Culture Forum North:
Research to support creating a new vision for higher education and cultural sector partnership

Final Report
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Executive Summary

In May 2021, Culture Forum North commissioned Dr James Doeser to conduct a rapid research review to inform their new vision for higher education and cultural sector partnership. The vision has been fashioned through consultation with practitioners, policymakers, funders and other leaders from both sectors. The research was funded by Arts Council England and jointly overseen by the other regional forums: the Midlands Higher Education and Cultural Forum and the South East Cultural Innovation Forum.

The cultural and higher education sectors in the UK have been hugely disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The trauma of the virus and costs of the lockdowns have brought about an almost existential challenge for two sectors dependent on human contact and collective experience and – importantly – the revenue which those experiences generate. As a historical event, the pandemic has coincided with forceful movements which have turned the spotlight on how institutions and policy can address systemic issues of injustice, particularly around race and climate.

Partnership working was increasingly the norm before the arrival of the pandemic, but the shared experience and common constraints of the last 16 months have meant that it's never been more important. The pandemic and lockdowns have prompted new ways of working together, some of which will endure long after the virus has receded. Good examples of partnership we uncovered were:

- Universities and arts organisations sharing their digital tools and skills to support each other to make and share content
- Universities acting as anchor institutions in towns and cities, allowing many and varied partnerships across multiple disciplines to form with local artists and cultural organisations
- Freelancers being supported in the scramble to provide emergency funding, recognising their importance to the ecology and precarious situation
- Local networks of shared interest facing outward to maintain an international profile and connections during and after the pandemic

These examples embodied the "best practice" characteristics that recur in published research on partnership. Characteristics on display were mutuality, the use of a shared language, alignment of objectives, responsiveness and agility, attention to power imbalances, respectful and empathetic behaviours. It was also important for authentic partnerships to grow from long-standing pre-existing relationships and not be formed in an expedient or synthetic manner in response to some new source of funding.

In the post-pandemic recovery it will be important for funders and policymakers to consider how digital and "blended" experiences can be delivered in partnership. These will, in turn, generate new forms of revenue and collaboration. The impact of the pandemic and lockdowns differs according to geographic location and a variety of somewhat arbitrary circumstances: some relating to the history, demography and economy of an area, and the decisions of a distant central government machinery. This means that both old and new

forms of local, regional and national inequality will need addressing as we collectively recover.

It's unlikely that persistent barriers to effective partnership working (such as resource constraints, divergent cultures and norms, the navigability of bureaucracy, etc.) can be removed overnight. However, this year marks a once-in-a-generation opportunity to re-imagine the way that the cultural sector works with HEIs, and how policy and funding can eliminate friction and incentivise productive and efficient modes of engagement. All of which can and should be in service of furthering equity and inclusive growth.

The role of intermediary 'third spaces' is especially important. The arrival of the Centre for Cultural Value, the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre and National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange has brought about a renewed focus on how partnership between sectors can be incentivised, brokered and sustained.

The majority of previous research on partnership has been produced by and for those in the higher education sector. Large amounts of investment to support partnership working is funnelled through universities. Culture Forum North and the other forums need to consider how they are adding value to this constellation of intermediaries, and what a genuinely "bidirectional" national brokerage and facilitation package involves. It will require a diplomat's proficiency in switching between different languages and cultures, it will involve nurturing and caring in the early stages of relationships, and it must visibly celebrate, inspire and instruct to be impactful and effective.

Taking the research as a whole there are systematic efforts needed to bring about an atmosphere in which partnership is valued. Funding is important but it is never a panacea. It should be less confined to predetermined channels and short-term projects. There needs to be support for "partnership-curious" leaders and intrapreneurs who can cultivate new and maturing partnerships which go beyond the temporary and transactional. There has never been a better time to make this happen.

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Section 1: What we've learned about partnership between higher education and the cultural sector in 2021

The cultural and higher education sectors in the UK have been hugely disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The trauma of the virus and costs of the lockdowns have brought about an almost existential challenge for two sectors dependent on human contact and collective experience and – importantly – the revenue which those experiences generate. Partnership working was increasingly the norm before the arrival of the pandemic, but the shared experience and common constraints of the last 16 months have meant that it's never been more important.

Researching effective partnership between the cultural sector and higher education institutions (HEIs) is a long-standing concern. The challenge of partnership working in recent decades has been exacerbated by growing complexity and scale – there are now more people and organisations in these sectors than at any other time in history.

