Towns and the Cultural Economies of Recovery:
A Multidisciplinary Mapping

Nicky Marsh, Catherine Clarke,
Michael Howcroft, Will May

November 2022

Contents

A.N OTHER DECISION

YOUR CHOICE

PEOPLE POWER

Executive Summary

1. Approach and Methodology

The project followed the UK Government's 'Towns Fund' initiative, which became one of the central planks of the Levelling Up agenda during the research. The Towns Fund targeted 101 'left behind' towns for additional support in four key areas, including skills and culture. Culture proved to be central to national investment: a recent FOI request suggested that of the successful Levelling Up bids, approximately 46% went on regeneration and town centres, 26% on transport, and **26% on culture** (Cultural Placemaking 2021). Yet our research has revealed that what culture means in these contexts is complex and under-researched while towns often lack capacities in key areas.

We worked with local communities, expert partners and stakeholders to understand the role that culture and heritage played in developing, writing and launching Towns Fund plans. We combined the disciplinary approaches of researchers working across arts, humanities, and the social sciences to understand how towns used, deployed and imagined culture as a strategy for social and economic regeneration. Our methodological range was broad and included quantitative, qualitative and creative approaches.

We developed these methodologies iteratively as the needs of our partners and communities came sharply into view. Recurring questions and themes influenced how we conducted our approaches and suggested interventions. We were particularly attentive to: the importance of the **hyper-local** to understanding place-based policy and place-attachment; the role of **emotional governance and affect** to decision-making in small communities and to the Levelling Up agenda (e.g. pride, self-perception, story-telling and narrative); the effects of the **absence of longitudinal research** and long-term forward planning; the **complex heterogeneity** of towns, regarding their **regional interconnectivity** and relationship to national strategies and anchor organisations, such as local authorities, ACE, and cultural entrepreneurs; the need for **inclusive, creative and EDI-aware models of community consultation**; and the effects of **austerity on local authorities'** ability to plan and implement cultural regeneration programmes (including research, bidding and evaluative capacities).

2. Research Challenge

The need and means for civic and cultural regeneration in the UK has also been transformed by the ongoing crisis of COVID-19. The past two years have seen rapid behavioural and organisational adaptations by governments, businesses, and communities, creating a seismic shift in our understanding of how we can effect change to rethink long-standing strategies, structures and practices. New kinds of support and resources will be needed to support our civic infrastructure, specifically in the cultural, creative and heritage industries.

Yet there is insufficient understanding of what culture means for UK towns, in particular. Our research has explored what towns want, need and expect from culture, how towns articulate these wants, needs and expectations, and how those have developed during the COVID-19 crisis and the first rounds of the Levelling Up Fund. We explored the local levers of cultural transformation and how these can be best supported, considering how multidisciplinary research can be used to strengthen and develop them. We have identified future research needs, opportunities and priorities that will enable the strengthening of cultural economies, drive the transformation of towns, and develop more nuanced understandings of local economic currencies, networks and value systems.
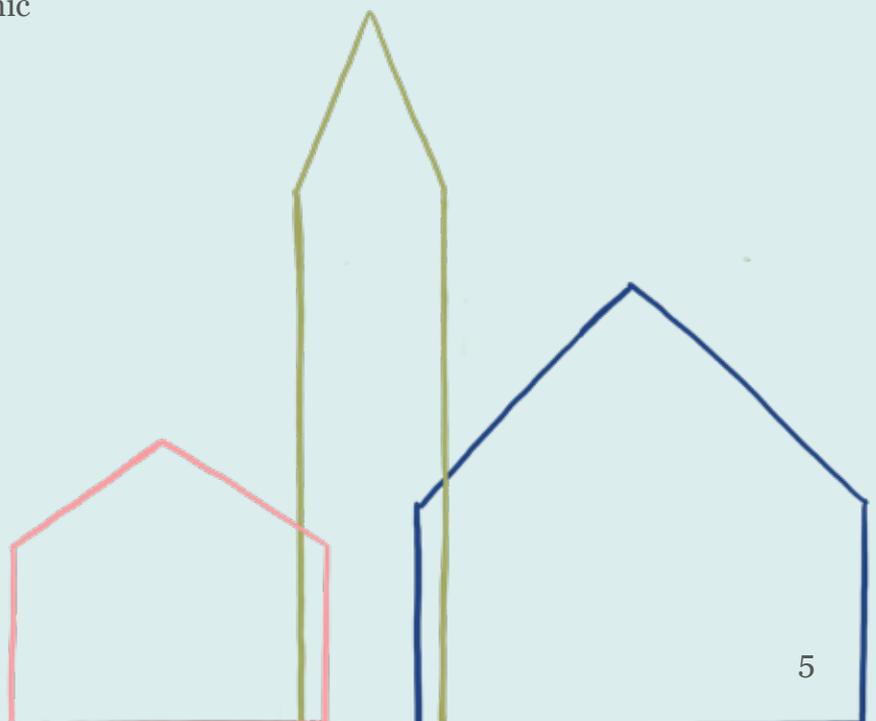
3. Urgency and Current Landscape

We situated our research within current national and international contexts, as well as the longer narratives of policy-making over the last ten years.

We did so with a specific focus on:

3.1 Place and policy

Four pressing aspects of the social and political research landscape—**Levelling Up, COVID-19, Brexit, and the environmental crisis**—have shaped the contemporary landscape for place-based policy. We trace the ways each has required us to rethink political affect and performance; the metrics for social change; pervasive and embedded regional inequalities; the role of the local in policy-based research; and the need for alternative models for economic sustainability, wealth and well-being.

3.2 Alternative economics

Our work on the economic humanities is informed by two emerging tendencies. First, mainstream economists have stressed the importance of narrative, affect and the experiential in evaluating economic choices and outcomes. This work has underlined the importance of humanities approaches to the social and cultural implications of economics beyond the assumed, and now much-critiqued, limitations of the rational and self-maximising economic man. Second, alternative economists have proposed that entirely different models of value—notably models emphasising sustainable, circular, co-operative and foundational economies—should be central to cultural development and regeneration in place of simple indicators of economic growth.

3.3 Towns and cultural regeneration

Cities across the Global North have increasingly looked to culture to help bring about regeneration outcomes. Geographic inequalities, structural disadvantages and the resulting economic and social decline of many English towns and cities have informed the rationale behind recent cultural initiatives that leaders perceive as opportunities to revive local fortunes. Our approach emphasised work that notes the limitations and risks of this perspective, particularly the boosterism attached to an emphasis on 'change' within the cultural regeneration process, and the need for more locally-embedded research on the implications of its affective and relational dynamics in smaller urban communities.

3.4 Skills and training

We trace changes in this interdisciplinary field as it has moved from an understanding of the historical development of industrial work through de-industrialisation and the development of the service, finance and creative industries. We follow debates that have demonstrated the pointed role of intersectional privilege in the creative and cultural industries, the geographical unevenness of skills and training, the need for longitudinal research, and closer networks between local communities and FE/HE institutions.

3.5 Place and place-making

We note the pervasive divide between pure primary research, based in traditional disciplines, and more applied research, focused on policy and applied professional practice. We also followed debates that have made clear the potential risks and inadequacies of 'place-making' as an external intervention, emphasising the need for participatory work and co-production with local communities and 'citizen-centric' practice.

4. Characteristics of the Intervention Needed

Our research demonstrated the **long-term effects of austerity** on the capacity of local communities to undertake evidence-informed planning. The need for arts and humanities collaborations to develop this missing capacity spanned all of our specific areas of enquiry and included:

» EDI and inclusive practice
Cultural decision making in towns is not representative: we are suggesting interventions for sharing models for practice-based research enabling creative and participatory decision-making and governance.

» Medium term planning
A central issue for many of the towns we surveyed was that the short-time frames of applying for funding assumed the existence of 'shovel ready' plans and/or priviledged capital investment ('glass and steel') that made understanding and supporting community needs difficult to achieve. We suggest medium-term co-production with towns on self-evaluation, planning and imagining futures to address this need.

» Meaningful community engagement
Towns approached community engagement in very different ways: we advocate for sharing models that can better connect diverse communities; encourage meaningful civic participation; and build community cohesion.

» Alternative and innovative modes of evaluation and need for longitudinal research
The need for new kinds of interdisciplinary, creative evaluation methods and new models for longitudinal research was apparent in nearly every area that we examined.

Towns ecosystems:
The interconnectedness of less mobile communities are complex and deeply embedded, and often raise issues about volunteers, belonging, social authority, norms and contested collective memories. We think **comparative academic research** into these dynamics would enable us to shift the cultural policy debates in ways that better reflect the longer term needs of smaller urban locations.

Skills and Mentoring:
Arts and humanities researchers are well-placed to contribute to an expansive understanding of what underpins creative and cultural vitality, through mentoring, creative collaboration, leadership training, shadowing and peer-to-peer networking. We advocate closer ties **linking cultural participation to skills development** and the adoption of succesful models (such as that suggested by the Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan) for linking local authorities and professional bodies and **for bringing HEIs into dialogue with external partners.**

Place shaping and placed-based research:
The focus on economic and geographical histories for the emerging typologies for towns (market, coastal, de-industrial) requires expanding. We found towns that operated as a centre for neighbouring settlements in a hub-spoke model, towns whose bidding capital and ambition had been strengthened by strategic networking with neighbouring counties or regions, and towns whose regeneration plans were focused on specific areas, neighbourhoods or streets. While towns will often have shared challenges, their wider ecosystems are unique. We are advocating for new kinds of cultural typologies that can explore the roles played by connectivity, regional status, and different patterns and types of cultural investment.

Local versus national metrics:

We discovered metrics and evidence for place-based regeneration are most valuable if granular and locally-focused. However, national funding and government bodies agencies need generalised data that can be aggregated and compared across regions. We propose the need for new research, across and beyond the arts and humanities, to bridge this disconnection, and the need to imagine and develop new, more flexible idioms for **translating local objectives into national indices.**

Material and digital places:

New research into **digital place-making and digital place interpretation**, intersecting with current 'Smart Cities' research and development, would expand place-shaping strategies beyond the literal and material, moving beyond the limitations and vagaries of surviving tangible heritage, and enabling more diverse, multi-layered and inclusive stories to be told.

Alternative Economics: Pioneering

research in the economic humanities can help councils and local government rethink models to growth. Better connections **between local and national debates** about the meaning of money itself are needed to enable local aspirations for alternative measures of economics and wellbeing. **New models for economic innovation are emerging from the social cracks and closed shops created by austerity and crisis:** more understanding of what these short-term local responses bring to communities and how they can be sustained is needed.

Affect, Participation and Place: It

was clear that affect and emotion—such as civic pride and place attachment—play a vital role in ecosystems and governance. We suggest that a critical account of these factors will allow for a sharper understanding of the values and aspirations that local governments pursue and represent. The renewed emphasis on pride and place, for example, has meant that the monitoring and evaluation of residents' civic pride to evidence policy success has become commonplace. Yet the tools for understanding and measuring civic pride are, like other affective metrics (such as wellbeing), often relatively undefined and unexamined in policy documents, practice and evaluation.

Creative methodologies: Towns

appear to have a narrow collective vocabulary for imagining renewal or transformation, and places with an emphasis on a single narrative about themselves struggle to imagine the futures in plural or inclusive ways. We have underlined the value of creative methodologies in opening up alternative spaces, modes and idioms. Facilitated creative activities are vital not only for allowing a range of voices across the community to engage but also for allowing researchers to see in 'real time' how relationships and cultural ecologies operate in each place. Such methodologies and their inductive toolkits allow researchers to support and remain alert to non-traditional, relational assets such as (though not limited to) experience, networks, ideas, innovation and creativity.

next DeCISION

Towns and the Cultural Economies of Recovery: A Multidisciplinary Mapping

Full Report

1

Approach and Methodology

Our study of place, place-making, and policy in place was characterised by an interdisciplinary approach that requires mixed methods and multidimensional approaches (McGuigan and Gilmore, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Bell and Oakley, 2015; Courage, 2020). This scoping project began with desk research to understand the role that culture has played in town planning strategies on regeneration and resilience, as well as analysis of policy documents and existing datasets relating to the Towns Fund prospectus and other emerging Levelling Up policies. We were also attentive to the changing approaches to culture and heritage that the COVID-19 crisis necessitated, including the rapid move to online cultural offerings and emergency funding schemes. This work included exploring data from a range of other sources (ACE, The Bennett Institute, The Carnegie UK Trust, Centre for Cities, Centre for Towns, The Electoral Commission, NESTA PEC, Office for National Statistics, and the Centre for Cultural Value).

We focused on the specific needs of towns, as we were aware that research on this subject is limited, with far greater attention placed on cities—perhaps, in part, because the 'town' as a distinctive type of settlement is a particularly British concept and poorly defined. David Bell and Mark Jayne have observed that 'small cities have for too long been ignored by urban theorists', advancing the concept of the 'small city' (developed initially with the UK town of Stoke-on-Trent as a model and provocation), and calling for further work in this area. Research for the Centre for Towns think tank has also identified the relative paucity of scholarship on towns. The heterogeneity and diversity of UK towns have presented research challenges: the Centre for Towns has suggested basic 'Typologies of Place' based on population size (6 categories) and 'characteristics of place' (6 categories). Deficits in research, place typologies and effective language continue to render towns peculiarly resistant to precise and widely-accepted definition and characterisation. Often imagined as 'in-between' spaces, variously identified as 'peri-urban', 'city regionalism', 'fringe' or 'interface' places, towns repeatedly fall through the cracks of research and analysis.

This early analysis provided a benchmark for understanding the role that culture plays in current plans for economic regeneration and post-COVID 'recovery' in UK towns. It informed the design of our empirical work, which included a survey of the 101 Towns Deal Boards and a cultural ecosystems analysis of our case studies: Bournemouth (Boscombe), Darlington, Hereford and Southend.

1.1 Town Deal Boards and the Town Board Survey

An online survey link was emailed to all 101 Stronger Towns Board members using publicly available contact details. The survey was designed to aid our understanding of: Towns Board regeneration needs and priorities; how Towns Fund decision makers broadly understood the identities and cultures of their towns, including cultural and heritage assets and infrastructures; Towns Board decision making processes including resources, capacities and sources of evidence and expertise. The survey also asked questions allowing us to classify respondents according to demographic groups, allowing us to pay close attention to equality, diversity and inclusion.

In total, there were 50 responses from (we estimate) at least 19 different Town Boards, providing views from a range of geographies and town taxonomies (e.g. market town, port town, new town, university town, coastal town and industrial heritage town). Due to ethical considerations we did not ask respondents to identify the town board they were responding on behalf of (Towns Boards generally have 10–15 members, making personal identification a possibility). From information supplied in the surveys it is reasonable to deduce that views from the following Town Deal Boards are represented: Birkenhead, Boston, Bournemouth, Castleford, Clay Cross, Darlington, Dewsbury, Glastonbury, Goldthorpe, Hereford, Margate, Penzance, Rotherham, Scunthorpe, Sutton in Ashfield, St Ives, Todmorden, Truro, and Wakefield.

Not all respondents completed the demographic questions. However, basic biographical and professional details of Town Deal Board members are publicly available online, with many boards having created websites to promote their initiatives, communicate with communities and offer some transparency of the process, publishing agendas and minutes of meetings, as well as the final Town Investment Plan (TIP). [1] **Our respondents tended to be senior decision makers from the private sector, local flagship cultural and heritage organisations and other anchor institutions.**

1.2 Cultural ecosystems analysis of four case study towns

'Cultural ecosystem' is often used to 'describe the complex support setting needed for a successful local cultural economy' (Pratt, 2021:4) and includes research of local histories, asset mapping and in-depth stakeholder interviews. We borrowed the cultural ecosystem concept to explore how towns understand their own cultural capabilities, resources and future needs. Given our time and resources, as well as the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 lockdowns, deeper ethnographic work (as advocated in this field by Walmsley, 2018 and Grabher, 2021) was limited. As will be discussed, our findings make it clear that such work is vital to fully understanding processes and uses of culture 'on the ground', especially the affective and relational dynamics of cultural policymaking and the lived experiences from policy implementations and outcomes.

