station Corridor and Milkstone Road Urban Room report, which included creative interventions and proposals to promote art-led placemaking as part of the proposed Maker's Mile[261].

[260] The quote was provided by Pete Courtie in August 2024, via email to me.
[261] See Appendix P6.4 for a copy of the Exec Summary of the Milkstone Road report.

In conclusion, this case study demonstrates that whilst challenges remain, the Creative Civic Engagement Framework has laid a solid groundwork for future growth and innovation in Rochdale. Through continued collaboration and commitment, the town is poised to become a beacon of creative enterprise and cultural pride.

PORTFOLIO

A number of materials, tools and frameworks were created as part of the deliverables for the Creative Innovation District. Due to the staff (and client) changes that took place, I created a shared Google Drive folder to house all the outputs and working documents to support the handover process to new staff and colleagues as and when they were recruited in post.

Portfolio Contents

- P6.1 Final CID Report
- P6.2 The Maker's Mile Framework
- P6.3 Small Moves Report
- P6.4 Milkstone Road Report
- P6.5 Urban Room Website

THE MAKERS

Contributors and credits

Lead & Direction

- Claire Tymon – Creative producer & strategic advisor

Key Partners & Advocates

- Darren Grice, Jonathan Hindle, Michael Atkinson-Smith - Rochdale Development Agency/ Rochdale Council – Commissioner & partner
- Matt Gilray, Lucy Sexton - Rochdale Development Agency
- Pete Courtie, Oliver Boaler, Annika Edge - Art & Placemaking Team, Rochdale Development Agency – Delivery & implementation
- Paul Ambrose - Rochdale BID

Creative Contributors & Collaborators

- Steven Dexter - Local Creative Producer
- Vic Whitaker (Doodlher) - Artist, Illustrator
- Vicky Hilton - Artist

- Sheffield School of Architecture Live Project - The Maker's Mile Live Project group
- Thomas Moore - design support
- Cultural partners and community members engaged in co-design
- Participants in workshops, residencies, and placemaking activities

Organisations & Venues

- Mark Doyle - Touchstones Museum and Art Gallery
- Greg Bond, Bushra Sultana - Culture Coop - Your Trust
- Cartwheel Arts
- Skylight Circus Arts
- M6 Theatre
- Sound Roots
- Rochdale Borough Housing
- The Rock shopping centre
- Community spaces and vacant buildings repurposed for creative engagement

Funders

- Rochdale Development Agency
- Rochdale Borough Council
- Arts Council of England

While this list recognises some key "makers", it cannot fully represent the large and diverse community of people whose involvement has been integral to the making of this project.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

This discussion synthesises the insights from the three case studies - *Blackburn is Open*, *Glossop Creates*, and *The Maker's Mile* - through the lens of the five key objectives (defined and discussed in *Chapter 3: Introducing a Framework for Creative Civic Engagement* and summarised in *Appendix P0.1)* of the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework. These objectives articulate what the Framework sets out to achieve and provide a useful structure for understanding how creative civic engagement operates in practice, the conditions that enable it, and the challenges it encounters. The case studies demonstrate how these objectives were realised differently according to scale, context, and stakeholder dynamics, offering a nuanced view of the Framework's applicability and adaptability.

Empowering Communities: Encouraging local communities to take on active roles as makers and shapers in their environments, developing ownership and pride. All three case studies showed that empowering communities is foundational to effective creative civic engagement. In *Blackburn is Open*, empowerment came through high-profile, visible interventions: empty shops became maker spaces and galleries, and community members participated in public events that repositioned their town. The institutional support provided resources and legitimacy, enabling broad engagement, though constrained at times by bureaucratic hierarchies.

In *Glossop Creates*, empowerment was more intimate and sustained. Without formal backing, the project focused on nurturing creative confidence among local artists, makers, and residents, creating informal networks and opportunities for collaboration. The cooperative model emerging here reflects a deeper sense of ownership, though its progress was slower and dependent on building trust over time. *The Maker's Mile* in Rochdale demonstrated how empowerment can be embedded strategically: although commissioned by a development agency, the project created space for local voices to shape plans for the Creative Innovation District. This ensured that community aspirations influenced policy, though maintaining momentum through institutional change posed challenges.