Ultimately, partnerships and collaborations are the result of institutional and individual actions. These can be shaped, incentivised, enabled, etc., but are always experienced in a fresh set of circumstances, meaning there is always something new to be said about the topic. There have been no circumstances quite like those of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020/21.

The impact of Covid on HEIs

Beyond the immediate impact of the virus on health and wellbeing, the HE sector has suffered huge disruptions to their usually bustling campus-based research and teaching activities. A lot of desk-based research continued, but plans for fieldwork and other in-person activities were suspended. The move to online and "blended" teaching demanded the acquisition of new skills and the use of unfamiliar technologies. The impact of the lockdowns has not been equally felt, with different parts of the country living under various restrictions for differing amounts of time. International staff and students have been especially affected. There are outstanding questions about the viability of the university business model. This is putting ever greater pressure on the funding and attractiveness of non-STEM subjects, which (thanks to the funding mix of fees and subsidy) look even more expensive to the government.

The response from relevant HE funders like the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has largely been through the 'Boundless Creativity' campaign (designed to explore and demonstrate the role of innovation, collaboration and participation in shaping cultural experiences in the pandemic, and to provide an evidence base for future growth). More tangibly, it has funded 'ambitious and ground-breaking projects' exploring new ways in which culture can thrive by pivoting towards digital offerings during lockdown. It also supported audience research designed to complement this move to digital. The findings of this research are referenced later in this Section.

The impact of Covid on the cultural sector

Just like those working in HEIs, people in the arts and culture sector have been dealing with the twin traumas of the virus and lockdowns. Along with hospitality and travel the arts are frequently cited as one of the worst hit sectors, with many organisations in need of emergency funding and staff on extended furloughs. The sector has been somewhat compensated with more than £1bn in support via the Cultural Recovery Fund. Ever-changing government rules and guidance has meant there has been no means to plan for even the immediate future. Many freelancers and microbusinesses (which make up the bulk of the sector workforce) have suffered their own misfortunes as a result of falling between the cracks of government support. An early decision by many in the sector to turn to online digital production has made demands of a workforce notoriously under-skilled in that department and done little to generate revenue from a deluge of digital content for super-served audiences online.

In their report for the Gulbenkian Foundation, written during the pandemic (MacFarland et al 2020), the Common Vision consultancy emphasised that 'partnership working has been key to the success of agile and impactful responses from arts organisations in their communities – from developing stronger networks and new alliances with other creative or cultural organisations, to maintaining and building connections with local organisations beyond the arts sector.' They quote Sara Unwin, Head of Cultural Engagement at the University of Sheffield who said: 'There has been a real coming together across the local arts ecosystem' which 'has been an amazing support for everyone.'

Four kinds of partnership in the pandemic

In order to gather evidence of effective partnership working during the last 16 months we conducted a series of group interviews with people who were working in the higher education and cultural sectors and had engaged in partnership activity during the Covid-19 pandemic. The themes of these conversations (digital resource sharing, HEIs as anchor institutions, supporting freelancers and global-facing local networks) all emerged from initial desk research and responses to our call for evidence (see Appendix).

Digital resource sharing

Recognising the power and resource imbalance that tends to operate in partnerships between HEIs and cultural organisations, it was very welcome to hear of acts of sharing. We spoke with academics from the University of Manchester and Northern School of Art as well as leaders from ARC Stockton and People's History Museum (PHM).

The lockdowns meant that the regular student experience of visiting and evaluating local museum and galleries in Manchester was impossible. In Stockton the ARC building was closed to staff, visitors and audiences for extended periods of time, which meant that community or student workshops and productions couldn't happen in the usual way.

On-site activity would normally be a crucial part of the student experience – providing pedagogical stimulus, a taste of 'real-world' experience and opportunities for exposure and

networking. Simultaneously, cultural organisations were facing a challenge of how to engage the public with their buildings and content in a way that didn't require their visitors to be physically on site. In general, there wasn't (and still isn't) the skills and resources across the sector to support novel or ongoing in-house digital content production. Working with universities meant learning together, embarking upon a shared endeavour with shared resources.

The acquisition of 3D scanning technology by the University of Manchester prior to the pandemic meant there was a ready-made solution to this problem: staff and students at the university could create a virtual learning environment by rendering and exploring museum interiors. They did this at the PHM and other local partner museums which might lack the means to do this themselves and who would normally be working on site with students from the university.