[1] For example see: https://investinbolton.com/towns-fund and https://www.stivestowndeal.org.uk/meet-the-board [accessed 1 Oct 2021].

Bell and Oakley (2015:8) argue for 'the importance of thinking spatially or geographically about cultural policy', and of the place-specific analysis of local implementations of policy. Similarly, Volkering (2001:400) notes the 'territorial nature of policy', arguing that policy is 'a spatial concept' through its metaphors of 'mapping' or through notions of 'boundaries'. Further, as several authors have noted (e.g. Edensor, 2000; Bell & Jayne, 2006; 2009; Jayne et al., 2010; Gilmore, 2013), discourse around urban cultural policy tends to privilege the larger, often 'global' and 'metropolitan' cities, making our case studies, which are smaller and arguably more 'ordinary' and 'off the map' (Sassen, 1991; Robinson, 2002; 2006), highly significant sites for considering cultural regeneration. Additionally, the dominance of nationally focused and positivist policy frameworks has led to a 'predictable' process of data collection and analysis that often overlooks local or regionally scaled understandings (Voinea and Neumann, 2020). **Our project's inclusion of interpretivist, ethnographic, regionally scaled and experiential methods offers a gateway to richer, more localised knowledge, which is crucial to how 'recovery' is planned for and understood 'on the ground'.**

1.3 Interviews and Focus Groups

Our project worked with qualitative material drawn from semi-structured interviews (Longhurst, 2003) and focus groups, using questions phrased to encourage open-ended discussion that allowed for spontaneous topics and issues to arise. Where possible, questions were related to the inclusion (or absence) of culture and heritage within case study TIPS (or in the case of Southend, the 2050 Vision). We refrained from defining keywords such as 'culture', 'heritage', 'recovery' and 'regeneration' because the project wanted to explore variations in understanding and to allow any place-based and sector-specific issues about definitions (as well as policy and practice) to emerge.

Interviews and focus groups took place with a wide range of stakeholders who, after being identified through desk research, were directly approached to take part due to their specific insider knowledge. Participants were also recruited through introductions made by partners, other respondents and from snowball sampling. Working with local volunteers and trustees from the Victoria County History project we were able to recruit further participants.

Key questions guiding the interviews and our analysis were:

» How is culture and heritage understood locally?

This would often develop into discussions regarding cultural and heritage 'assets' and 'infrastructure'.

» What is understood locally by 'Levelling Up' and 'recovery'?

How and where are the tensions or alignments with local decision makers, organisations and the TIP?

» What is the role of culture in local regeneration?

» What research would be useful to help make confident, informed decisions around these issues?

Data from all participants has been interpreted considering their affiliations and their personal and professional interests. It has been validated through cross-referencing with the data collected from desk research and policy documents, as well as with the information gathered from other interviews. In accordance with standard ethics procedures, all responses have been anonymised to avoid personal identification and to protect informants from deductive disclosure (Kaiser, 2009). This point matters, because the report occasionally presents conflicting views about local issues, and it is imperative not to jeopardise our participants' professional relationships. While all participants are cited anonymously within the text, a full list of contributors to the study can be found in **Appendix One**. Given the rapidly changing and heightened political context in which the study took place, the data collection and analysis was developed inductively, allowing space to include emerging government policy such as the Community Renewal Fund, which launched mid-way through the project, as well as being able to respond to the complications created by the COVID-19 lockdown.

1.4 Creative Workshops

Stories and 'storying' are fundamental to the way that human beings make sense of the world, to understand who they are and where they fit in (Kearney, 2002; Kerby, 1991; Bruner, 1987). Throgmorton (1996) suggests that the practice of urban or town planning can be thought of as a form of storytelling and that stories and, importantly, re-storying, have become key elements of the creative place-shaping toolkit. The potential in harnessing storytelling to imagine future places and inform policy is demonstrated playfully in the Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities report on 'The future of seaside towns' (2019), which presents an account of the successful regeneration of the fictional English coastal town of Seaminster as a paradigm for renewal and sustainable development. The Towns Fund itself also makes use of storying and indeed, the **'Our Town Stories'** series was 'at the heart of the Towns Fund programme'. This elicited future-gazing stories from the Town Deal Boards that supported and gave

coherence to the individual programmes contained within each Town Improvement Plan that might otherwise have appeared as disconnected projects.

Pinder, whose work develops theoretical relationships between art, performance and place (particularly the urban landscape), has identified several strands of 'utopian urbanism' that express desires for better ways of being and living (Pinder, 2002). Such a desire works utopically to reveal the 'gap between present conditions and desired alternatives' (Blomley, 2007:58). Stories contribute to the way we make sense of and inhabit places. Investigating imaginaries can reveal utopian aspirations and hidden desires. Since 2019, interventions that mobilise storytelling about the past, present and future to inform future visions for towns have been led by a number of major agencies involved in place-shaping, renewal and social change. These interventions include the Carnegie Trust's 'Talk of the Town' programme, as well as the Cultural Programmes. Which is associated with Historic England's Heritage Action Zones (including High Street Heritage Action Zones), in partnership with ACE. These projects include the 'High Street Tales' project to 'Twin Towns', the Outdoor Arts Commission, and SoundWalks.

Despite such strategies for local engagement and co-production, official stories can dominate, and become more widely read or accepted than others; many such stories have better access to means of communication. As Collie (2011:425) argues, 'stories inscribe boundaries that socially include some and exclude others'. Numerous authors (Rose, 1997; Merrifield, 1995) have noted the presence of multiple knowledges and ways of knowing, and of the ethical importance of acknowledging and respecting these pluralities. The report focuses on the extent to which 'the public' or the different 'communities' within towns were (or were not) involved in TIP developments, which was a point of tension. This point is not surprising, and there is a long history (e.g. Arnstein, 1969) of the exclusion and marginalisation of certain voices in such practices.

Researching thoughts and feelings about the future of localities can be exploratory and impressionistic, with a considerable lack of parameters. This point demands consideration of the 'more than representational' (Lorimer, 2005) and applications of experimental methods. To elicit fuller, multi-modal accounts of our participants' understanding of place—and perhaps give the non-representational some symbolic (and therefore discursive) value—we collaborated with local artists to co-design and facilitate creative workshops, which took place online.

We worked with 5 community artists across our 4 case studies as follows:

Bournemouth/Boscombe:
Michelle Rumney (visual artist)
Darlington: Lisette Auton (self-identified disabled writer, activist, and creative practitioner)
Southend: Emma Edmondson and Lu Williams (visual artists)
Hereford: Toni Cook (community theatre practitioner specialising in work with young people), in collaboration with young people from Hereford.

Working closely with the research team, the artists were briefed as to the central research questions, scope and key terminology. They nonetheless brought unique creative skills and approaches to the workshop design and delivery. Accordingly, each workshop differed in terms of specific activities. For example, Boscombe participants worked with photographs and maps, whereas Darlington participants worked with words and doodles to create miniature books—from which Lisette Auton devised a poem. Details, images and artefacts produced from the workshops can be found on the **project website.**

These creative partnerships also fed into a suite of further activities for the **Being Human Festival of the Humanities, 2021.** These activities were intended to feed back into the wider communities and included displays of the Boscombe, Darlington, Hereford and Southend artworks in locations in the towns (for example, Darlington railway station; Hereford Maylord shopping centre; an empty shop front in Boscombe Royal Arcade). This work was supplemented by an online event 'What's in Store: Imagining Future High Streets' and two linked online workshops: the first with the artist Michelle Rumney in which participants made a #FutureMap of their place as they hoped it would be in 2050; the second with writer and maker Elizabeth Dearnley in which participants wrote a #FutureHistory of their place, looking back on it from the perspective of 2050. This further programme of events also included a workshop with Creative Kids, an education charity in Boscombe, which aims to address economic disparities and deprivation locally through the arts. Children explored Boscombe today and back then, with the support of Michelle Rumney, and created a giant collaborative map of Boscombe as they hoped to see it in 2050.

Key questions guiding the core project workshops with communities in Boscombe, Darlington, Hereford and Southend were:

» How can we better develop and retain skills in our local communities?

» How might we explore 'creative repurposing' (see discussion of the Levelling Up prospectus, below) of heritage in place?

» How do we create and measure value in communities and what currencies can we use?

» What makes an effective local government consultation for the 'Levelling Up' project pipeline?

Workshop participants responded with varying degrees of reflexivity, at times repeating official messages (especially those participants in positions of organisational seniority), but more often making their own meanings. In all workshops, discussions often took highly personal turns, reflecting everyday concerns, such as work-based, family and community histories. Despite their online delivery, the

research team understood a collective sense of place was arrived at by the end of each workshop, due to the local (and often hyper-local) knowledge shared by participants, who in many cases already knew (or knew of) each other through local work, social life, or other networks and settings. Their concerns suggest an open-endedness to processes and uses of culture within local development, thus making multidimensional analysis suitable for achieving a fuller picture of its multiple meanings.

While our breadth of engagement was wide, we observed and encountered barriers to participation in several ways. While keen to support our research, local government officers and elected representatives had limited time to engage (with one or two exceptions). As a result, we are perhaps aware of an over-reliance on 'official' narratives in some interviews with this group of respondents, where more time might have revealed deeper and reflective engagements. Freelance creative practitioners also play a key role in the cultural development of towns, and we observed barriers in terms of finance: while we included funds as an 'attendance fee support' limited resources constrained freelance participation. Perhaps most significantly, the project identified barriers to access at the grassroots level – both in terms of our research and other local consultation and participatory initiatives – in terms of class, race, disability, and age.

1.5 Research Reviews

Our research literature reviews cut across individual disciplines and go beyond arts and humanities research areas in many cases.

Our understanding of cultural economies of towns is enabled by new research emerging from the intersection **between economics and the humanities** that points to the centrality of **narrative, affect and the experiential in understanding and evaluating economic choices and outcomes.** It is also motivated by the insights of critics who have underlined the importance of alternative models of value—of sustainable, circular, co-operative and sharing economies—

to cultural development and regeneration. We were interested in how local economies have been understood to **develop sustainable communities, build community social capital and foster trade and local development.**

The literature on **towns and cultural regeneration** has focused on how processes of regeneration can be made inclusive and transformative. It has critically explored what the emphasis on 'cultural display' has meant for the wellbeing and social outcomes of a diverse range of communities. We pay particular attention to what the critiques of the 'creative city' mean for towns, specifically on **infrastructural investment and the need for place-based local analysis.**

National and regional policies for UK growth have drawn on the extensive literature on **skills development and training,** and this has been a key area of government focus, leading to the 2021 Skills and Post-Education Bill. Academic research from the arts and humanities has looked in particular at **creative skills**, as well as models for urban and regional development focused on creative clusters, digital skills and the need for national skills infrastructure.

Recent and current work on **place and place-making** (a fraught term and concept, which we interrogate) spans a wide range of research disciplines, including archaeology, cultural, economic and historical geography, heritage studies, history, tourism studies, urban planning and design, as well as 'grey literature' produced by agencies involved in place-based programmes. This literature review has sought in particular to draw together findings from across applied research and research-led practice, policy and more traditional academic disciplines, where there have often been missed opportunities for interdisciplinary and cross-sector dialogue and collaboration.

2

Research Challenge

Our project set out to uncover the role that arts and humanities researchers can play in the cultural recovery of UK towns. We aimed to explore what towns want, need and expect from culture (including heritage) in economic regeneration, and how their wants and needs were developed and articulated before and during the COVID-19 crisis.

Culture is often seen as the 'magic bullet' for place-based regeneration, helping to draw in the skills and digital connections that help develop, promote and sustain cultural activity, and create a civic architecture that can tackle urgent social and economic issues. Markusen and King have called art and culture's substantial contribution to economic vitality the 'artist's dividend' (2003: 3). A vibrant and diverse cultural life can grow the creative economy, attract and retain the young people who revive depleted town centres, and bridge socially fractured or divided semi-urban communities. Increasingly, the social and economic benefits of culture are elided in UK regional policy and strategy. The Levelling Up Prospectus urges investment in cultural assets that offer 'place based-economic and social development' (2021: 12), prioritising projects that promote wellbeing, foster a sense of community and increase high street footfall.

The Levelling Up Prospectus was published half-way through this project. It was significant, first, for its assertion that cultural spend is intrinsic to civic life and 'not a luxury', making cultural and heritage investment one of its three themes for 2021–22 spend, and, second, for creating what the LGA have seen as an opportunity to reset the relationship between central and local government' after a period of 'fragmentation' (LGA report, 'Is the grass greener?' 2016: 12). The need and means for civic and cultural regeneration in the UK has also been transformed by the ongoing crisis of COVID-19. The past two years have seen rapid

behavioural and organisational adaptations by governments, businesses, and communities, creating a seismic shift in our understanding of how we can effect change, or rethink long-standing strategies, structures and practices.

We have explored the local levers of cultural transformation and how these can be best supported, considering how multidisciplinary research can be used to strengthen and develop them. We have looked to identify the future research needs, opportunities and priorities which will enable the strengthening of cultural economies, drive the transformation of towns, and develop more nuanced understanding of local economic currencies, networks, and value systems. Specifically, we have considered what can be learnt from the innovations in skills, forms of community and place (virtual and material) and cultural sharing economies that this prolonged crisis has necessitated, and how interdisciplinary research can contribute to our economic and cultural recovery, at national and local levels.

The geographical scope of this work focuses on towns in England, with an emphasis that is both national, regional, and hyper-local. In our research, we found towns that operated as a centre for a range of neighbouring settlements in a hub-spoke model, towns whose bidding capital and ambition had been strengthened by strategic networking with neighbouring counties or regions, as well as towns whose

regeneration plans were focused on specific areas, neighbourhoods, or streets. While towns often have shared challenges (connectivity and digital skills, transport infrastructure, ageing populations, and development of community resources), their wider ecosystems are unique. While engagement or partnership-working with HEIs was uneven across our case studies, it was largely confined to local providers.

The beneficiaries of this research will include:

» Local and National Government

By understanding the impact and outcome of targeted place-based funding for culture and the specific needs for towns in England post-COVID, authorities at a local and national level will have a better grasp of how to tailor future funding, how processes of decision-making effect engagement, systems and networks that can better support local government, and how to shape future policy in this area.

» Communities in Towns

Town engagement and consultation exercises often struggle to include hard-to-reach communities, compounding existing problems in making local democracy representative and inclusive. Research that gives local authorities fuller access to best practice across the country will better support work in this area.

» HEI researchers working across disciplines
Arts and humanities research has distinct methodological expertise in helping us understand the relationship between culture, heritage, and economics, yet the complex challenges outlined above require multidisciplinary teams.

» Towns Developers and Planners

The paucity of existing research on the ecology of towns and the transformation of lived experience due to the pandemic are both challenging for investors and planners: new research in this will improve the feasibility, delivery, and efficacy of future planning and civic infrastructure.

» National Cultural and Heritage Organisations
National organisations such as Arts Council England and Heritage England will benefit from an increased understanding of communities in towns and their needs, specifically around recreation and leisure, cultural engagement.

» Local Museums, Archives; Heritage and Local History Groups

Local heritage and history institutions and groups carry unique expertise and knowledge of their area, and more transparent ways to connect with HEI researchers will strengthen the visibility of heritage and history in regional planning.

»Local Arts and Cultural Organisations
Arts and cultural organisations are often in responsive-funding mode, and their lack of opportunities for partnership working with the HE sector limits the capacity of their evaluation work, bidding capital, and the scale of ambition.

»FE Colleges
The FE sector is key to supporting, responding and adapting to the needs of towns in England. A better understanding of skills mapping will enable colleges to better tailor courses to local needs, and to support college graduates in sharing their expertise across communities.

3

Urgency and Current Landscape

3.1 Place and Policy

This section of the report situates the field within current wider national and international contexts, as well as the longer narratives of policy-making over the last ten years.