These examples illustrate that empowerment requires intentional design, time, and sensitivity to context but is achievable at both grassroots and institutional levels.

Promoting Radical Co-Creation: Shifting power dynamics to ensure all collaborators have a voice and influence, creating inclusive spaces where diverse perspectives inform decisions. Each project confronted and navigated power imbalances inherent in place-based

development. In *Blackburn*, co-creation was constrained by the need to align with council priorities and procedures, but progress was made in legitimising creative voices in strategic conversations. In *Glossop*, power was more evenly distributed: with no institutional agenda to satisfy, the project was able to prioritise local needs and inclusivity. Community members, including students, shaped events, programming, and the emerging vision. In *Rochdale*, co-creation operated at the policy level, giving stakeholders a platform to shape strategic decisions about cultural infrastructure. However, as the case study revealed, these processes are vulnerable to disruption, when leadership or resources shifted, sustaining inclusive decision-making became more difficult.

Radical co-creation is most effective when embedded from the outset and supported by governance that recognises the value of diverse contributions, as the CCE Framework advocates.

Incorporating Regenerative Practices: Adopting sustainable methods that enhance social and environmental well-being over the long term. Sustainability, both social and cultural, was approached differently in each context. In *Blackburn*, tangible infrastructure emerged: permanent spaces like The Making Rooms and The Bureau continued beyond the project, embedding creative activity into the town's fabric. In *Glossop*, sustainability manifested in the formation of establishing my own company, *Local Creative Project Ltd.*, ensuring the initiative could continue independently of temporary funding or external support. This model allowed the project to evolve in response to local needs, rather than funder requirements. In *Rochdale*, sustainability was built into policy, providing an evidence-based strategy and governance model to guide ongoing development of the Creative Innovation District. However, gaps between project phases (across all three case studies) and changes in leadership highlighted the fragility of these gains if not actively maintained.

These examples show that regenerative practices require both a long-term vision and mechanisms to sustain energy, leadership, and resources, beyond the initial intervention.

Drawing on Historical and Contemporary Insights: Combining lessons from industrial heritage with forward-thinking methods to create contextually relevant and innovative engagement strategies. The case studies illustrate how acknowledging and integrating local histories enhances relevance and resonance. In *Blackburn*, the industrial heritage of textiles and manufacturing was reinterpreted through contemporary maker culture and public art, connecting past and future identities.

In *Glossop*, the town's creative history and post-industrial challenges informed a narrative of renewal through small-scale, locally-driven activity, honouring its distinctiveness while embracing innovation. In *Rochdale*, the legacy of cooperative movements and civic pride provided a foundation for envisioning a new creative economy, aligning historical values with modern policy tools.

By respecting local heritage while employing contemporary methodologies, including digital platforms, strategic partnerships, and creative leadership, these projects ensured that engagement felt both authentic and aspirational.

Facilitating Creative Leadership: Developing leaders who embed creativity and innovation within communities, enabling environments where ideas can flourish. Leadership emerged as a critical factor in each case study, not only through formal roles but also through distributed, collective action. In *Blackburn*, creative leadership was institutionalised to some extent, allowing the project to scale quickly, though sometimes at the expense of flexibility. In *Glossop*, leadership was more informal, distributed across a network of practitioners and residents. This model cultivated resilience and local ownership, though progress was slower and dependent on sustained personal relationships. In *Rochdale*, leadership at the strategic level ensured creative principles were embedded into policy, but the departure of key individuals and shifts in institutional priorities exposed the fragility of these gains.

Across all three, the presence of committed leaders, both individual and collective, was vital to initiating and sustaining momentum. The CCE Framework's focus on nurturing leadership capacities proved essential in building confidence and enabling innovation.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis affirms that the CCE Framework offers a viable methodology for aligning creativity with inclusive, sustainable development in diverse contexts, providing a meaningful contribution to both the theory and practice of placemaking. The findings and reflections presented here demonstrate how the Framework's objectives are enacted in practice, while also revealing the conditions, enablers, and challenges encountered along the way. Together, the case studies and discussion provide the empirical and analytical foundation for the conclusions and recommendations that follow in Chapter 5, which reflect on the overall contribution of this research, its wider impact, and future directions for creative civic engagement.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter synthesises the findings of this thesis, reflecting on how the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework contributes both conceptually and practically to creative placemaking. It articulates the thesis's original contribution to knowledge, evidences its impact on practice and policy, and offers a guide for makers to continue advancing creative civic engagement. In doing so, it circles back to the thesis's central concern: (re)defining the role of the maker in placemaking, as a collective civic role enacted by diverse individuals, communities, and institutions. The chapter closes by presenting the Manifesto for Makers as a final output of this research.