Digitisation has always been a way to widen the pool of people who might engage with an organisation and its content. The PHM saw the scanning in service of their accessibility agenda. On Teesside, the move to online teaching meant that Northern School of Art was able to more easily put a wider group of sector experts and teachers to work for the students – people who might not have previously been able to be there in person. By making and sharing their coursework online it was also a way for the students to reach a wider audience of friends, family and remote industry contacts.

Academics at Manchester now have the kit and expertise to digitise spaces and collections, but they are cautious about crowding out possible freelancers and SMEs who have (or might) develop a business doing the same thing. Ultimately, this should be about prompting cultural organisations to develop the sufficient skills to fulfil a digital or online remit themselves – that will require structural change. The university can't continue to act in service of all local museums as it would take up too much staff resource – they are currently exploring options for a more sustainable model.

A focus on sustaining an equitable local ecology is also a driving force of the ARC partnership with Northern School of Art. Both organisations provide support for local disadvantaged groups who have expressed an interest in furthering their engagement with the performing arts. By working on digital capture and opening the building in a safe way for local students ARC wasn't making a concession to the needs of a partner but going about its core business of creating and sharing relevant locally grounded work. It was also a way to maintain the continuity of progression (artistically, pedagogically, professionally) for young people who might have been disadvantaged by the constraints of lockdown.

Another interesting example we came across was 'Digitale' in Durham. The platform was already in production prior to the lockdown and provided a mechanism for encouraging greater digital proficiency by local SMEs and attractions. This entailed a fair amount of brokerage with technologists undertaken by staff at Durham University. During lockdown a consortium of local heritage sites worked through the Digitale Online Creative Lab to bring a group of local young people together (students, locals, and those from the surrounding towns and villages) to develop ideas for ways to better engage young people with local

heritage. The ideas are the subject of subsequent funding applications and wider conversations in the university to bring them to fruition.

The work in all cases (Manchester, Stockton and Durham) was supported by university leadership because it delivered on stated civic and social responsibility agendas, in addition to providing an obvious intrinsic benefit to young people themselves.

HEIs as anchor institutions

Universities sit within local ecologies. The character and history of any one institution in its local context will shape the way in which that HEI operates as well as the partnerships and networks it activates. Some towns and cities are built around their universities, others have industrial sectors which have grown up in symbiosis with them.

The ways in which universities engage with their localities, their physical environments and the communities which surround them was the subject of Comunian and Gilmore's landmark 'Beyond the Creative Campus' report of 2015. The role of an anchor HEI beyond its campus can take many forms but includes the way it activates its estate (perhaps it runs a local gallery or theatre), the life of its students, staff and visitors in the locality, and the degree of porosity between what is known colloquially as "town" and "gown".

It was curious that three different organisations (Cap-a-Pie, New Writing North, Berwick Visual Arts) each came to us with stories of partnership with one local HEI: Newcastle University. Despite working with different academics from different departments, all three collaborations explored the topic of climate change. This exemplified what we thought of as an HEI acting as a crucial central node around which other smaller local entities orbited during a time of extreme disruption and distress. The impact of Covid has been dramatic but has prompted a good deal of pragmatic creativity. Deadlines and deliverables have been extended into 2022 and in many ways the university acted generously to ensure partners and artists got the funding they were expecting.

The conversation revealed different routes into the same university, all of which generated an interesting partnership: a serendipitous encounter, liaison through the vice-chancellor, and an approach from an academic following previous engagements with other colleagues.

The motivations for academics are clear enough when they are looking to disseminate their work and make an impact (see Section 4). But for this to happen through small arts organisations the HEIs need to take a risk and make an investment. The multi-disciplinary package that a university can offer is really attractive to any small organisation: subject specialists with interesting research as well as evaluation and business expertise. When full economic costings and overheads are added in, a formal HEI partnership looks comparatively expensive and beyond the reach of many small arts organisations.

The culture of the university is very different to that of a small arts organisation, which can be frustrating and hard to navigate for arts leaders – sometimes it seems like the challenge isn't reaching the right academic but getting them to achieve institutional buy-in from university leadership. Organisations in the North East have an ongoing concern with matters

of diversity, but there is an acknowledgement of more to do, and that some communities need to be "taken on a journey".

Moving things online can make hard-to-reach audiences even harder to reach. There was scepticism about the success of various online digital adventures, but overall people we spoke to were pleasantly surprised that online content from the various collaborations reached larger and more global audiences than any offline activity would.