3.1.1 Putting Levelling Up in its place
'Levelling Up' is a phrase which has had increased traction over the project, and although its corresponding White Paper was not published at the time of this report, the Levelling Up Prospectus was published in March 2021, and the broad policy has informed outcomes across seven government department since 2020. Its significance was marked by the renaming of the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in September 2021. It can be understood in a longer history of political phrase-making to recalibrate the social contract and frame political activity through a series of policies, initiative, and government spending decisions, often in response to post-austerity politics (e.g. The Big Society). Its language of localism has framed much of the data-gathering and public understanding of the scoping area. Although the term has been understood by some analysts to indicate redistributive policies, it has been increasingly linked to place-making, and the relative political space and funds afforded to different types of settlement (cities, towns, villages).

Because it can express a more general desire to make something better alongside making something the same as other things, it at once speaks to a divisive post-Brexit political moment, shaped by competition and contest, and simultaneously raises unspecified expectations on EDI. The porosity of the phrase is part of its metaphorical power: in civil engineering, it describes the preparation needed to begin building work; in gaming, it indicates moving to a higher level, perhaps with more skills or strength; as a phrasal verb, it suggests a renewed commitment to truth-telling. These three definitions encompass our project's own strands—heritage and the built environment; skills, and social currencies, contracts, and decision-making.

Our research has repeatedly highlighted the **heterogeneity of towns** in terms of demography, political power, bidding capital and, most significantly, the often inverse relationship between their needs and expectations. This key insight highlights the challenges of Levelling Up without mechanisms for measuring its impact, both for effective delivery and political accountability (Shearer, Shepley, Soter, 2021: 15): as it stands, it does not give places the political vocabulary to contextualise their aspirations through a national framework or clear measurements. This policy context has increased the urgency for revitalised thinking on the relationship between place, community and the Levelling Up agenda, indicated in recent reports from the Create Streets Foundation in June 2021 which argues that 'the country needs government to trust communities with flexible, long-term funding' (Create Streets Foundation: 2021: 11). This has also amplified calls for new deals in governance, decision-making and funding, often linked directly to accounts of towns and their heterogeneity. The recent Local Government Information Unit report extends the place typologies devised by Colinge and Gibney (2010) to classify areas into new and emerging places; dispersed places; regeneration and renewing places; maintain and maturing places (Walker, Hussain, Diamond, 2021: 8).

Photo: TCER team, 2021, *The Knife Angel* by Alfie Bradley and the British Ironworks Centre at Hereford Cathedral

The Levelling Up Prospectus (March, 2021) foregrounds several key policy areas which we have explored in our research and through engagement with local communities and respondents. Firstly, the three investment themes for the first round of funding (2021-22) include 'Cultural Investment', with a reference to 'creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces' (2021:8). What are the varied processes, politics and possibilities of 'creative repurposing' in local development? The Levelling Up Prospectus also places pride and affect centre stage, using the term 'pride' 5 times. The Prospectus asserts that 'for many people, the most powerful barometer of economic success is the positive change they see and the pride they feel in the places they call home' (2021: 2). This radical shift away from more typical metrics for quantifying success places affect and emotional governance at the heart of strategy, demanding a new attention to ways in which we might capture, represent or measure (changing) emotional responses to place.

3.1.2 COVID-19

Much of the early policy work prompted by COVID-19 has revealed how nested health inequalities are focused in small geographical areas. The pandemic has highlighted these inequalities in complex ways, showing the disparities between average life expectancy and access to healthcare, and how these are heightened by living conditions, the availability of a wide range of employment, access to green spaces, and even the retail offer in local areas (Goodair, Kenny, Marteau, 2020).

Different stages of the pandemic, including national and regional lockdowns, have revealed new divisions, such as the professional and digital work versus frontline delivery employment. This has focused attention on how to 'build back better': Lucas and Kippin note the need for cross-sector collaboration, a range of new local institutions, and 'multiyear

public service outcome deals' (Lucas and Kippin: 2021). The work of the PEC has been especially important here and has revealed that the crisis has exacerbated regional, class and socio-political disparities in the creative industries (Carey, O'Brien and Gable, 2021: 2); the importance, and relative resilience of micro-clusters of local creative industries that exist outside of metropolitan centres (Easton, Bakhshi, 2021); the value of partnerships between local government authorities and academic researchers in developing and sustaining cultural eco-systems (Dunn and Gilmore 2021). Research and polling during the pandemic has raised wider issues about regional and national identity: the distinct travel and social distancing policies between all four nations, as well as the tiered system of restrictions in 2020 has heightened awareness of the relationship between where we live and where decisions are made. This has refracted, reframed, and sometimes diffused the divisions of Brexit in new ways (Kenny, de Waal, Kelsey 2021).

These findings were reflected by our communities: as one respondent suggested 'Coronavirus is a shock that exacerbates existing issues and trends', and austerity, which has brought the language of reduced capacities, resources and their affectual and relational consequences, remains a significant challenge facing these communities.

3.1.3 Brexit

Between the result of the EU referendum in June 2016 and the UK's departure from the EU in January 2020, social scientists and policymakers became increasingly interested in the political divisions and polarisation between affluent voters in metropolitan areas, where larger numbers voted to remain in the EU, and smaller towns and rural areas, where larger numbers voted to leave. This was often termed the 'politics of resentment' (Stoker 2018). However, recent UKRI-funded research projects have suggested there are more complex modes of belonging and civic identity in post-Brexit Britain than indicated by media narratives *(Tyler, 'Identity, Belonging, and the Role of Media in Brexit Britain').*

3.1.4 Environmental issues

COVID-19 and Brexit have emphasised the social, economic, and health inequalities between towns and regions across the UK. However, the agenda for 'building back better' has also been informed by the climate crisis, and its attendant impacts on building, transport, housing, and spending priorities. Despite the prevalence of media attention on multinational agreements or city-focused environmental policies (e.g. UK Urban Climate Action Programme), an increasingly vital aspect of environmental policy intersects with the language of localism. As a recent IPPR report notes, there are now 307 Transition Towns in the UK (Hunter et al, 2021: 33). Transition Towns are grassroots communities

which come together to explore local solutions to the damages wrought by peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability.

Recent policy documents in the field call upon international frameworks to deepen their commitment to local-level action and note the positive role of climate policy formed from local consultation and civic engagement (Tiratelli et al, 2012: 112). The implications for regenerating towns can range from encouraging green jobs, rethinking processes for community-led decision making, adaptive design for housing and travel infrastructure, preventative flooding measures, to promoting the transitions away from fossil fuels.

3.2 Research Review: Alternative Economics

Alternative economies and e-currencies have long been associated with local regeneration. They are embedded in an approach to economics that overturns the conventional notions of money—which understand it to be a unit of value, a unit of exchange, or a unit of storage — a 'neutral veil' that hangs over the real economy of goods and services. Instead they draw on a range of other disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, history and cultural studies, that have understood money to be a social technology that organises social relations and space and time (Dodd 1994, Graeber 2011, Ingham 2004, Zelizer 1994). Money in these contexts might be better seen as a kind of 'commons', part of a 'foundational economics' of resource management that is best collectively understood, imagined, constructed and enacted. (Camille Meyer and Hudon, 2019)

Approaches to alternative and local currencies have followed in this anthropological and sociological mode and have focused on the ways in which local forms of money can organise social relations in more progresssive ways. These currencies often share a resistance to the interest-bearing and debt-dependent practices of the established financial system and have been associated with both more environmentally sustainable outcomes (because debt relies on growth) and, through comparisons with the gift economy, with more altruistic and socially-focused communities (Raworth 2017, Karanantini 2014, Douthwaite 1999). These complementary currencies are seen to produce particular kinds of relations, which are often about **building trust, networks and reciprocal relationships outside of established and asymmetric modes of capital relations.**

There are a range of different kinds of models for alternative currencies and each has different kinds of aims. Mutual credit systems (such as long-running projects WIT and Sardex) provide credit and support for small businesses and often appear in times of financial crisis and reduced liquidity. Local currencies (such as

the Brixton Pound, the Brighton Good Money voucher) are intended to boost local economies and foster a sense of place and place attachment. LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems) are often intended to promote local businesses whilst supporting social inclusion (providing work and training skills) and environmental sustainability (focusing on recycling and reusing rather than consumption and production).

It is, of course, also important to note that neither the gift economy nor alternative currencies are inherently attached to progressive, redistributive or socially environmental aims. The gift economy, as feminist critics of social reproduction have long argued, is often deeply gendered and dependent on unpaid domestic labour and care. Alternative currencies, conversely, possess strongly libertarian histories, in which they are valued as a way of evading seigniorage and state monopolies (bitcoin is simply the most recent contender in this tradition). Indeed, some of the recent 'local currencies' are actually global cryptocurrencies that increase pride in place but do so in the service of multinational corporations rather than local economies (Marsh 2017).


Photo: TCER team, 2021, Bournemouth pier

In the UK the landscape for alternative currencies and regeneration is a complicated one: although there is a clear appetite for both LETS and alternative currency systems the structures are very fragile, far more so than in either Latin America or mainland Europe. **UK towns have their own particular role in this context. Successful town-based environmental movements, such as the Transition Town movement, were often associated with the alternative currency movement** (Singer, 2019). Transition towns were critical of the debt-structures of finance capital and their aspirations for sustainable and inclusive communities frequently led them to adopt their own currencies which appeared to function as both a symbolic and literal currencies. Yet they were very precarious and Singer's exhaustive documentation of them, for example, has ironical implications: his comprehensive and fully-illustrated descriptions function as a catalogue—they are being sold as collector items and a suggested price is attached to each (Ten Stroud Pounds are available for a suggested £40). The currencies are collectible because they were restricted and failed in economic terms. Peter North's work provides a more utopian strategy for understanding these failures, both ethnographically and historically (North 2006, 2007). Although he recognizes that the networks of LETS in the UK are too 'small for significant levels of trading' he nonetheless valorises their importance for offering collective opportunities for new debates between 'those who see local currencies as an unproblematic rational policy innovation with the capacity to reform mainstream economic rationales towards free, humanised, ecological values' and those 'with more ecological even anarchist values [who] see local currencies as resistant or emancipated strategies which operate under their changed rules' (North, 2006: 8-9).

3.3 Research Review: Towns and Cultural Regeneration

Cities across the global north have increasingly looked to culture to help bring about regeneration outcomes (Landry et al., 1996). Geographic inequalities, structural disadvantages and the resulting economic and social decline of many English towns and cities, has informed the rationale behind recent cultural initiatives which are perceived by leaders as opportunities to revive local fortunes. Harvey (1989:9) argues that this compels cities 'to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in' and that the delivery of temporary or permanent urban spectacles become key strategies of entrepreneurial approaches to urban regeneration (see also Bianchini et al., 1992; Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007). The emphasis on 'change' within the cultural regeneration process (Belfiore 2011), often supported by the techniques of boosterism (Boyle, 1997), see places aspiring not only to present 'world-class' or 'once in a lifetime' cultural activities but also those which will transform opinion in the eyes of both locals and outsiders. In this sense, such initiatives might be understood as a version of what Williams (1984) called 'culture as display'—later adapted by McGuigan (2004) into 'cultural policy as display'—to explain the transformations occurring within contemporary cultural policy under global capitalism. Similarly, Bell & Oakley (2015:58) refer to Royseng's (2008) argument of cultural policy's 'ritual logic' and 'the assumption that culture can magically make things (and people) 'better', or make 'better' people (and things)'.

As Cunningham and Platt have noted (2019), places which bid into such competitive initiatives often see themselves as the 'underdog' in need of investment, but with strong cultural heritage to draw tourism and boost local pride. Several Town Deal Board survey responses attest to the affective consequences of this through the use of language such as 'ailing' to describe their town centres, and (in a deliberately provocative gesture) our Southend artists have produced pin-badges emblazoned with 'Southend's not shit' as a reflection of the town's complicated self-esteem. Thus, there are clear links between territorial stigmatisation and cultural regeneration. Slater and Anderson (2012), in their analysis of St. Paul's, Bristol, show how renewal schemes for the area exploited its negative reputation, and both Howcroft (2021) and Paton, Mooney, and McKee (2012) suggest that urban renewal schemes and state-led gentrification may contribute to a pathologising of areas that are perceived as 'problem places'. Bianchini and Tommarchi (2021) describe how 'speculative practices by real estate developers and financial actors may contribute to reinforce stigmatisation', which can lead to 'demolition of affordable housing, displacement and renewal schemes targeted at wealthier city residents.' Further, several authors (such as Paton, Mooney, and McKee, 2012 and Harvie 2013) have understood such schemes as a means to redefine working class people's lives within the more deprived locales. For example, Glasgow's East End was actively stigmatized in policy and media discourses to support the event as a means to pursue gentrification and capital accumulation (Paton 2018). It is possible that regeneration as understood by some of our case study actors (especially within the competitive frameworks of the Stronger Towns and Community Renewal funds) is being used in similar ways. As an emerging policy area, there is little to no research on the affective or relational dynamics of its impact.

Photo: Lu Williams and Emma Edmondson, 2021, still from *What Makes Good Public Art?*

Critiques of Florida's (2002) 'creative city', point to the ways in which his approach to culture-led urban regeneration is underpinned by unfair competition, privileges neoliberal ideologies and caters to a 'middle class' elite (see Harvie, 2013b:118-19). As a result, the concerns of local cultures and low-income populations can be marginalized, displaced, or occluded altogether, re-entrenching gender, class, and race inequalities. Florida has recognised some of the unfairness arising from the reality of the creative class ideology, advocating instead a more localist agenda that calls for investment in infrastructure, affordable and centrally located rental housing, raising service sector wages, and investing in people and places to tackle concentrated poverty (Florida, 2017). However, austerity politics in the UK, poor transport links within and between regions and the machinations of an unregulated free-market more widely, make it difficult for some to conceive how these suggestions can ever be implemented without systemic reform – especially in relation to affordable housing, and greater powers for devolved regions (McKee et al., 2017; Prosser et al., 2017). Thus, 'boosterism' and place promotion appealing to foreign tourists and investors remain embedded as central tropes of local government and the politics of localism more generally (Soja, 2015; Wills, 2016). Thus, policy makers in many towns and cities, inspired by the 'Glasgow model', the 'Barcelona model' or the 'Margate model', continue to adopt aggressive branding strategies which exploit local identity as a marketing device (García, 2004a). Such an instrumentalist view of culture exemplifies the 'tokenistic' position of policy makers and marketeers dominated by economic and corporate logics (García, 2004b:103).

As Gilmore has argued, the resulting cultural strategies can often 'ignore the specificities of places, the situated cultural practices and implicit knowledge of localities, their internal logics, histories and structures' (2013: 86). The everyday realities of the inhabitants become obscured by 'official knowledge which privileges legitimate forms and institutions and neglects local contexts of participation' (2013: 94). Oakley suggest that 'academic critiques of culturally-led urban regeneration [...] are manifold and persuasive', though 'they have not yet weaned city governments off the idea of cultural regeneration or its related narratives of the "creative city"' (Oakley, 2015: 4). Outlining some of these spatial patterns in the urban creative economy 'script', Oakley refers to Cameron and Coaffee's (2005) study of Gateshead which makes a distinction between cities where gentrification is driven by commercial capital and where what they call 'positive gentrification' is driven by public authorities. Cameron and Coaffee argue that the latter has more relevance in cities in the North East of England, where 'private capital has to be dragged kicking and screaming into de-valourised urban locations through the initiative and investment of the public sector' (2005:45).

Substantial research focuses on the challenges facing towns, including relationships between local cultural participation and capital (or lack thereof) and wider economic and social participation and prosperity. Gilmore has handled critically the ubiquitous terminology of 'cold spots, crap towns and cultural deserts' in her work on 'cultural consumption within "ordinary" localities and mundane places', while the Local Trust / Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) report (2019, data updated July 2020) identifies 'left-behind' places, including 'post-industrial areas', 'coastal districts' and estates on the 'peripheries of towns and cities', but also reflects on the problems of 'left behind' as a label. As Shaw (2017:630) has pointed out, previous funding streams and delivery mechanisms such as the Regional Growth Fund, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Enterprise Zones 'primarily operate[d] as instruments of economic development, rather than City-Region regeneration'. Further, culture-led urban regeneration in the UK seems to be in a process of 'downscaling' (Bianchini and Tommarchi, 2020) with emerging trends pointing toward smaller schemes, notably with heritage-led projects and perhaps a shift in emphasis from 'urban' towards towns and rural economies.