KEY FINDINGS

This research evidences that creative civic engagement can significantly influence policy and practice by combining participatory methodologies, interdisciplinary collaboration, and adaptive frameworks. The findings are drawn from the longitudinal case studies - *Blackburn is Open*, *Glossop Creates*, and *The Maker's Mile* - and reflect both the successes and the challenges encountered in practice, which together offer valuable insights into the conditions, roles, and mechanisms that underpin effective creative placemaking.

Creative practitioners as catalysts, collaborators, and advocates: Creative practitioners occupy pivotal roles in shaping place and policy. They act as connectors across sectors and communities, advocating for marginalised voices, translating creative ideas into action, and navigating the complexity of local and institutional dynamics. In *Blackburn is Open*, for example, artists were not only facilitators of public art but also strategic participants in reimagining the town's identity and economic future.

Structured yet flexible frameworks support sustainable engagement: The CCE Framework proved effective as a methodology that brings coherence to creative civic engagement while remaining adaptable to specific contexts. It enabled practitioners to align creative ambitions with policy objectives while ensuring community ownership and inclusivity, as evidenced in all three case studies.

Building trust and community ownership takes time: The research highlights the importance of sustained, time-based engagement to build trust and capacity among

communities and stakeholders. Each case study demonstrated that meaningful participation requires ongoing dialogue, iterative learning, and flexibility to respond to evolving needs.

Manifestos as Tools for Engagement and Advocacy: Manifestos emerged as effective artefacts for engaging stakeholders, articulating principles, and advocating for projects. In Blackburn is Open, the manifesto set out the project's ethos and vision; similarly, the strategy for The Maker's Mile functioned as a manifesto to guide policy conversations. The CCE Framework explicitly integrates this approach in its Playbook (see Chapter 3). This research validates the manifesto as a valuable creative and strategic tool in civic engagement.

Challenges of implementation and sustained engagement as findings: Throughout the nine-year research period, several challenges emerged that are themselves instructive findings:

- **Implementation barriers:** Translating theoretical frameworks into practice often encountered bureaucratic hurdles, resource constraints, and shifts in institutional priorities. For instance, *The Maker's Mile* project in Rochdale struggled to maintain momentum during a six-month gap between the completion of my work and the establishment of a dedicated team. These gaps risked undermining partnerships and continuity.

- **Navigating stakeholder dynamics:** Implementing creative civic engagement requires careful negotiation of diverse and sometimes conflicting stakeholder interests. Building consensus among partners and/or participants with different priorities and degrees of power was an ongoing challenge, mitigated in part by the CCE Framework's emphasis on collaborative decision-making and ethical practice.

- **Sustained leadership and governance:** Maintaining long-term collaboration demands not only initial enthusiasm but also robust governance and continuous leadership. The research underlines the need for creative practitioners and policymakers to assume multiple roles - advocate, fundraiser, curator, evaluator - and to nurture networks through ongoing commitment.

These challenges are not seen as failures but as realities of practice that informed the iterative development of the CCE Framework. They underscore the value of adaptive, ethical, and participatory approaches, and demonstrate the resilience and creativity required to sustain engagement in post-industrial contexts marked by disenfranchisement, declining high streets, and complex political landscapes.

By integrating these challenges as findings, the research presents a more authentic and nuanced understanding of how creative civic engagement operates in practice, highlighting not only what works but also what must be navigated and negotiated to achieve sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This thesis makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge in the field of creative placemaking and civic engagement by advancing both conceptual understanding and practical methodology, supported by substantial empirical evidence. It explicitly addresses the research aim of (re)defining the role of the *maker* in placemaking and demonstrates how creative practice and research can work in tandem to shape more inclusive, sustainable, and creative places.