While people are generally very excited about the opportunity to reach a wider audience with digital content, research from the Centre for Cultural Value and others suggests that while there may be rich potential for increasing diversity and access via online and digital work, it's not really attracting a more disadvantaged or previously-disengaged set of audiences. Our current enthusiasm about the numbers and profile of people reached perhaps needs tempering as we come to understand what a reasonable baseline and benchmark looks like.

Some of the ways of working and the outputs from 2020 are going to be continued and replicated after the pandemic and social distancing comes to an end. However, the move to remote working means that people haven't had the time on campus that they usually would – that is important for random encounters and understanding what life is really like for students and academics.

The joy and success of partnership is dependent on individuals, but senior buy-in at the university and cultural organisation means the partnership will sustain over years and beyond the tenure of specific individuals.

Supporting freelancers and artists

It's widely understood that freelancers and individual artists have been especially hard hit by the pandemic. The lockdown brought work to a halt, and many found themselves excluded from the support mechanisms afforded to regular employees. This had real-life consequences for the individuals concerned, but it has wider sectoral ramifications too – on the kind of people who make up our sectors and the kind of work that gets made.

Precarity is an increasingly familiar concept inside higher education labour markets, with short term contracts (even 'zero hours') becoming the norm for younger early career researchers and adjunct teaching staff.

We spoke with three people with experience of this issue, whose accounts illustrate the variety of ways in which freelancers have been supported or frustrated (or even neglected) during the pandemic. We talked with Hannah Buckley (freelance practitioner), a curator at Bury Art Museum (who overseas an annual graduate showcase exhibition), and the Public Engagement Manager at the University of Leicester.

The start of pandemic brought an immediate arrest to ongoing and planned work (often without compensation or promise of future prospects). Some freelancers felt very shut out from institutional support structures (they might have been employed by organisations but

weren't always automatically included in pastoral care interventions). The best partnerships have an in-built acknowledgement of power and resource imbalances between institutions and freelancers. A duty of care to freelancers is key to sustain the health and diversity of the sector. Freelancers need resources (money and space) to do their work – they suffered a pre-Covid disadvantage in that regard, which is set to continue after the pandemic recedes.

There are some great models of HEI partnership with individuals that are "Covid-proof" because they involve substantial residencies and projects which respect the autonomy and needs of freelance artists. They can be adapted and made to work with extended deadlines and physical constraints. The Creative Fellowships at the University of Exeter were cited as one such example and have inspired a similar approach at the University of Leicester.

Making work online, teaching online, showcasing online… this way of working has some advantages and disadvantages. It exacerbates some form of disadvantage while compensating for others. It is also a matter of personal preference. The online form of showcasing was not very popular with art students, who preferred on-site shows. It also meant they didn't get the real-world practical work experience of what a gallery show entails. That experience is hard to teach in the classroom and over Zoom.

Freelancer partnerships with HEIs are often arrived at through serendipity, which means its vitally important to be visible and out and about in the sector. Bury Art Gallery advertises their showcasing opportunity directly to art students, not going via HEI faculty or administrators. There may be potential in more formal or systematic institutional partnerships, but it works okay as it is, and it's hard to know how welcome local HEIs would be to any deeper level of engagement.

There is an obvious role for forums like CFN to act as a matchmaker between HEIs and artists or freelancers who might not have pre-existing connections or any ideas how to penetrate university bureaucracies.

Global-facing local networks

We were very conscious that HEIs and cultural organisations are cosmopolitan and internationally networked in ways that other parts of UK society are not. Whatever damage the pandemic might have caused, restrictions on travel and imports/exports were exacerbated by the fact that the UK formally left the European Union midway through its 'second wave' of Covid in January 2021.

There were lots of ongoing bilateral partnerships brought to our attention which were sustained during the pandemic – HEIs and arts organisations working with others overseas. In their 2018 report on international partnerships between the HE and cultural sector, SQW were clear that 'collaboration on local civic issues tended to involve Local Authorities or Local Enterprise Partnerships, through the development of Regional Cultural Strategies or City Consortiums, with one HEI engaging with a City of Culture bid. Other civic collaborations involved local festivals, exhibitions and community groups.' As such, we wanted to understand how such consortia had functioned during the pandemic.

We spoke with representatives from the Liverpool and Bristol City regions about this. Both cities have made intentional and explicit commitments to be outward-facing and internationally networked through their policy and strategy.