3.4 Research Review: Skills and Training

This is an interdisciplinary field, including researchers from geography, sociology and social sciences alongside English, history, media studies, media industries research. In the 1970s and 80s, historians and social scientists took a renewed interest in the historical development of industrial work, as the UK moved through de-industrialisation, and the development of the service, finance and creative industries. The rise of the media studies in the 1980s and 1990s saw increased focus on conditions of creative labour and skills development, particularly with the more recent advent of **digital connectivity** and the gig economy.

More recently, the skills debate has been contextualised and complicated by academic research which demonstrates the **intersectional advantages conferred by class, race, and gender**, particularly in the creative and cultural sector. Scholars in this field have done much work in recent years to articulate the challenges of working in the creative and cultural sector without inherited wealth or capital. Mark Banks, noting the that conditions of creative labour are 'imposed, and potentially contestable' imagines the discourse that might lead to 'creative justice' (Banks, 2017: 127), while Animak Saha's work shows how cultural production and working conditions both contribute to discourse and politics around race (Saha, 2017).

Increasingly, academic understanding of work and labour is sector-specific, and attends carefully to what scholars in social sciences have called 'the new geography of skills' (Weise, Hanson, and Salehm, 2019). This work can help us identify the distinct and heterogeneous 'skills shapes' in a particular area, and give us the theoretical tools to take existing data to identify and map regional skills gaps. Academic research in the wake of Levelling Up agenda have noted the unequal distribution of economy activity across the UK's major towns and cities , and identified the need to kickstart growth in less prosperous towns in tandem with supporting

people with no or low qualifications (Magrini, 2020). There are a range of cross-disciplinary approaches to skills and training, from the neurological and cognitive processes involved in skills acquisition (Johnson and Proctor, 2017) to the new skills acquired by arts organisations and participants in community-based social impact work (Jackson and McManus, 2019).

The Skills Commision report 'England's Skills Puzzle' (2020) called for a 'long-term framework for skills and lifelong learning' supported through devolved powers and employer-led commissioning, noting the need for longitudinal planning. This paper set the groundwork for the government's Skills for Jobs White Paper in January 2021, and and marked the first time skills had been an explicit part of the Queen's Speech (the Education and Skills Bill was still being debated at the time of this report).The paper called for the founding of a new Skills and Productivity Board to provide expert advice to the government. Its vision of skills was employer-led, focusing on improved traineeships and access to apprenticeships, and emphasised post-16 qualifications alongside a 'flexible lifetime skills guarantee'.

These national policy interventions need to be read in a wider context of sector-specific and labour-focused evidence emerging over the last 12 months. With the skills debate a key part of government language, the pandemic prompted a range of policy reports and initiatives designed to address the acute challenges to work, education, and training, particularly during periods of national lockdown. The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) impact report for 2020 places emphasis on the need for **hyper-local and regional skills solutions to shortages in specific sectors**, care and nursing, and noted the increased need for reskilling and lifelong learning provision in the wake of the pandemic ('A Year to Remember'). While the need for distinct training and support for self-employed workers has been often outlined, particularly since austerity (Meager, Martin, and Carta, 2011), the key role of freelancers, part-time workers, and casual employers to a range of sectors was made clear

in the response to and feasibility of furlough schemes – an unaffiliated group of theatre freelancers published an ACE-funded report which detailed continuing problems with fair pay, employment status, working conditions, and talent development ('The Big Freelancer Report', 2020). This emphasis on skills and training has highlighted the importance of FE colleges in supporting unemployed people to retrain (Henehan and Hughes, 2020), and the power of regional college partnerships and education groups to deliver skills programmes tailored to a particular region.

Prior to the pandemic, NESTA noted the need for reskilling and further training to counterbalance challenges posed by changing labour markets and automation, outlining a skills manifesto to support those most at risk of losing their jobs in the coming decade ('Precarious to prepared', 2019). During our period of research, the Creative Industries PEC has offered a series of skills assessments, noting recurring challenges and skills mismatches in the creative industries sector for specialist 'create-tech' skills, as well as transferable skills such as 'time management, customer service, and people management' (Giles, Splisbury and Carey, 2020: 1). Its strand of work on social mobility in the creative economy has also noted the class crisis in the sector, which effectively excludes 250,000 working-class people from its growth (Carey, O'Brien and Gable, 2021: 2). In the wake of the Levelling Up agenda, recent policy work has noted the **need for better connections between HEIs and regional stakeholders:** Stuart and Shutt suggest 'a more permeable relationship between universities, their industrial partners, and the wider community will be more successful in developing skills that feed into productivity' (Stuart and Stutt, 2021: 53).
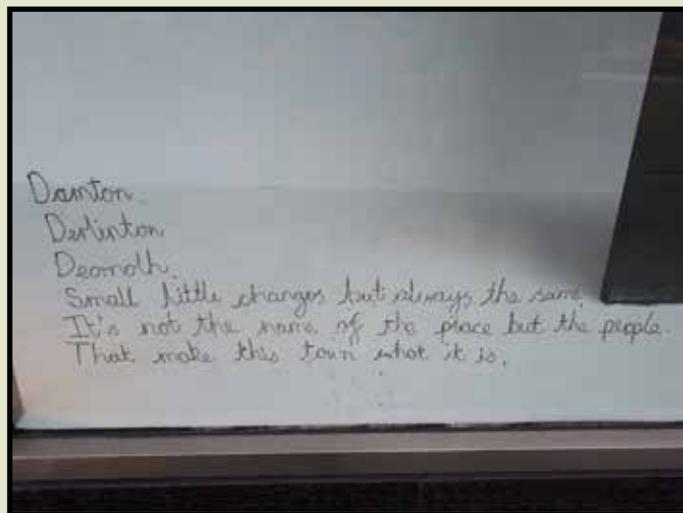
Photo: TCER team, 2021, Darlington poem in Cornerstone Arts window, Darlington

3.5 Research Review: Place and Place-making

Current research into place and place-making, together with work focused more specifically on towns and their regeneration and development, is found across a wide range of disciplines, as well as reports commissioned and produced by non-HEI agencies actively involved in place-based programmes. Existing research tends to be quite siloed within specific disciplines and fields, including archaeology, cultural, economic and historical geography, heritage studies, history, tourism studies, urban planning and design and more. There is also, in general, a striking divide between basic or pure primary research based in traditional disciplines (for example, research into the history of places), and more applied research, or research focused on policy and applied professional practice (for example, planning, conservation, heritage management, cultural policy), with relatively little confluence between the two. The potential risks and inadequacies of 'place-making' as external intervention into places and communities have recently received more sustained attention; initiatives including the UKRI-commissioned report on 'Achieving equity in place-based research, innovation and public engagement', from the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (2019), and the AHRC-led 'Connected Communities' cross-UKRI programme (Layard, Milling and Wakeford, 2019), as well as the RCUK/Innovate UK Urban Living Partnership, have emphasised the need for participatory work and co-production with local communities and 'citizen-centric' practice.

29

Uses of heritage in place-making and place development have been explored extensively in disciplines such as urban planning, heritage studies and geography, with the case for heritage-based regeneration also made in reports such as Historic England's Heritage: The Foundation for Success and its Places Strategy (2018). In their work on heritage as a catalyst for urban development, John Pendlebury and Heleni Porfyriou have invited attention to the ways in which 'regeneration' is often elided with 'economic development', describing this as 'an easy trap to fall into in a world where capital accumulation overrides most processes in most places', and instead calling for a more nuanced, locally-focused approach to placed heritage and place development, which examines the varied aspirations and objectives of stakeholders (Pendlebury and Porfyriou, 2017; Pendlebury, 2015). Links between historic environment and built heritage, 'sense of place' and social capital have been well explored (Graham, Mason and Newman, 2009), with 'sense of place' emerging as an area of lively scholarly interest across the humanities and both critical and creative approaches.

'Place attachment', as a concept which has moved from the social, psychological and behavioural sciences into the humanities, is increasingly associated by researchers with positive urban regeneration outcomes and sustainable places (for example, Ujang and Zakariya, 2015). Rebecca Madgin's 2021 report 'Why do Historic Places Matter? Emotional Attachment to Urban Heritage', emerging from AHRC-funded research, examines emotional responses to places, advancing the idea that historic urban places can be understood to have 'personalities', and analysing the 'emotional communities' which connect around these sites (Madgin, 2021). The report highlights the scope for further research into methodologies for accessing and measuring emotional experience, as well as the potential for including emotional attachment more rigorously in conversations around placemaking. Growing fields such as 'place writing', emerging at the intersection of humanities disciplines with creative practice, are offering new representational modes and 'unearthing or producing new data and


Photo: TCER team, 2021, Southend

perspectives' for understanding place (Cooper and Lichtenstein, 2020; Lichtenstein, 2020). Digital place-making continues to grow as an area of scholarly interest, with many innovative applied projects, often at a relatively small scale, coming from SMEs in the digital creative industries (for example, Calvium, Splash & Ripple), alongside larger-scale projects and research networks focused on 'Smart Cities' and new ways of understanding the public realm in an increasingly networked and digitally-mediated world (Willis, 2016). Across all these approaches to place and place-making, problems surface repeatedly around representation and inclusion: the often unmet imperative to co-create place-shaping projects with local people; the invisibility and erasure of particular communities (especially minoritised communities) in heritage interpretation, place-making and the scholarly literature around it; and the playing out of elite interests in place development, through gentrification, capital accumulation, heritage-washing and the promotion of often narrow, exclusionary narratives about place and identity.
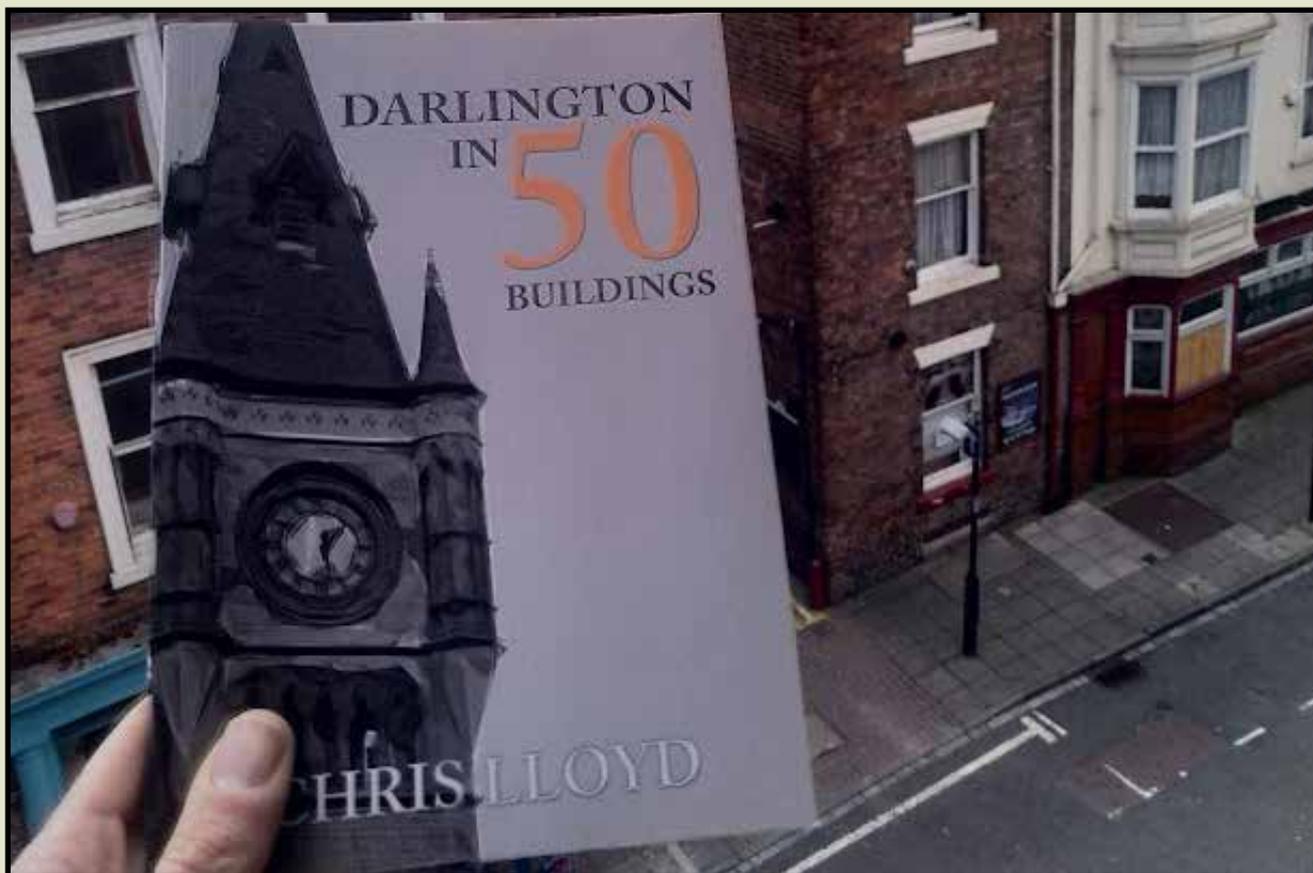
Photo: TCER team, 2021, Darlington in 50 Buildings by Chris Lloyd

3.6 Research Review: Local and Regional Studies

Local and regional studies, and research which seeks to theorise the diversity and specificity of places, their heritage, culture and potential, are also particularly relevant in the context of the localism agenda in current UK politics and policy, most visible in programmes such as the Towns Fund and Levelling Up. Regional studies, as a field which spans a wide range of disciplines, has long been recognised as having the capacity to offer 'empirically grounded and policy-sensitive research' (Pike, 2010: 1146), but much unrealised potential remains. In the UK, excellent traditions (including established university research centres) in local and regional studies are often grounded in the discipline of history, along with archaeology and landscape studies, but with less interdisciplinary reach beyond this. (Exceptions include the environment- and climate-focused work on sustainable regions in projects like the current 'Risky Cities', funded by the AHRC/UKRI and the UK Climate Resilience Programme, and the Leverhulme Trust-funded

'Flood and Flow' project at the University of Leicester, 2016-18.) Local and regional studies in the UK have tended to be historically-focused, rather than future-oriented and policy focused with some exceptions. Local studies are also an area where immense knowledge capital and hugely valuable networks exist outside of HEIs, IROs and professional organisations, through local and community history groups (such as local historical and archaeological societies), volunteers and expert 'amateurs'. These knowledge assets and capabilities are currently under-exploited in academic (for example HEI-based and/or UKRI-funded) research. The status of, and investment in, local and regional studies has also been negatively impacted by reductions in local government funding (reduced resources for local archives and formerly council-funded local history initiatives) and in HEIs by the perceived incentives or disincentives stemming from REF research output evaluation, and the imperative to publish in major, internationally-facing (i.e. not 'local' or 'regional') contexts. Yet local studies advance research insights and evidence crucial for place development within locally-inflected policies and agendas.

4

Characteristics of Intervention Needed

This section summarises the findings from our field research and survey work, then offers suggested interventions and priorities across the key research strands of our scoping project.

4.1 Survey, Interview and Focus Group Findings

The final question in our Towns Board Survey asked respondents to give three words that would describe the towns, had their plans come to fruition. The limited responses ('vibrant' and 'creative' made up nearly 50% of responses, Fig. 1) suggests that while existing research and our own scoping project has revealed the **complex heterogenity** of towns that there is a narrow collective capacity to imagine renewal or transformation. Place-based work in arts and humanities has a vital role in expanding our sense of what is possible for the imagining the future of towns.