It develops and rigorously tests the **Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework**, offering a structured yet adaptable methodology for enabling meaningful, inclusive, and sustained creative civic engagement. The Framework's phases - *Observatory*, *Laboratory*, *Factory*, and *Story of Change* - were applied across three case studies (*Chapter 4*), evidencing their effectiveness in distinct contexts: institutional, large-scale interventions in *Blackburn is Open*; grassroots, self-initiated approaches in *Glossop Creates*; and strategic, policy-influencing work in *The Maker's Mile*. Supporting evidence includes visual timelines, project outputs, and evaluation materials (*Appendices P4.1–P4.3*).

The thesis demonstrates empirically how creative practitioners, policymakers, and communities act collaboratively as *makers* of place and policy. It identifies and acknowledges the multifaceted roles that makers play, as catalysts, collaborators, advocates, leaders, and co-creators, and shows how these roles can be supported, recognised, and embedded in practice. In *Blackburn is Open*, artists, businesses, and the council collectively repositioned the town as a creative hub (*Appendices P4.2 & P4.3a*). In *Glossop Creates*, local creatives initiated and led cultural programmes such as the *Dark Peak Photography Festival* and ongoing networking events (*Appendix P5.3*). In *The Maker's Mile*, community insights shaped the strategy for Rochdale's *Creative Innovation District*, later informing the *Rochdale Creates* campaign[262] and successful funding bids (*Appendix P6.1*).

It extends placemaking theory by explicitly centering art and creativity, rather than simply collaboration, as essential to innovative and sustainable development. The thesis situates

[262] https://www.rochdalecreates.co.uk/ (accessed July 2024)

creative practice as both a method and an outcome, demonstrating through the case studies how artistic processes generate cultural, social, and economic value (*Chapter 4; Closing Remarks, Chapter 5*).

The research evidences that creative civic engagement is impactful not only in large urban centres but also in smaller towns, an area often overlooked in placemaking literature. Drawing on data from towns with populations between 33,000 and 148,000 (*Blackburn, Glossop, Rochdale*), it demonstrates these places' capacity for creative-led regeneration.

It addresses gaps in evaluation frameworks identified by *Counting What Counts* and the *Centre for Cultural Value*, by offering a practice-tested methodology for measuring and sustaining culture-led, place-based interventions (*Appendices P0.1 & P0.3*).

It also produces actionable, practice-tested recommendations (summarised as a Manifesto for Makers - see below) that support policymakers, practitioners, and communities to design, implement, and evaluate creative civic engagement initiatives. These practical implications include ethical principles, methods for sustaining engagement over time, guidance on aligning creative practice with policy, and approaches to evaluating impact (*Directions for Future Research & Practice, Chapter 5*).

These contributions are underpinned by a substantial body of evidence, including documentary materials, photographs, publications, stakeholder testimonies, and evaluation reports, that both document and credit the creative and civic labour of makers at all levels. Together, they articulate and substantiate how the CCE Framework operates in practice, how it acknowledges and strengthens the role of makers, and how it can inform both theory and practice at multiple scales.

IMPACT

The impact of this research and the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework extends beyond the boundaries of this thesis, demonstrating influence on practice, policy, and decision-making at local, regional, and national levels. The three case studies - *Blackburn is Open*, *Glossop Creates*, and *The Maker's Mile* - reveal the significant role creative engagement can play in implementing innovative strategies, promoting sustainable development, and shaping inclusive cultural ecosystems. Together, they provide compelling evidence of how creative civic engagement can embed culture into place-based policy-making and contribute to broader agendas such as regional devolution.

These findings have not only informed my creative practice, Local, which now operates with a distinct proposition based on robust evidence and case studies, but have also shaped a series of subsequent projects and policy developments. Below, I describe key examples that demonstrate the wider impact of this research and its integration into cultural strategy, devolution agreements, and creative policy-making.

Place Lab, Co. Durham

In 2021, I collaborated on County Durham's UK City of Culture 2025 bid[263], leading community engagement and proposing a network of 'Place Labs'. Drawing on the CCE Framework, I designed a model of community-led cultural hubs to embed decision-making and creativity into local governance. Following the bid, I authored the *Place Lab Feasibility Report*, which outlined governance models, pilot frameworks, and evaluation methods (incorporating CCE SYSTEMS, LOGIC, and PLAYBOOK components)[264]. This work was adopted in the *Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy* (2023) and contributed to Arts Council England Place Partnership funding[265]. Place Labs are now a flagship of the North East Devolution Deal, exemplifying culture-led regeneration integrated into regional strategy.