Liverpool is blessed with a well-developed and mature infrastructure for partnership working. Decades of investment leading up to the 2008 European Capital of Culture and the subsequent experience garnered from that year means that in 2021 there are individuals, institutions and structures in place to facilitate local international partnership. In Bristol and Liverpool the role of culture and HEIs are vital to the local ecology – not just in terms of the economy but for community cohesion, the built environment, tourism, wellbeing, etc. All of these function better through local strategic partnership.

The role of cities as centres of soft power were tested by the pandemic. Local diaspora resident populations and international workers in the HE and cultural sectors make UK cities vibrant, connected and distinct. These residents are joined each year by half a million overseas students, with Chinese students making up a quarter of that group. Not only did the pandemic prevent many of these young people from coming to the UK, but those that did come faced restrictions and racism from the resident population. This was exacerbated by the fact that some people in the UK have vocally blamed universities – and particularly students – for spreading the virus.

What would normally be the link-up role of a city administration (providing a welcome to international students, showcasing local attractions and amenities to prospective visitors, ensuring that local service provision met demand, etc) was all adapted to a "digital proposition" in a way that was qualitatively different from normal. Nonetheless, it also meant that distance and costs were shrunk by the technology – so a wider and more diverse set of talent took part in online festivals and showcases, and audiences were larger and more global too. It remains to be seen what the impact of this will be.

Despite all of the restrictions and constraints presented by Covid and the lockdowns there is still a very strong appetite to revive and enhance the international partnership work in these cities. The last year has been about testing new ways of working, having conversations, and doing the strategic work to ensure that when things reopen the cities are ready with their offer and have their systems in place to make partnership work.

The recipe for partnership success during lockdown

Section 2 of this report discusses the many factors which have been shown to foster or inhibit good partnership working between HEIs and the cultural sector. These are all still relevant to what we heard in our group interviews (where the partnerships exhibited a typical set of enduring characteristics seen throughout the existing research on the topic). However, the circumstances of the last 16 months prompt us to reflect on the types of activity discussed above, and the many other instances of partnership work that we reviewed for this study. Out of this reflection we posit a few general conclusions about what worked best in this period of crisis and renewal:

- The most important precondition for successful partnership work was having a ready-made local network built on trust
- The characteristics required from people in the lockdown were agility and flexibility, combined with a compassion and empathy for those in constrained circumstances or distress
- The behaviours of organisations that worked best were not "sweating the small stuff", and seeking to be inclusive, humble and generous
- The use of digital technology was transformational when it was genuinely appropriate, not when it was a synthetic second-preference medium for engaging with others

A framework for post-covid partnership working

There have been previous attempts to pin down an all-encompassing framework for partnership between HEIs and cultural sector organisations. Comunian and Gilmore (2015) talk about HEIs as 'patrons' (where universities have preserved, commissioned, made and shared art), 'sponsors' (where universities have been advocates and allies of the arts) and 'partners' (where knowledge has been shared or generated together).

Fig. 6: Summary of objectives, knowledge frameworks, exchanges and impact of different perspectives to HE collaborations with the arts

	Higher Education as …		
	Patron	Sponsor	Partner
Objectives	Greater good	Promotion / Visibility	Collaboration
Knowledge Framework	Unidirectional	Buying-in others' knowledge or community connections	Peer-to-peer exchange
Exchange form	Donation / Contribution	Business transaction	In-kind exchange or equally or externally funded
Impact	Long-term legacy	Visibility / Citizenship	Knowledge creation

The Hidden Story report (2017) took a slightly different approach, mapping HEI activity against the various impacts that might be generated through partnership and knowledge exchange:

Mapping projects onto this 'compass' representation provides a framework for analysing research impact aligned both to core aims and to ancillary outcomes, fitted with regional strategies, and enabling the assessment of trade-offs between parameters.