This narrowness was differently reflected in the demographic of the boards, raising questions of **EDI in public consultation**: while most survey respondents articulated various processes of online community consultation, notwithstanding the challenges of lockdown, Town Deal Board members were the ultimate decision makers and survey respondents were old(er) and racially homogeneous (white). The

majority of Town Deal Board members who answered our survey were over 50 years of age (with the next largest group being over 60). Only 2 respondents answered that they were white (not British) and 1 that they were 'any other ethnic group'; all other respondents identified as white British. Only 3 survey respondents had lower than degree level education, and 60% identified as male. This lack of diversity is reflected in perceptions about wider consultation, too: when asked to identify any groups that had not been consulted for their TIPs, the majority of respondents could not identify a specific group. Those that could identify a group tended to mitigate their responses (e.g. 'it is difficult to engage with the poorer groups because they don't relate to much').

The Town Deal Boards who responded to our survey recognised the primary aims of the Towns Fund investment as economic diversification (30 respondents) and increasing digital opportunities (26 respondents). Others include increasing tourism; active travel; clean growth and net zero; and rail infrastructure.

Fig. 1 Word cloud based on Towns Board Survey

Other answers included: Residential, arts, 'experience' and cultural investment; Skills, infrastructure; Social inclusion; Wellbeing and healthy living; Inclusive growth and pride in place; Youth priorities / provision

Our survey revealed the **long-term impact of austerity** in local funding: respondents who expressed doubts about the capacity of the councils to deliver the TIPs noted 'local authority budgets under strain have led to staff cuts in the past', and 38% noted there was now a capacity issue. Those more confident about delivery saw themselves as exceptional ('we went above and beyond', 'it will be delivered because we are prepared to employ specialised people'). Despite this legacy, some respondents expected the free market to stand in for the lack of infrastructre ('investment flows in and you've created the catalyst and you let the happy world of capitalism do the rest').

Our research found that many towns—and organisations within towns—do not have the same capacities to respond effectively to competitive, place-based funding processes. This issue was understood by our respondents in distinct, though at times intersecting ways, with convergences that were sometimes the source of institutional or localised tension. It should be noted here that these are issues well known to scholars of localism (eg. Wills, 2016; Brownill and Bradley, 2017)—where the political ideology of 'Big Society' is often in conflict with municipalism.

Responses to our scoping questions identified important **disparities in material resources and capacities** between different local authorities and towns. While larger authorities and organisations have established agile **'project pipelines'** that strengthen their 'bidding capital', smaller and less well-resourced areas struggle to meet the same demands. In a focus group with members from the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA), the phrase 'shovel ready' was used: a well-known expression that signifies projects that are ready for delivery yet 'shelved', ready to be instigated quickly should the appropriate funding opportunity arise. Developing 'shovel ready' projects requires a certain amount of foresight

to predict the emerging funding landscape, as well as up-to-date understanding of needs and developments on the ground in order for the project to retain relevance. Some respondents, especially those in smaller authorities, considered the process to be a waste of limited resources, further impeding their increasingly reduced capacity to deliver basic services. Indeed, one respondent suggested responding to these schemes was a 'headache'.

In a local government context, 'shovel ready' usually refers to 'hard' infrastructure. When a respondent from a larger metropolitan authority used the term 'curtain ready' in relation to cultural (and specifically theatre) projects, others in the group gasped in mock amazement and disbelief. Such language, they said, was unthinkable for them, and that (in their eyes) only metropolitan authorities have the material resources and infrastructure to develop and 'shelve' cultural (and especially theatre based) projects. Compounding these frustrations are long (and not so long) institutional memories— with respondents referring to the loss over time of significant cultural assets (such as libraries, galleries, theatres and arts centres), dedicated cultural departments (and budgets) and ultimately of experienced and skilled arts, culture and heritage specialists. Indeed, in response to the 'curtain ready' comment, one participant from a smaller authority said 'I remember when we used to be able to say that'.

Photo: TCER team, 2021, Enjoy Darlington visitor map

Photo: Michelle Rumney, 2021, *The Ragged Map* artwork for TCER Being Human Festival in Boscombe Royal Arcade by Michelle Rumney

At the same time, several respondents from local cultural organisations, as well as freelance cultural workers, understood some local decision makers as 'lacking imagination'. In some cases, it appeared that lack of material capacities was less of an issue than lack of vision and **capacity to imagine**. There is perhaps a knowledge and skills gap in some local authorities where budget holders lack expertise relating to their portfolio: in some cases basic information such as freelance contract processes, working practices (such as the need for appropriate studio space and equipment), and going rates of pay was unknown. Further, rigid decision-making processes – often through the same gatekeepers – entrench senses of disenfranchisement amongst the local cultural sector, particularly amongst freelance workers. This criticism was not isolated within municipal settings: of their entire Town Deal Board, one survey respondent noted 'a poor governance structure and a lack of strategic think[ing]'.

The distinctive character of each town and its wider resources was further emphasised by the particular demarcations of local authority spend (e.g. Darlington within the Tees Valley), and the regional frameworks for link organisations or national funders (e.g. Arts Council England's spread of regional officers).

While the majority of respondents saw culture as key in regenerating their towns, and had made them central to the TIPs, when we asked what they would have personally prioritised, skills and training was the most popular. However, many councillors did not see how to fund skills successfully, other than 'pottering about with work placements'. The inability to find 'shovel-ready' skills projects for the majority of respondents suggests that more work is needed **linking cultural participation to skills development.**

In general, our research discovered **little evidence of networking either internationally, or across regions.** While organisations such as CLOA provide support and guidance to councils and local authorities, and national networked initiatives such as CPPs (Creative People & Places) share action-led research between regions, the demise of organisations such NALGA (National Association of Local Government Authorities) has left many councils and authorities with less collective experience, and fewer resources and support. Responsive-mode support for strategic funding initiatives such as the Towns Fund is significant, but not sustained.

There was **limited evidence of local authorities benefitting from HEIs**, and the Boards in our survey noted that published academic research was less likely to evidence decision-making process than external consultants, local consultations, or the Towns Fund website. There was little evidence of involvement in international networks for public sector innovation *(e.g. https:// creativebureaucracy.org/).*

Photo: TCER team, 2021, Herefordshire Council Information Point, Hereford City Centre

4.2 Experiential Data Findings

As part of our scoping research, we visited cultural organisations and communities in all four towns, and ran online workshops with a variety of stakeholders, ranging from representatives of volunteer organisations and charities, to council employees, to local artists and freelancers. Our findings suggest that demographic data about towns can be an uneven guide to the **complex and nested capacities and inequalities in specific towns**. What one councillor described as the 'surprise of being looked at from the outside' during one workshop can register as suspicion, delight, or a strategic opportunity depending on the cultural capital and confidence of a particular community.

The radical differences between our case study towns was shown in the spirit of the online workshops: while one council member in Hereford used the opportunity to imagine what a Time Bank would look like for their town, a senior officer in Darlington noted the virtue of offering recognised outcomes for the community that couldn't be gainsaid (e.g. lighting the town's clock tower). While one community will come together to develop their conceptual collective imaginary, another may carry the collective scars of austerity and political disappointment, knowing the importance of **mapping what is promised to what can be delivered.**

A complex mixture of short and long-term challenges besets towns: the short-termism of community renewal funding versus the long-term legacies of funding being withdrawn plays out in particular ways in areas with less job mobility. As a consultant at WorkAdvance noted, 'government funding comes with a memory', and funding can often retrench thinking. Relationship breakdowns between particular individuals or council leaders can have impacts on the cultural activities within a town over a generation, and create complex algorithms of interconnectivity. In towns with a hollowed-out private sector, people working in cultural organisations are more likey to be paid council employees, forming difficult webs of loyalty and stifling the space to question or critique.

Challenges of connectivity expressed themselves through community striation as much as isolation. One representative of a cultural organisation in Bournemouth noted 'we don't know much about the impact of COVID-19 on 18–25s', while an FE teacher in the same town noted his students 'didn't know how much Bournemouth had to offer'. Meanwhile, the director of a children's theatre was keenly aware of the impact that lockdown closure was having on the mental health outcomes of infants and young parents in the local area, but data was only connected on cultural interventions, not their absence.

During our visits and in workshops, participants used language that downplayed socio-economic difference or the legacies of long-term funding benefits (e.g. Great Place Scheme in Hereford). In its place, towns benefitting from sustained funding had 'doers' and 'trailblazers', personal traits accounting for their civic success. The heterogeneity of towns can produce similar behaviour or traits despite markedly different impulses: what is earned autonomy in one town, leading to more opportunities and funding, is a lack of confidence in asking for external help in another.

Our field trips showed that towns with a single story or narrative about themselves struggled to imagine the futures in multiple or plural ways. This was observed both from the staging or preserving of cultural assets (e.g. fencing off a tourist attraction in one town to prevent the local community from trespassing), or the inability of a single story to absorb, contain and hold the lived experience of diverse communities. To better understand our places and include more people in decisions about their future, we will also need to expand our range of stories about them.

4.3. Needs: Skills and Training

A key priority research in this area is in mapping and evaluation, particularly a need for **longitudinal work**. Our interviews uncovered challenges in: mapping a region's skills needs or gaps; understanding how skills were acquired; developing strategies for retaining skilled workers; evaluating the impact of apprenticeship schemes; or securing sustained investment for training or skills beyond responsive-mode funding. Shaping and interpreting this data effectively calls for cross-disciplinary approaches, and closer attention to the **complex heterogeneity of towns.**

As funding and cultural spend is devolved, and in the context of a decade of austerity, councillors, arts organisations, and local authorities would benefit from **more opportunities and R&D funding to develop their own skills and expertise:** arts and humanities researchers can support this through brokering strategic partnerships across regions or areas, setting up mentoring or training schemes to offset the uneven spread of bidding capital, or by offering training or bespoke support to local authorities. The Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University has set up a High Street Task Force, offering to connect regional expertise with mentors and facilitators across the country. By establishing new relationships between local authorities and professional bodies (eg. Royal Town Planning Institute), it offers a **distinct model for bringing HEIs into dialogue with external partners to address skills challenges,** and these should be a key focus of research.

Our desk research and interviews frequently uncovered a skills mismatch between the types of skills and training on offer in a town, and competing strategies for retaining, attracting, or skilled worked or particular demographics. This is particularly true of creative skills, which are prized by employers across sectors and industries, and a priority in the government's plan for growth and sector deals, but afforded less provision in regional initiatives such as the Towns Fund, with data cuts for creative skills not prioritised. Arts and humanities researchers
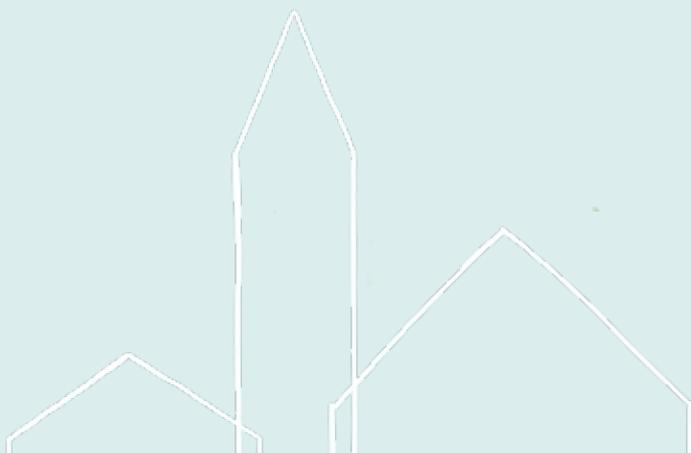
can play a key role here through engaging young people and hard-to-reach communities with local skills strategies and decision-making, **co-developing models of community consultation more attentive to EDI issues,** and through further research work into the economic and social benefits on developing creative skills.

Over a third of participants we surveyed from the Towns Board named skills and training as the area where they would have personally spent the Towns Fund investment, and 96% saw cultural and creative activity as key to developing life-long skills. However, a repeated frustration voiced from councils, freelancers, and national organisations during our interviews was the need for a greater evidence base for skills acquisition through cultural engagement, voluntary work, or informal 'on-the-job' training: substantial anecdotal evidence for its success would not be met by government recognition or support without **more substantial, longitudinal evidence**. This is echoed in the academic literature, with a report by the National Foundation for Educational Research noting how requirements for 'off-the-job' training saw an increasing decline based on the apprenticeships on offer (Julius, Faulkner-Ellis, O'Donnell, 2021). More interdisciplinary work across arts, humanities, and social sciences, including increasing support for Knowledge Exchange, would help contribute to a better collective understanding of skills development.

Our research uncovered the lack of support from or partnership working with HEIs across many towns in England, with **interconnectivity a key differential between towns.** When this was in place, it was limited to a narrow set of disciplines or departments. National policy reports have noted the frequent exclusion of arts, humanities and social sciences R&D from national definitions of R&D, cutting off the benefits of arts and humanities research to the wider economy, and businesses looking to increase their R&D spend by working with HEIs (Bakhshi, Brekcon, and Puttick, 2021). A key area for development would **be broadening the national definition of R&D to specifically include arts and humanities**, permitting sectors to engage e.g. with recent

work on narrative and story-telling in business (Robson, Holgate, Randhawa, 2021), or models for leadership and development emerging from cross-disciplinary work.

The Levelling Up agenda places significant emphasis on **affect and emotional governance**, focusing on the feeling of 'pride' prompted by regeneration. Recent work on cultural work and emotional labour is significant and underexplored, with cultural workers often required to perform emotional labour in the face of 'precarious and uncertain funding incomes' (Ashton, 2021).

Photo: TCER team, 2021, Maylord Shopping Centre, Hereford

4.4 Needs: Place-shaping and place-based research

Further research is still needed into towns, addressing the previous neglect of towns (as opposed to cities) in scholarship; in particular, **further work on typologies of towns** and understanding the characteristics and needs of different towns and regions, exploration of new vocabularies for describing, representing and mapping towns and regions, and, perhaps, particular attention to towns within the gravitational field of large cities, but not themselves regional hubs (for example, Darlington in relation to Newcastle; Southend in relation to London), or suburban and peripheral areas whose identity is often subsumed and erased by a larger conurbation (for example, Boscombe and Pokesdown in Bournemouth). This scoping project has underlined the pressing need for **research and analysis at the hyper-local level**, and the crucial importance of understanding micro-places (place at the most granular level of specific wards, neighbourhoods, streets and postcodes) in regional development. Engagement with the towns has also highlighted the importance of 'deep hanging out', or sustained, locally-embedded co-production and partnership. In the wake of COVID-19 and creative new approaches to online engagement, there are opportunities now to explore and pilot modes of **virtual or digital 'deep hanging out'**, alongside real-world placements.

For towns and their communities, metrics and evidence for place-based regeneration and development are most valuable if they are as locally-focused and granular as possible, linked to relevant local aims and indicators; however, at a national level, funding agencies and government need generalised data which can be aggregated and compared at across regions. New research, across and

beyond the arts and humanities, could help to bridge this disconnection, and imagine and develop new and more flexible idioms for **translating between local and national objectives and indices**. Localism and regional development agendas and goals will need to be informed by high-quality **local and regional studies research**. There is a timely and compelling opportunity here to pivot excellence in local and regional studies (especially in history and archaeology, as well as interdisciplinary research) to address policy and future development.

Funded mechanisms for partnership working between HEIs / IROs and local and community history groups (historical and archaeological societies, expertise in museums and archives, local records series etc) could realise the value of existing knowledge assets and networks in new ways, to address regional development challenges. More broadly, there remains a need for projects which model genuine **co-production and co-creation with local communities in place-shaping** programmes, and, more especially, a need to **involve more diverse constituencies** (in terms of age, ethnicity, social demographic) in 'citizen place-making'. There is also scope for

Photo: TCER team, 2021, Adventure Island, Southend

further research into **emotional attachment to place and heritage**, and more robust inclusion of this in placemaking policy. Across the Towns Fund 'Town Improvement Plans', and with closer attention to the four project case-study towns, it is clear that notions of heritage, place and place development are overwhelmingly determined by surviving built heritage in the urban environment, even where that is very fragmentary, partial or degraded, and often hinge on a single, often one-dimensional, narrative of history and identity.