The Bridge, Stalybridge

Appointed Chair of *The Bridge* consortium in 2019, I directed and co-produced a three-year cultural programme aligned with the High Street Heritage Action Zone. Guided by the CCE Framework, the programme engaged communities in creative projects addressing climate, equality, and identity. This initiative achieved 'GM Town of Culture' status (2022), delivered high-profile public commissions, and contributed to Stalybridge securing £20 million Levelling Up funding, demonstrating how creative engagement can influence regeneration priorities and shape public realm investment.

GMCA Creative Improvement District (CID)

Building on my experience in Blackburn and Glossop, I contributed to the GM CID concept, presenting case studies to the GMCA taskforce in 2019. As a strategic advisor[266], I applied the CCE Framework to pilot projects and co-developed an action plan with GMCA's Culture Policy team[267]. These insights influenced the design and advocacy of CIDs, which have

[263] Durham was a finalist in the competition, along with Southampton and Wrexham, and Bradford, who won the competition and will host the UK City of Culture in 2025.
[264] See Appendix P7.1a, b and c for the Place Lab report and framework.
[265] See Appendix 7.3d - press release announcement of the funding.
[266] See Fig.3.18 on page 144.
[267] See Appendix P7.3b.

since been referenced in the *GM Trailblazer Devolution Deal* (2022) as part of the region's commitment to embedding creativity into economic renewal and town-centre strategies.

Derbyshire Makes

Informed by *Glossop Creates* and the CCE Framework, I helped design and produce the *Derbyshire Cultural Framework*[268] in 2021 and later led the *Derbyshire Makes* cultural programme. This county-wide initiative applies CCE principles across six towns, connecting heritage, innovation, and making to support local economies and cultural industries. With confirmed investment and a three-year plan launching in 2024, Derbyshire Makes stands as a testament to how creative civic engagement can influence local policy, secure funding, and develop sustainable, place-based cultural programmes that reflect community priorities.

Impact Summary

These examples illustrate how the CCE Framework has shaped local decision-making, cultural policy, and regional devolution strategies. The research informed the *GM Trailblazer Devolution Deal*, underpinned Durham's cultural strategy and funding bids, and contributed to securing significant investment in County Durham and Derbyshire. By embedding creativity within local governance and strategic policy-making, this work demonstrates the potential of creative civic engagement to influence structural change and support sustainable, inclusive regional development.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH & PRACTICE

This PhD has demonstrated that the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework provides a tested, adaptable methodology for embedding creativity, local distinctiveness, and collaboration at the heart of placemaking. As I prepare the research for publication, its relevance has been reinforced by evidence from policy and practice. The Centre for Cultural Value notes that placemaking studies often use 'creative' to mean collaborative rather than arts- or culture-led; this thesis reasserts the value of arts and culture as central drivers of innovative, inclusive placemaking. It also responds to the ongoing overemphasis on cities in policy and research by offering evidence from smaller towns and highlights how the CCE Framework addresses the gap in robust evaluation frameworks for culture-led initiatives (as identified by *Counting What Counts*).

[268] Commissioned by Derbyshire County Council and funded by Arts Council of England. https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/business/economic/cultural-framework/derbyshire-cultural-framework.aspx

To support others - practitioners, policymakers, artists, and communities - in applying, testing, and advancing this approach, I offer the following recommendations as a manifesto for future research and practice:

A MANIFESTO FOR MAKERS

1. Expand and Adapt the CCE Framework

- **Test in Diverse Places:** Apply the CCE Framework in varied geographic and cultural contexts - rural, suburban, international - to assess its scalability and flexibility. Document how its principles interact with different histories, demographics, and governance systems.
- **Explore New Sectors:** Extend its application beyond cultural policy into adjacent fields such as education, health, or environmental planning. Investigate how creative civic engagement might support systemic change across these areas.
- **Refine through Feedback:** Treat each application as an opportunity to refine the Framework. Collect feedback from participants and stakeholders to strengthen its relevance and accessibility for a wide audience.