New engaged research into **digital place-making and digital place interpretation**, intersecting with current 'Smart Cities' research and development, would help to expand place-shaping strategies beyond the literal and material, moving beyond the limitations and vagaries of surviving tangible heritage, and enabling more diverse, multi-layered, and inclusive stories to be told. Funding to bring together pioneering digital place-making practice in the digital creative industries with academic researchers and communities would kickstart innovation. Fundamentally, there is a need for **greater interdisciplinary work on place and place-making**, across academic fields in the arts and humanities and beyond, and for **more research which bridges the 'pure' and applied divide.**

4.5 Needs: Local Economies

Our work with these local economies suggested the need for further arts and humanities research that can explore the cultural, political and social constructedness of the money form itself. There was a clear gap between aspirations toward what a local currency could achieve— in terms of developing environmental, inclusive and resilient communities—and community's ability to achieve it. In each of our case study towns we found that there was a desire for local currencies but that the structures for supporting them were too precarious and fragmented for them to register as little more than failed experiments.

We found, for example, that where these local currencies do thrive (Southend's established time banks) they do important work in sustaining inclusive communities and developing skills. They usually survive because they are part of well-resourced broader community projects and are able to translate their activities in familiar economic terms (the time bank is part of a volunteering network). However, more ambitious attempts for local currencies (such as the Southend 'Pier'), that aim to challenge the status quo and provide more radical economic alternatives, have rapidly foundered and leave little trace. Even when

LETS are more successful, such as the South West Dorset Lets that has over 200 active members and has been established for over 20 years, it is clear that there is an ongoing struggle for participants to understand alternative economic models they require.

We found a need, given the recurrent aspiration for these currencies and the clearly positive community-based actions that they bring about, to embed them in **stronger economic literacies**—around what money is and how money is made—in order that the trust and confidence in these systems can be built. We think that **linking national interventions and debates (such as those led by the Positive Money movement and by Young Money educational charities) to local and placed-based debates about money** would be very valuable. We also think that the arts and humanities community has much that it can contribute to the re-formulation of financial literacy. Although financial literacy is on the national agenda, and Young Money successfully lobbied for it to be included in the national curriculum, at present it is focused on 'practical' knowledge (how to understand interest rates, for example) and much more could be done to broaden the debates to **include arts and humanities approaches to the cultural contexts and implications of money as a form of 'commons'** that we can be more engaged in operating. The role of history, language, identity and politics in creating these local and imaginary possibilities would be very valuable.

The other ways in which the aspiration for a local economic system was present in our study was through a number of 'shop local' movements that allied consumerism with place attachment and gained renewed traction in towns as they emerged from lockdown. These have a long history in our case studies: Christchurch's 'Totally Local' movement, for example, encouraged consumers to ensure that they spent at least £5 in locally-owned shops each week with the aim of providing a 'boost to the town – to the value of £8.2million' that 'could help ensure its survival.' This focus on the local, and a sense of the precarity of town's high streets, was starkly apparent as we completed our field work in the summer of 2021 and the effects of lockdown and Brexit were evident. It was in the 'creative repurposing' of emptied high street shops that we found some of the most vibrant form of alternative economies. Some were operating on a self-consciously large scale:

the site of Bournemouth's closed Debenhams has been reborn as the art gallery GIANT and exhibited internationally significant artists to widespread national attention and reviews.

Yet we also found newer opportunities for understanding the role of the creative industries in these towns that have yet to be fully explored. In each town a complex combination of some funding (ACE or local authority), very low rents (either peppercorn or no rent at all) and an enterprising mentality (practitioners selling art work, renting out studio space and equipment, offering workshops and training) had allowed for a 'community takeover' of a former retail space. These spaces —the Powerhouse in Hereford, Creative Kids in Bournemouth, Toma in Southend—were all active, inclusive and generative. In our conversations with their members it was also very clear that they were aware of their importance to the community and of their precarity and this was something that was widely discussed in our workshops. It was also notable that these ventures felt threatened by gentrification, especially when it was reliant on residential real estate development, in ways that are historically familiar to larger cities. **We advocate for arts and humanities research on the creative repurposing of these assets, that better understood their contribution to community well-being, to sense of place, to intergenerational community building, to retention.**

4.6 Needs: Local Governance, Consultation and Connectivity

We suggests that solutions to challenges in local consultation, governance and development require **new networks and connections** between places and people, and between HEIs and regional and civic decision-makers across the UK. In particular, there is no existing mechanism or network for towns to **benefit from or commission university research**: this would be of significant value, especially in towns without a local HEI provider or anchor

institution. Funding initiatives such as the Towns Fund often operate on compressed timescales and demand rapid visioning and planning: this is another area where further funding and support would allow decision-makers in towns to benefit from the various expertise dispersed across the UK. **Academic partnerships with local authorities** could meet the needs of the Levelling Up agenda and local development by working alongside and/ or within—and in a sustained way, thereby helping to develop capacity and bidding capital and support more effective approaches to place-based funding opportunities. There is also potential for far **greater connectivity and sharing of experiences and best practice** across local authorities and towns across the UK: there is currently a lack of mechanisms for sharing insights and learnings.

There are also opportunities to develop understanding of local consultation and governance, especially in the context of regeneration, by drawing on international models and comparators – particularly necessary given the paucity of work on towns and regeneration as a whole. The majority of research on regeneration has looked at urban areas, whether focused on the UK (Paddison and Miles 2007; Kennedy 2004) or internationally (Son 2021; Morato and Zarlenga 2018). Where non-urban spaces have been included, they have been figured as part of a rural-urban relationship (Sirayi, Kanyane, Verdini, 2021) or as part of the process of suburbanization (Freestone, Randolph, and Pinnegar, 2018). While there is existing research
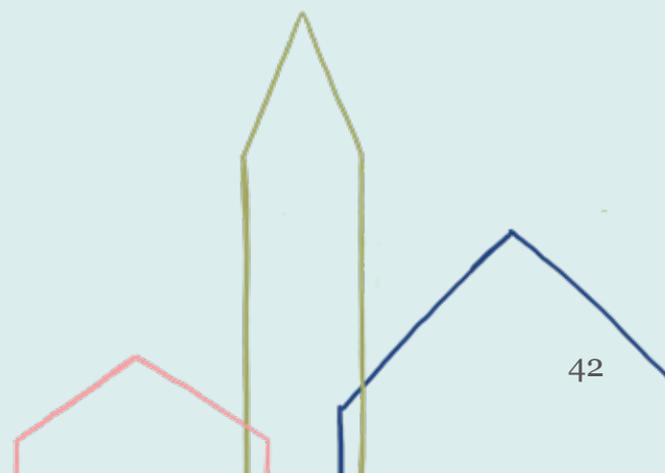
on the development of Britain's new towns (Alexander 2009), and recent approaches which connect planning initiatives in Britain's towns and cities (Ferm and Tomaney, 2018), there is little existing research plotting the typology, particularity and variety of Britain's towns and their distinct needs.

While theoretical models and paradigms for both place-making and the economic humanities are often global in outlook, UK HEIs have world-leading expertise in place-making, the economic humanities, and skills and training infrastructure, suggesting arts and humanities scholars from the UK are well-placed to shape new work in the field and to contribute to the research area. While our literature review looks at each topic area discretely, researchers have also explored the interconnections between each area, from the interrelations between place-making, networking and politics (Pierce, Martin and Murphy, 2010), to economic development strategies focused on place (Kelly, Ruther, Ehresman and Nickerson, 2016), to the global challenges for cultural and creative sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020).

Further, post-Brexit, it is important for the UK to continue to look outward, with many local government participants expressing the desire for **relevant research from beyond our national borders**. To this end, we suggest pursuing involvement with the Festival of Creative Bureaucracy – an international collaboration based in Berlin – which seeks to support imaginative, adaptive, agile, accountable and trustworthy public administrations. It brings together 'creative bureaucrats' at all levels of career and governance, to support the idea of positively transforming public institutions.

We suggest that **longer-term research partnerships which might include 'embedded' or 'researcher in residence' workstreams** would enhance participation and understanding. Indeed, we see this trend emerging elsewhere through initiatives such as https://theideasfund.org/   https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/collaborate-fund/ and DCMS policy internships with postgraduate researchers (Digital Skills Internships scheme).

Our research supports Belfiore's (2021) conclusion that 'in the move towards a supposedly 'evidence-based' cultural policy, 'evidence' is rarely the main driver of decision-making' and that this field of inquiry would benefit from more engagement with policy theory to understand the **role that ideas and values have in shaping policy**, as well as skills such as persuasion and argumentation, and charismatic leadership.

4.7 Needs: Affect, Participation and Place

The 2021 Levelling Up prospectus emphasises the political value of emotion. We have found these concepts reflected in the ways in which towns understood themselves and their cultural strategies. Our findings would suggest that we should pay close attention to these **affective dynamics of policies** which are built on the promise of 'regeneration' and 'recovery'. Civic pride in particular, is increasingly present within the policies of UK local governments which are seeking new ways to re-animate declining high streets, attract inward economic investment and boost their tourist industries, often through the incorporation of celebratory cultural programming (Boyle, 1997; García, 2004; Wood, 2006; Boland, 2010; Duchêne, 2012; Shapely, 2012; Evans, 2016; Collins 2017). We suggest that **examining civic pride with greater nuance** and a more robust critical lens will make an important intervention.

More robust, qualitative social impact frameworks are required by many organisations and local authorities, yet most do not have the capacities or resources to support their development. Further, cultural agencies, such as Historic England, are seeking new ways to evidence the impacts of their investments in ways that can both contribute to, and complement, the econometric approaches currently being developed by central Government (e.g. DCMS' recent work to establish a cultural and heritage capital framework that can function as a counterpart to the success of the natural capital framework).

They have told us that more specific yet transferable languages and metrics are required that can help them develop frameworks for civic pride measurement (and other indicators of place attachment) beyond the limited understandings and uses that currently exist.

Further, if such schemes are successful in harnessing senses of civic optimism in areas targeted for Levelling Up funds, what might happen to political participation and other forms of civic engagement? **Practical and appropriately resourced solutions to increase and strengthen grassroots activity and social infrastructure** are vital for sustainable community development and enhancing civic life (Klinenberg, 2018; Hopkins, 2020), and a critical public sphere is vital in a representative democracy for holding decision makers to account. There was a suspicion expressed amongst some of our respondents that the rhetoric of hope and pride through Levelling Up suggests that changing feelings is higher on the policy agenda than instituting meaningful, lasting material change through effective policies of (for example) increasing local empowerment and fiscal redistribution. The central place of affect, emotion and feeling in the Levelling Up agenda, in the emerging academic understanding of place attachment, and in the practical, lived experience of local development and regeneration underlines the vital need for further research on **capturing, representing and measuring affective responses** to place.

Photo: TCER team, 2021, Darlington workshop artefact

5.8 Needs: Role of creative methodologies

Our creative workshops and collaborations, together with the further suite of activities as part of the Being Human Festival of the Humanities, have underlined the value of creative methodologies in opening up alternative spaces, modes and idioms for engagement and expression, adjacent to but distinct from structures and discourses of policy and governance. Facilitated creative activities are vital not only in allowing for a range of voices across the community to engage with each other (outside of normal hierarchies), but also in their capacity to allow researchers to see in 'real time' how relationships and cultural ecologies operate in each place. Such methodologies and their inductive toolkits can allow the researcher to remain alert to (and to support) non-traditional, relational assets such as (though not limited to) experience, networks, ideas, innovation and creativity (Crossick, 2009).

How would you rate the quality of art & culture in Southend?

How would you rate the quality of art and culture being created in Southend-on-Sea?

3.33
Avg. Response

15
Responses
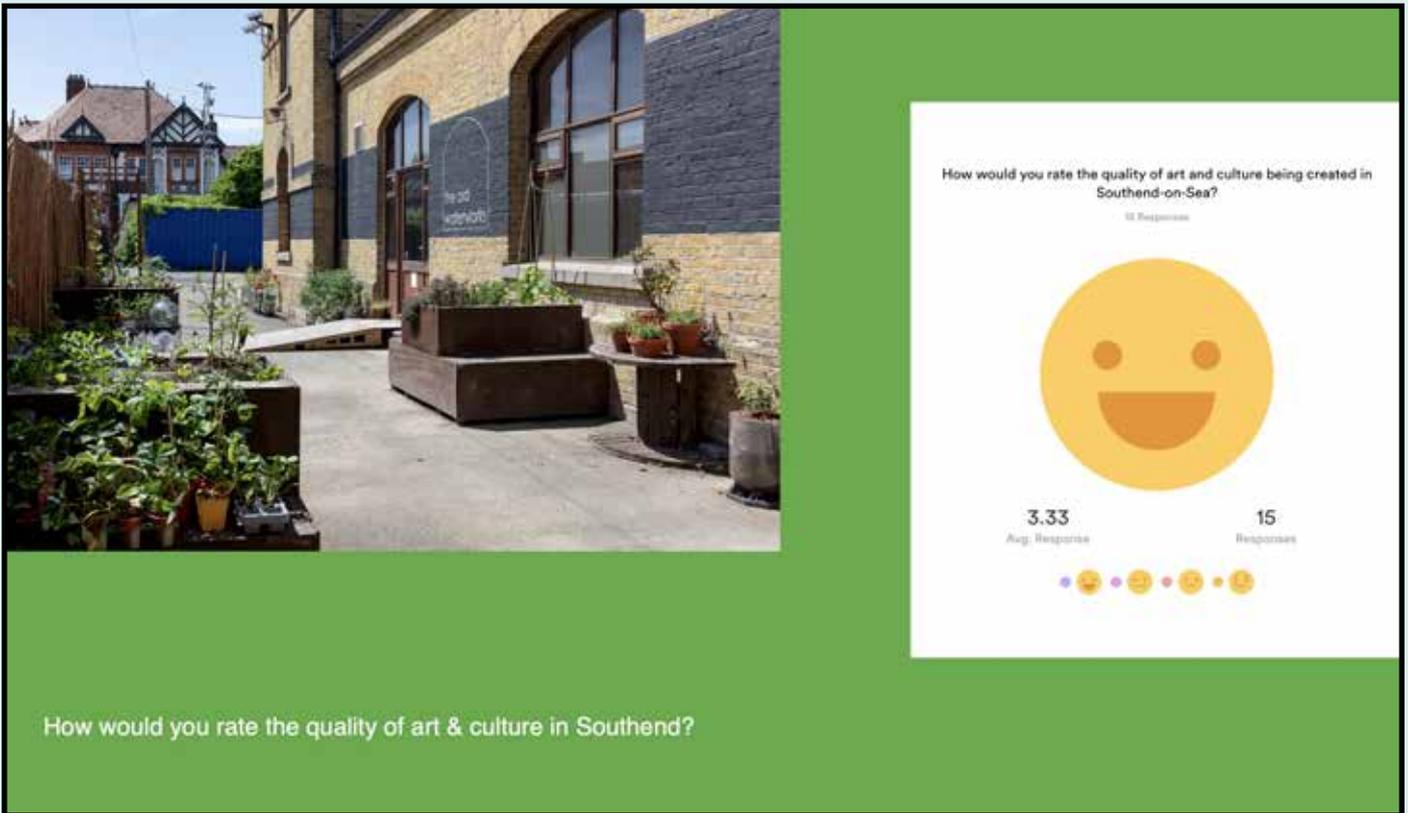
Photo: Still from TCER Southend workshop. Image is of the Old Waterworks garden

Creative methodologies can also help to open up richer vocabularies and imaginaries for places and their futures. Town Investment Plans and policy conversations tend to reflect a narrow vocabulary for conceptualising regeneration and flourishing places. Creative practice can help those involved in consultation and policy-formation explore richer, more nuanced vocabularies for their place and its possibilities, as well as freer, more open-ended (and potentially more ambitious) ways of imagining the future. Creative methodologies enlarge capabilities for imagining futures, developing and evaluating policy and engaging multiple perspectives and stakeholders. They present an important tool for moving from consultation towards genuine co-production with local communities and participation in place development and policy.

The move to predominantly digital engagement over the course of this project, necessitated by COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing, has raised further opportunities, challenges and needs. There is potential for consolidated research into practices of Cultural Animation (Kelemen et al, 2018), co-production and creative activities via digital channels, and analysis of what works successfully in virtual and online settings. This will inform and help to develop future methodologies and best practice, with the move to (or increased use of) online and digital platforms for engagement surely a significant change for the future.

Recommendations

Priority One: Leadership on Towns and the Local

There is insufficient academic research on understanding towns, the local, and the needs of towns in relation to arts, heritage and culture. Although there is extraordinary innovation, creativity and entrepreneurialism within towns, there is also a lack of capacity to address these issues systematically and independently. Our priority recommendation supports a **large-scale programme** anchored in a cross-council research centre. **This is an urgent priority because of the current political discourse on culture and place.**

It could:

»Coordinate projects **that could explore the connections between culture and the pressing issues facing so-called 'left behind towns',** including health and wellbeing, digital literacy, alternative models for economic regeneration, education and skills, social and regional connectivity.

»Support case-study projects enabling a fuller, evidence-based understanding of the varied and distinctive cultural identities and capacities of a range of towns and local regions across the UK.

»Develop **typologies for towns** and local cultural economies that could radically **change and disrupt** the ways in which we understand both their needs and their possibilities.

»Develop mechanisms for producing **longitudinal research, for sharing best and innovative practice, for including diverse participants, and for mapping existing resources** across towns in ways that can extend beyond cliff-edge funding. We propose that research councils work with national organisations and partners (such as ACE, Historic England, CLOA) to develop these resources.

»Make better connections between **local, national and international debates and models.**

»**Advocate for the role of the arts and humanities in R&D local funding**. Our scoping report has highlighted the missed funding opportunities for UK researchers, local authorities, and cultural, community and heritage organisations by the continued absence of arts and humanities in national definitions of R&D. In particular, this has a negative impact on the cultural and creative industries, SMEs, and local authority capacity. We would recommend the presence of a research centre that could address this challenge.

Priority Two: Place Fellowships / Knowledge Transfer Scheme

We are proposing a series of 12–18 month fellowships that could allow academics to work with local authorities and arts, heritage and culture organisations, particularly those outside of metropolitan areas and not readily served by existing HEIs/IROs. We advocate a programme of Fellowships that can directly enable knowledge exchange and partnership development and overcome **existing siloes between conventional scholarly research (e.g. historians), applied research (e.g. urban planning) and community practitioners (e.g. arts organisers)**. This could include local placements/ secondments/ fellowships/ embedded or shared positions. We recommend that these include academics at all career-stages, from doctoral researchers to senior academics.

Priority Three: Developing skills and training within the community

We recommend building reflection and evaluation around skills into many more of its programmes, especially those that are place-based. The emerging skills agenda suggests that there is insufficient understanding of **on-the-job training** or **skills development through placements and volunteers.**
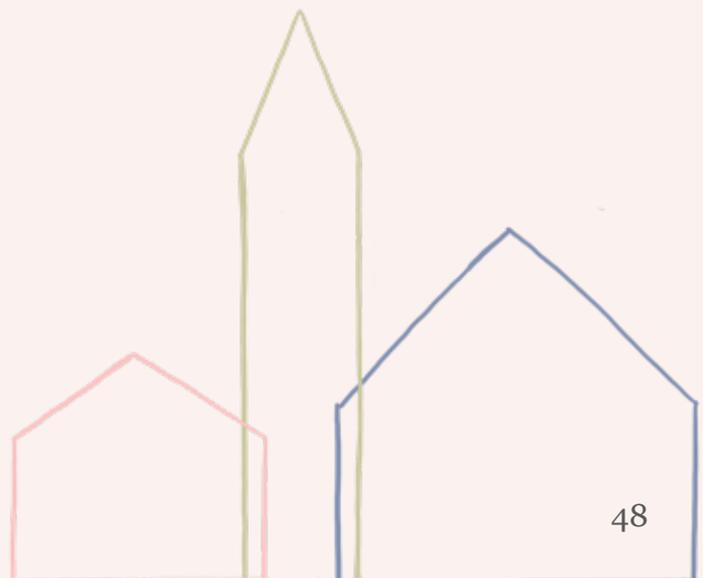
Bibliography

Alexander, A. (2009) Britain's New Towns: Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities. Abingdon: Routledge.

Arnstein, S. (1969) The ladder of citizen participation. Journal of the Institute of American Planners, 35(4), 216-24.

Ashton, D. (2021) Cultural organisations and the emotional labour of becoming entrepreneurial. Poetics, 86.101534.

Banks, M. (2017) Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bakhshi, H., Breckon J. and Puttick J. (2021) Understanding R&D in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Journal of the British Academy, 9, 115-45.

Belfiore, E. (2011) The 'transformative power' of the arts, The Routledge international handbook of creative learning. London: Routledge.

Belfiore, E. (2021) Is it really about the evidence? Argument, persuasion, and the power of ideas in cultural policy. Cultural Trends, 1-18.

Bell, D. and Jayne, M. (2006) Small cities : urban experience beyond the metropolis. Abingdon, UK; New York: Routledge.

Bell, D. and Jayne, M. (2009) Small cities? Towards a research agenda. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 33(3), 683-699.

Bell, D. and Oakley, K. (2015) Cultural policy. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bianchini, F. (2006) European urban mindscapes: Concepts, cultural representations and policy applications, in Weiss-Sussex, G. and Bianchini, F. (eds), Urban mindscapes of Europe. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Bianchini, F., Dawson, J. and Evans, R. (1992) Flagship projects in urban regeneration, in P. Healey, S. Davoudi and Toole, M. O. (eds), Rebuilding the city. London: Spon Ltd, 134-153.

Blomley, N. (2007) Critical geography: anger and hope. Progress in Human Geography, 31(1), 53-65.

Boland, P. (2010) 'Capital of Culture—you must be having a laugh!' Challenging the official rhetoric of Liverpool as the 2008 European cultural capital. Social & Cultural Geography, 11, 627-645.

Boyle D. (1999) Funny Money: In Search of Alternative Cash. London: Harper Collins.

Boyle, M. (1997) Civic boosterism in the politics of local economic development – 'institutional positions' and 'strategic orientations' in the consumption of hallmark events. Environment and Planning, 29(11), 1975–1997.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101.

Brownill, S. and Bradley, Q. (2017) Localism and Neighbourhood Planning: Power to the People? Bristol: Policy Press.

Bruner, J. (1987). Creative places: Growing the creative industries across the UK. Creative industries Policy and Evidence Centre, Available from: https://pec.ac.uk/policy-briefings/resilience-in-places-growing-the-creative-industries-across-the-uk [Accessed 7 November 2022]

Cameron, S. and Coaffee, J. O. N. (2005) Art, gentrification and regeneration –
from artist as pioneer to public arts. European Journal of Housing Policy, 5(1), 39-58.

Carey, H. and O'Brien, D, Gable, O', (2021) 'Social mobility in the creative economy: Rebuilding and
levelling up?', Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, (https://www.pec.ac.uk/research-reports/
social-mobility-in-the-creative-economy-rebuilding-and-levelling-up)
[Accessed 7 November 2022]

Centre for Towns (2021). The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our towns and cities.
Available online: https://www.centrefortowns.org/reports/COVID-19-and-our-towns/
viewdocument/21 [Accessed 23 November 2021].

Colinge, C., and Gibney, J. (2010) Place-making and the limitations of spatial leadership:
reflections on the Øresund. Policy Studies, 31(4) 475-489

Collie, N. (2011) Cities of the imagination: Science fiction, urban space, and community engagement in
urban planning. Futures, 43(4), 424-431.

Collins, T. (2016) Urban civic pride and the new localism. Transactions of the Institute of British
Geographers, 41(2), 175-186.

**Courage, C., Borrup, T., Jackson, M. R., Legge, K., Mckeown, A., Platt, L.
and Schupbach, J. (2020)** The Routledge Handbook of Placemaking. Abingdon:
Taylor & Francis.

Cresswell, T. (2013) Geographic thought: A critical introduction. Chichester: Wiley.

Crossick, G. (2009) So who now believes in the transfer of widgets. Knowledge Futures Conference.
London Goldsmiths.

Cunningham, I. and Platt, L. (2019) Bidding for UK city of culture: Challenges of delivering a bottom-
up approach 'in place' for a top-down strategy led scheme. Journal of Place Management and Development,
12(3), 314-325.

Carey, H. and O'Brien, D and Gable, O. (2021) Social mobility in the Creative Economy Rebuilding
and Levelling Up, PEC, September 2021.

Dodd, N. (1994) The Sociology of Money. London: Polity Press.

Donaldson, A., Ward, N. and Bradley, S. (2010) Mess among disciplines: Interdisciplinarity in
environmental research. Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space, 42(7), 1521-1536.

Duchêne, A. and Heller, M. (2012) Language in late capitalism: Pride and profit. London: Taylor &
Francis.

Easton, E and Bakhshi, H, (2020) 'The impact of COVID-19 on diversity in the creative industries',
Creative Industries: Policy and Evidence Centre, (https://www.pec.ac.uk/policy-briefings/the-impact-of-
COVID-19-on-diversity-in-the-creative-industries)
[Accessed 7 November 2022]

Edensor, T. (2000) Reclaiming Stoke-on-Trent: leisure, space & identity in the Potteries. Staffordshire:
Staffordshire University Press.

Evans, G. (2016) Branding the city of culture – the death of city planning?, in Guardia, M. (ed), Culture,
urbanism and planning. London: Routledge, 217-234.

Fairclough, N. (1995) Critical discourse analysis : the critical study of language. London;
New York: Longman.

Gilmore, A and Dunn, B, Barker, V, and Taylor M, 'When policy meets place: 'Levelling Up' and the culture and creative industries', Creative Indsutries Policy and Evidence Centre, 13 July 2021, https://www. pec.ac.uk/blog/when-policy-meets-place

Fairclough, N., Mulderring, J. and Wodak, R. (2011) Critical discourse analysis, in Dijk, T. A. v. (ed), Discourse studies. A multidisciplinary introduction, 2nd edition. London: Sage, 394-417.

Fern, J. and Tomaney, J. (2018) Planning Practice: Critical Perspectives from the UK. Abingdon: Routledge.

Florida, R. (2004) The rise of the creative class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2017) The new urban crisis. New York: Basic Books.

Freestone, R., Randolph, B., Pinngar, S. (2018) Suburbanization in Australia, in Hanlon, B. and Vicino, T. (eds), The Routledge Companion to the Suburbs. Abingdon: Routledge.

García, B. (2004a) Cultural policy and urban regeneration in Western European cities: Lessons from experience, prospects for the future. Local Economy, 19(4), 312-326.

García, B. (2004b) Urban regeneration, arts programming and major events. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 10(1), 103-118.

Giles, L., Spilsbury, M., and Carey, H. (2020) Workplace Perspectives: Skill needs, mismatches and development in the Creative Industries. Policy & Evidence Centre. Available online: https://www.pec.ac.uk/ discussion-papers/creative-skills-monitor [Accessed 30 November 2021].

Gilmore, A. (2013) Cold spots, crap towns and cultural deserts: The role of place and geography in cultural participation and creative place-making. Cultural Trends, 22(2), 86-96.

Goodair, B. and Kenny, M. (2019) Townscapes—The North East. Bennett Institute for Public Policy. Available online: https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/publications/townscapes-north-east/ [Accessed 30 November 2021].

Goodair, B. and Kenny, M. (2020) Townscapes—West Midlands. Bennett Institute for Public Policy. Available online: https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/publications/townscapes-west-midlands/ [Accessed 30 November 2021].

Goodair, B., Marteu T., and Kenny, M. (2020) Townscapes—England's Health Inequalities. Bennett Institute for Public Policy. Available online: https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/publications/ townscapes-englands-health-inequalities/ [Accessed 30 November 2021].

gov.uk (2021) New Levelling Up and community investments. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/ government/collections/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments#:~:text=Policy%20paper-,The%20 Levelling%20Up%20Fund,in%20cultural%20and%20heritage%20assets [Accessed 12 April 2021].

Grabher, B. (2021) Doing Gender in Events: Feminist Perspectives in Critical Event Studies. London: Routledge.

Gross, J. (2019) Practices of hope: care, narrative and cultural democracy. International Journal of Cultural Policy 27(1), 1-15.

Gross, J. (2020) Holding Together Loss and Hope: Reflections on the Need for Art in Times of Crisis. Journal of Psychosocial Studies 13(2), 209-217.

Hanretty, C. (2021) The pork barrel politics of the Towns Fund. The Political Quarterly, 92(1), 7-13.

Harper, D. (2002) Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. Visual Studies, 17(1), 13-26.

Harvey, D. (1989) From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: The transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. Geografiska Annaler, 71(1), 3-17.

Harvie, J. (2013a) Brand London 2012 and 'The heart of East London': Competing urban agendas at the 2012 games. Contemporary Theatre Review, 23(4), 486-501.

Harvie, J. (2013b) Fair play: Art, performance and neoliberalism. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hastings, A. (1999) Analysing power relations in partnerships: Is there a role for discourse analysis? Urban Studies, 36(1), 91-106.

HM Treasury (2021) Levelling Up Fund: Prospectus. London. Available online: https://assets.publishing. service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966138/Levelling_Up_ prospectus.pdf [Accessed 16 June 2021].

Hopkins, R. (2020) From what is to what if: unleashing the power of imagination to create the future we want. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Howcroft, M. (2021) Pride, Shame and the Hull Civic Imaginary: UK City of Culture and Brexit. PhD thesis. University of Hull.

Hunter, J., Murphy, L., Stone, L., Webb, J. (2021) The Climate Commons: How Communities Can Thrive in a Changing Climate World. IPPR.

Jackson, A., McManus, R. (2019) SROI in the art gallery: valuing social impact. Cultural Trends, 28(2), 132-145.

Jayne, M., Gibson, C., Waitt, G. and Bell, D. (2010) The cultural economy of small cities. Geography Compass, 4(9), 1408-1417.

Johnson, A. and Proctor, R.W. (2017) Skills Acquisition and Training: Achieving Expertise in Simple and Complex Tasks. Abingdon: Routledge.
Julius J., Faulkner-Ellis, H., O'Donnell, S. (2021) Putting Apprenticeships to Work for Young People. Slough: NFER.

Kaiser, K. (2009) Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. Qualitative Health Research, 19(11), 1632-1641.

Kearney, R. (2002). On Stories. London: Routledge.

Kelemen, M., Surman, E. and Dikomitis, L. (2018) Cultural animation in health research: An innovative methodology for patient and public involvement and engagement. Health Expectations, 21(4), 805-813.

Kelly, J., Ruther M., Ehresman S. and Nickerson B. (2017) Placemaking as an economic development strategy for small and midsized cities. Urban Affairs Review 53(3), 435-462.

Kerby, A. P. (1991). Narrative and the Self. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Klinenberg, E. (2018) Palaces for the people : how social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life. New York: Crown.

Landry, C. (2007) The art of city-making. London: Earthscan.

Landry, C. (2009) The creative city: a toolkit for urban innovators. London: Earthscan.

Landry, C., Bianchini, F., Ebert, R., Gnad, F. and Kunzmann, K. (1996)
The Creative City in Britain and Germany. London: Anglo-German Foundation for the Study
of Industrial Society.

Leyshon, A. (2021) Economic geography I: Uneven development, 'left behind places'
and 'levelling up' in a time of crisis. Progress in Human Geography, 45(6), 1678–1691.

Longhurst, R. (2003) Semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Key methods in geography, 3(2),
143-156.

Lorimer, H. (2005) Cultural geography: the busyness of being `more-than-representational'. Progress in
Human Geography, 29(1), 83-94.

Lucas B., and Kippin, H. (2021) Place is the Space. Available online: https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.
ac.uk/blog/place-space/ [Accessed 1 November 2021].

Madgin, R. (2021) Why Do Historic Places Matter? Emotional Attachments to Urban Heritage. Available
online: https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_811457_smxx.pdf [Accessed 1 November 2021].

Magrini, E. (2020) Measuring 'levelling up': new indexes on businesses and job opportunities. Centre for
Cities. Available online: https://www.centreforcities.org/publication/measuring-levelling-up/ [Accessed 30
November 2021].

Markusen, A. and King, D. (2003) The Artistic Dividend: The Arts' Hidden Contributions
to Regional Development. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota.