Instruction: Practitioners, policymakers, and researchers should treat the CCE Framework as a living tool - not a fixed template. Begin by mapping the specific social, cultural, and political conditions of your place, then adapt the Framework's principles to suit those realities. Document and share how your adaptations work in practice, so that the collective knowledge of creative civic engagement continues to grow and evolve across contexts.

2. Take the Long View: Invest in Longitudinal Impact

- **Commit to Continuity:** Ensure projects are designed with long-term engagement in mind, enabling learning and growth over time rather than one-off interventions.
- **Measure Beyond Immediate Outcomes:** Build evaluation frameworks that assess not only outputs but also evolving relationships, resilience, and policy influence over years, not months.
- **Build Leadership & Capacity:** Support communities and creative practitioners with training, mentoring, and governance structures so they can sustain initiatives independently.

Instruction: If you are a policymaker, design funding mechanisms that reward continuity and deepen local ownership. If you are a practitioner, build in exit strategies that leave behind knowledge, networks, and confidence in the community.

3. Embrace Digital & Technological Tools Thoughtfully

- **Increase Accessibility:** Use digital platforms, online collaboration tools, and emerging technologies like AR/VR to broaden engagement and make creative civic processes more accessible.
- **Enable Real-Time Feedback:** Integrate digital surveys, live dashboards, and social media to capture ongoing feedback and adapt projects dynamically.
- **Analyse & Share Data Responsibly:** Harness data analytics to evaluate progress, but remain transparent and ethical about how data is collected and used.

Instruction: When deploying technology, always prioritise inclusivity, ensure it complements, rather than replaces, face-to-face interaction and trust-building.

4. Strengthen Ethical & Inclusive Practice

- **Centre Community Voice:** Commit to genuinely participatory approaches where communities co-design and co-own decisions.
- **Acknowledge Power Dynamics:** Be mindful of existing hierarchies, and create spaces where diverse voices, especially marginalised groups, are heard and valued.
- **Document & Share Learning:** Openly share successes and failures to build collective knowledge in the field.

Instruction: Practitioners and policymakers alike should embed clear ethical principles in contracts, funding criteria, and project planning to safeguard inclusivity and fairness.

5. Use Manifestos as Engagement Tools

- Develop manifestos collaboratively to articulate project values, intentions, and outcomes.
- Treat them as living, participatory artefacts to guide, advocate, and align stakeholders throughout the project.

Instruction: Practitioners and policymakers should embrace manifestos as creative and strategic tools, ensuring they remain accessible, visible, and responsive as projects evolve.

Closing Remarks

Reflecting on my diverse roles in creative civic engagement, I have concluded that the 'maker' in placemaking embodies a collective role, enacted by many people, encompassing a broad array of disciplines, skills, and experiences, both lived and professional. This expanded role integrates various perspectives, from local to global, and is organised through collective management and cooperative principles.

This thesis has demonstrated the transformative potential of creative civic engagement in shaping communities and influencing public policy. The development and implementation of the Creative Civic Engagement (CCE) Framework offers a valuable model for integrating art and creativity into civic life. This research contributes significantly to the growing field of creative placemaking, providing practical tools and theoretical insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. By emphasising the transformative power of creative civic engagement, the thesis underscores the crucial roles of creativity and collaboration in urban development and community building.

My journey through this research has been one of continuous learning, adaptation, and collaboration. The insights gained from the case studies and the CCE Framework have provided a robust foundation for future practice and research. Creative civic engagement impacts extend beyond immediate project outcomes, contributing to broader social and cultural transformations.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to inspire and inform future initiatives in creative civic engagement, encouraging practitioners and communities to harness the power of art and creativity in shaping the future of their environments. By nurturing a deeper connection between people, place, and policy, we have a collective role to play in making more vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable places for generations to come.

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6.13	Mapping beneficiaries across the four strands	Claire Tymon
6.14	Mapping activities against the 4 pillars of the CID model and the outcomes	Claire Tymon
6.15	Mapping the culture-led opportunities along the Maker's Mile, combining design from Sheffield Live Project and Claire Tymon, (March 2023)	Rochdale Maker's Mile Live project
6.16	Photograph of the mapping exercise in the Urban Room (2022)	Claire Tymon
6.17	Photograph collage of the Urban Room Rochdale	Richard Tymon

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