Marsh, N (2017), 'How Liverpool's new currency fits into global trends of money and power', The
Conversation, February, 2017 https://theconversation.com/how-liverpools-new-local-currency-fits-into-
global-trends-of-money-and-power-72677 [Accessed 7 November 2022]

McGuigan, J. (2004) Rethinking cultural policy. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

McGuigan, J. and Gilmore, A. (2000) Figuring out the dome. Cultural Trends, 10(39), 39-83.

McKee, K., Muir, J. and Moore, T. (2017) Housing policy in the UK: the importance
of spatial nuance. Housing Studies, 32(1), 60-72.

Meager, N., Martin, R., Carta, E., Davison, S. (2011) Skills for Self-Employment.
UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

Merrifield, A. (1995). Situated knowledge through exploration: reflections on Bunge's 'Geographical
Expeditions'. Antipode, 27(1), 49-70.

Meyer, C. and Hudon, M. (2019) Money and the Commons: An Investigation of Complementary
Currencies and their Ethical Implications. Journal of Business Ethics, 160, 277-292.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) Towns Fund prospectus.
London. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towns-fund-prospectus [Accessed
30 November 2021].

Morató, A.R. and Zarlenga, M.I. (2018) Culture-led urban regeneration policies in the
Ibero-American space. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 24(5), 628-646.

Muller, L., Zeidler, L., Cairns, M. and Safazadeh, S. (2021). Wellbeing Economy Data Guide for
Towns. Available online: https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/wellbeing-economy-data-guide-
for-towns/ [Accessed 30 November 2021].

North P. (2007) Money and Liberation: The Micropolitics of Alternative Currency Movements. Mineapolis: Minnesota University Press.

Oakley, K. (2015) Creating space: A re-evaluation of the role of culture in regeneration. Available online: http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/88559/ [Accessed 30 March 2020].

OCSI / Local Trust (2019, dataset updated 2020) Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge. Available online: https://localtrust.org.uk/insights/research/left-behind-understanding-communities-on-the-edge/ [Accessed 23 November 2021].

Paddison, R., and Miles, S. (2007) The Rise and Rise of Culture-led Urban Regeneration. Abingdon: Routledge.

Paton, K. (2018) Beyond legacy: Backstage stigmatisation and 'trickle-up' politics of urban regeneration. The Sociological Review, 66(4), 919-934.

Paton, K., Mooney, G. and McKee, K. (2012) Class, Citizenship and Regeneration: Glasgow and the Commonwealth Games 2014. Antipode, 44(4), 1470-1489.

Pennycook, L. (2020) Talk of the Town: Supporting place-based storytelling. Dunfermline: Available online: http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/ [Accessed 5 November 2021].

Petrie, I., Coutts, P. and Ormston, H. (2019) Turnaround Towns UK. Dunfermline: Available online: http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/ [Accessed 5 November 2021].

Pierce, J., Martin D.G., and Murphy J.T. (2010) Relational place-making: the networked politics of place. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 36, 54-70.

Pinder, D. (2002) In defence of utopian urbanism: imagining cities after the 'end of utopia'. Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography, 84(34), 229-241.

Pratt, A. C. (2021) Creative hubs: A critical evaluation. City, Culture and Society, 24, 100384.

Prosser, B., Renwick, A., Giovannini, A., Sandford, M., Flinders, M., Jennings, W., Smith, G., Spada, P., Stoker, G. and Ghose, K. (2017) Citizen participation and changing governance: Cases of devolution in England. Policy & Politics, 45(2), 251-269.

Robinson, J. (2002) Global and world cities: a view from off the map. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 26(3), 531-554.

Robinson, J. (2006) Ordinary cities : between modernity and development. London: Routledge.

Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. Progress in Human Geography, 21(3), 305-320.

Robson, J., Holgate, B., Randhawa, A. (2021) Storycraft: the importance of narrative and narrative skills in business. SKOPE. https://skope.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Storycraft-Full-Report.pdf [Accessed 7 November 2022]

Røyseng, S. (2008) The ritual logic of cultural policy, Fifth International Conference on Cultural Policy Research, Istanbul.

Saha, A. (2017) Race and the Cultural Industries. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Sassen, S. (2001) The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Shapely, P. (2012) Civic pride and redevelopment in the post-war British city. Urban History, 39(2), 310-328.

Sahakian M. (2014) Complementary currencies: what opportunities for sustainable consumption in times of crisis and beyond? Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy, 10(1), 4-13.

Shaw, K. (2017) Y21: Culture-led regeneration in twenty-first century UK city regions. International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning, 12(4), 628-636.

Shearer, E., Shepley P., and Soter, T. (2021) Levelling Up: Five Questions about what the government means by the phrase. Institute for Government, London. Available online: https://www. instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/levelling-up [Accessed 30 November 2021].

Sirayi, M., Kanyane, M., Verdini, G. (2021) Culture and Rural-Urban Revitalisation in South Africa. Abingdon, Routledge.

Slade, J.M. (2017) What do they know? The power and potential of story in planning. PhD thesis. University of Sheffield.

Stoker, G. (2018) Relating and Responding to the Politics of Resentment. Political Quarterly, 90(1), 138-151.

Stuart, M. and Shutt, L. (2021) Catching the wave: harnessing regional research and development to level up. HEPI Report 144.

Slater, T. and Anderson, N. (2012) The reputational ghetto: territorial stigmatisation in St Paul's, Bristol. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 37(4), 530-546.

Soja, E. (2015) Accentuate the regional. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 39(2), 372-381.

Son, M. (2021) Culture-led urban regeneration in South Korea. Wilmington, Vernon Press.

Srivastava, P. and Hopwood, N. (2009) A practical iterative framework for qualitative data analysis. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8(1), 76-84.

Thompson, P. (1981) Life histories and the analysis of social change, in Bertaux, D. (ed), Biography and society: The life history approach in the social sciences. London: Sage, 289–306.

Throgmorton, J. A. (1996). Planning as Persuasive Storytelling: The Rhetorical Construction of Chicago's Electric Future. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Tiratelli, L., Studdert J., Morgan C. (2021) Communities Vs. Climate Change. New Local. Available online: https://www.newlocal.org.uk/publications/communities-climate-change/ [Accessed 30 November 2021].

Tommarchi, E. and Bianchini, F. (2020) Hull UK city of culture 2017: Mobilizing heritage through the arts, in Ponzini, D., Bianchini, F., Tzortzi, J. G.-N. and Sanetra-Szeliga, J. (eds), Mega-events and heritage: The experience of five European cities. Krakow: International Cultural Centre.

Voinea, C. F. and Neumann, M. (2020) Political culture: a theory in search for methodology. An editorial. Quality & Quantity, 54(2), 335-360.

Volkerling, M. (2001) From Cool Britannia to Hot Nation: 'Creative industries' policies in Europe, Canada and New Zealand. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 7(3), 437-455.

Walker, A., Hussain F., Diamond, P. (2021), A New Settlement: Place and Wellbeing in Local Government (Local Government Information Unit). Available online: https://lgiu.org/publication/a-new-settlement-place-and-wellbeing-in-local-government/ [Accessed 30 November 2021].

Walmsley, B. (2018) Deep hanging out in the arts: an anthropological approach to capturing cultural value. International Journal of Cultural Policy, 24(2), 272-291.

Weise, M.R., Hanson A.R., and Saleh, Y. (2019). The new geography of skills: regional skill shapes for the new learning ecosystem. Strada Institute for the Future of Work.

Williams, R. (1984) State, culture and beyond, in Apignanesi, L. (ed), Culture and the state. London: ICA.

Wills, J. (2015) Populism, localism and the geography of democracy. Geoforum, 62, 188-189.

Wills, J. (2016) Locating localism. Bristol: Polity Press.

Wodak, R. (2001) What CDA is about – a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments, in Meyer, R. W. a. M. (ed), Methods of critical discourse analysis. London: Sage, 1-13.

Wood, E. H. (2006) Measuring the social impacts of local authority events: a pilot study for a civic pride scale. International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, 11(3), 165-179.

Appendix One: Interviews and Focus Groups

The consultation for the Towns and the Cultural Economies of Recovery Scoping Project took place between February 2021 and July 2021. The four workshops, bringing together key stakeholders in the four case studies, were organised between June and July 2021. The agenda from the workshops are available in Appendix Three.

Hollie Smith-Charles. Cultural strategy, fundraising and place, Ex CEO
Gloucester Culture Trust
Dr. Jane Adams, Hereford Museums service support chair
David Fowler, Hereford Civic Society
Mandy Evans, South Wye Development Trust Chief Officer
Louisa Foti, Educational Officer, Herefordshire Growing Local
Mo Burns, Herefordshire Tree Forum
Andy Johnson, Hereford Community Land Trust
Nigel Higgs, Change Management Consultant, Hereford
Chrissie Peplar, Church & Society Link Officer, Herefordshire
James Baker, Founder, Hereford Make
Nic Millington, CEO and founder, Rural Media
Julia Goldsmith, Producer and co-director, Catcher Media
Rick Goldsmith, Founder and artistic director, Catcher Media
Tamsin Fitzgerald, Artistic Director, 2Faced Dance Company
Katie Cross, ER Arts Consultancy, Hereford
Lucy Baxendale, freelance ceramicist, Hereford
Tim Evans—Director, Powerhouse Live, Hereford
Rhys Griffiths, Archivist, Hereford Archive Centre
Judy Stevenson, Curator, Hereford Museums
Lauren Rogers, Hereford Town Board Chair
and Development producer Rural Media
Roger Allonby, Head of Economic Development,
Herefordshire County Council
Nick Webster, Economic Development Manager,
Herefordshire County Council
Jon Chedgzoy, Museum, libraries and archives manager,
Herefordshire County Council
Cllr Diana Toynbee, Hereford City and Herefordshire County Councils
John de la Cour, Elmley Foundation
The Revd Canon Chris Pullin, Chancellor Hereford Cathedral
Gerraint Bowen, Music director, Hereford Cathedral
Rosemary Firman, Hereford Cathedral librarian
Chris Carr, Project Manager, Foundation UK, Darlington
Miranda Thain, Artistic Director, Theatre Hullabaloo
Sharon Paterson, Associate Director Culture and Engagement
at MIMA and Teesside University
Caroline Pearce, Freelance theatre producer, Darlington
Jason Berge, Freelance cinematographer, Darlington
Rob Irish, Freelance musician, Darlington
Becky Sunter, Freelance textiles artist, Darlington
Stephen Wiper, Director, Creative Darlington
Andrew Hutchinson-Clish, Darlington Hippodrome,
Front of house manager
Charlie Kemp, Tees Valley Creative Place Manager
Chris Lloyd, Senior Northern Echo journalist and author, Darlington
Katharine Stout, Director, Focal Point Gallery, Southend
Hayley Dixon, Deputy Director, Focal Point Gallery, Southend
Warren Harper, Director, Old Water Works, Southend
Colette Bailey, Artistic Director and CEO—Metal
Andrea Cunningham, Assistant regional director, Metal, Southend

With many thanks to those who contributed to the workshops:

Michael Spender, Museum and Arts Manager, BCP Council
Adam Gent, ACE Senior Relationship Manager, South West
Sharon Coyne, Artistic Director, Vita Nova
Helen Parrott, ACE, Senior Manager Strategic Partnerships
Lesley Giles, Director, Work Advance
Paul Kelly, Chair of Trustees, Powerhouse Poole
Alison Smith, Our Museum Project Manager, BCP Council
Cllr Jane Kelly, Boscombe ward Councillor & Chair of Chine Park Friends
Dr. David Fevyer
Cary Lightfoot, Director, Creative Kids
Rev Ruth Wells, Senior Chaplain, Bournemouth University and Arts University Bournemouth
Ang Downs, Arts Manager, Creative Kids
Rita El-Gazali, Chair, Unity in Vision
Elaine Cooper, Bournemouth Civic Society
Chris Mains, Darlington Council, Towns Fund Programme Manager
Richard Starrs, Programme Manager, Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone
Stephen Wiper, Director, Creative Darlington
Sophie Vohra, Railway heritage researcher
Chris Carr, Project Manager, Foundation UK
Rosemary Pennington, Head of Arts and Cultural Wellbeing, Southend Borough Council
Robert Sharp, Business development manager, Southend Museums
Emily Chase, ACE Relationship Manager, Children, Young People and Learning, South East
Claire Toogood, ACE Relationship Manager South East
Ruth Hazel, Focal Point Gallery Coordinator
Sam Duckworth, Concrete Culture, Southend
Gemma Cartwright, Project Manager, SAVS Southend
Prof. John Denham, University of Southampton
Lorraine Cox, Creative Assets Manager, Creative Estuary
Claire Coache, Open Sky Theatre
Hugh James, ACE, Senior Relationship Manager,Greater Derby area
Elle While, Artistic Director, Pentabus Theatre
Rhys Griffiths, Hereford Archive
Julia Goldsmith, Co-director, Catcher Media
Mo Burns
Mel Groves, The Living Room, Hereford
Lauren Rogers, Rural Media, Hereford Town Board Chair
Elizabeth Pimblett, Cider Museum Director
Judy Stevenson, Curator, Hereford Museums
Peter Arscott, Founder and director, Ledbury Poetry Festival
Nancy Winfield, Hereford Community Land Trust
Cllr Jeremy Milln, Herefordshire County Council
Viv Baraclough, Hereford Community Land Trust

Key Organisations and Individuals Consulted During the Research

Academic Centres, Institutes and Individuals
Centre for Cultural Value, University of Leeds *(https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/)*
DISCE —Developing Inclusive & Sustainable Creative Economies Project
(https://disce.eu/)
Bennett Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge
(https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/)

Spaces of HOPE *(https://www.spacesofhope.co.uk/)*
Civic Theatres, Jenny Hughes and Helen Nicholson
(https://twitter.com/creativetowns)

Academic Networks
AHRC Cities of Culture Network *(https://citiesofculture.co.uk/)*

Think Tanks and Trusts
Centre for Towns *(https://www.centrefortowns.org/)*
The Carnegie UK Trust *(https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/)*

Consultants
Arup *(https://www.arup.com)*
Rose Regeneration *(http://roseregeneration.co.uk/)*
Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy *(http://tfconsultancy.co.uk)*
Wayne Hemingway *(https://www.hemingwaydesign.co.uk/)*

Practitioners / Cultural Practitioner organisations
ALB Consortium *(https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/albs)*
Local Government Officers
LCEPs *(https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/children-and-young-people/working-partnership)* Cultural Compacts
Great Place Scheme *(https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding-finder/great-place-scheme)*
Creative People & Places *(https://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/)*

Community Groups
Hereford Community Land Trust *(https://herefordclt.org.uk/)*

Local Cultural Organisations
METAL, Southend *(https://www.metalculture.com/about-us/southend-on-sea/)*
Focal Point Gallery, Southend *(https://www.fpg.org.uk/)*
Rural Media, Hereford *(https://www.ruralmedia.co.uk/)*

Sectors / sectoral organisations
CLOA *(https://cloa.org.uk/)*
Where Next *(https://www.wherenext.com/)*
ASELA *(https://www.southessex.org.uk/)*

Appendix Two: Workshop Agenda

The workshops took place online on the following dates:
Bournemouth—June 9th 2021
Darlington—June 17th 2021
Southend—July 1st 2021
Hereford—July 13th 2021

Co-created and facilitated by local artists and with a short, contextualising presentation from local historians, each workshop had bespoke content and structure. However, an indicative structure of what took place is as follows:

10-10.05: Introduction
10.05-10.10: Ethics reminders, ice-breaker and agenda
10.10- 10.20: Historian presentation
10.20-10.35: TCER team introduce early consultation findings and key questions:

How can we better develop and retain skills in our local communities?
How might we explore 'creative repurposing' of heritage in place?
How do we create/measure value in communities?
What makes effective local government consultation for the
'Levelling Up' project pipeline?

10.35—11.05: Local Artist—Creative participatory exercise
11.05—11.20: Break
11.20 – 12:00: Breakout room discussions led by TCER team
12-12.40: Plenary discussion including artist response
12.40-12.45: Reflections from participants
12.45-12.50: Thanks and wrapping up