FIGURE 5: The Cultural Impact Compass
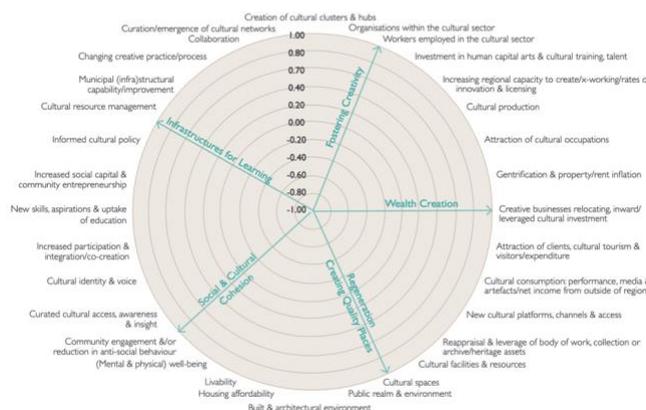
None of the pre-existing frameworks feel quite right given the shock of covid on both the HE and cultural sectors and so we have devised something new which reflects the strengths and activities we have uncovered.

The framework below is derived from critical reflection and conversations within the project team stimulated by a combination of previous studies on the topic alongside the many examples of partnership work brought to our attention during the life of the project. It recognises that partnership work is an active process involving individuals and institutions. As such it is not built around static assets (which need activating) nor theoretical objectives (which may or may not result in any tangible manifestation). The main framing (in order to prompt thinking about how to be generative, catalytic and sustaining) is around what is brought or provided, what is risked, and what is gained. None of these aspects can occur without action (the volition or determination to act, the ability or means to act, the mechanism to derive or sustain something from it):

A framework for post-covid partnership working

What HEIs BRING	Matching features, shared goals and common ground	What cultural organisations BRING
Stature and heritage Stability Access to funding Campus with buildings and space Routes to young people	Co-located in a town or city Curious enquiring expert research minds Confronting reality of "blended" provision	Profile by association Ways to animate research Ways to tell stories Routes to audiences and public Means to further student experience Attractiveness to research and sector funders
What HEIs RISK No direct or immediate return on investment Diversion of funds away from core activity	Eager to demonstrate public benefit, civic impact, etc.	**What cultural organisations RISK** Wasted time navigating bureaucracy Being patronised or misunderstood
What HEIs GAIN Reach and impact into communities A 'complicating texture' to their research More interesting ways to teach Practical real-world experience for students	Looking to diversify staff, audiences, beneficiaries	**What cultural organisations GAIN** Rigour and credibility Critical feedback New complicating multidisciplinary stimuli Access to funding Access to audiences
Individual and organisational attributes Mutual respect, flexibility, curiosity, empathy, trustworthiness, appetite for risk, focus on what matters		
Role for CFN Demystifying both sides, finding common language, assessing risk appetite, instilling diversity/equity concerns, signposting, triage, celebrating.		

Section 2: What we already knew about partnership between culture and higher education

There are quite a few reports on the topic of partnership between higher education and cultural organisations. This study has reviewed more than 20 that directly address the subject. Many have been sponsored by funders and policymakers who wish to see the sectors work more efficiently and productively, or to activate expertise and resources that they see as operating in silos.

Despite the unique circumstances of the last 16 months, there are enduring and useful things in this literature on the following themes: models of partnership, drivers to partnership, barriers to partnership, conditions for partnership, benefits of partnership. There are also many, many examples of successful partnerships which exhibit transferable or scalable characteristics that are still relevant in 2021 and beyond.

Models of partnership

Definitions

Jane Ellison's landmark 2015 report for King's College London (*The Art of Partnership*) found that while people appreciate the looseness of the definition of partnership, many were concerned that some partnerships were 'just window dressing'. The report landed on the following as a meaningful definition:

'Partnership is an ongoing working relationship where risks and benefits are shared.'

It goes on to suggest that partnership entails a 'commitment to mutuality' (meaning co-creation/co-ownership of the partnership's activities, and shared risk, responsibility and accountability). The report identifies 'core partnering principles' of equity, transparency and mutual benefit.

Before going any further it's worth pointing out that partnerships between HEIs and cultural organisations are usually quite specific to their time and place. This heterodoxy isn't just some quirk of individual preferences or habits but the result of longstanding traditions within different types of research institutions. Facer and Enright (2016) found that different institutional traditions 'bring very different rationales and methods for the processes of collaborative research. There are key differences, for example, between those traditions that seek university-community collaboration for reasons of equity and democracy, and those that see it primarily as a means of improving the quality of research and practice. Indeed, the idea of 'community' is framed very differently in different traditions – with some partnerships particularly concerned with capacity building amongst grassroots communities and others with building policy-level knowledge with representative organisations.'

When looking at the topic of leadership Oakley and Selwood (2010) found all collaborations are 'dynamic interactions and as such during their lifetimes, new ideas arise; new needs are

identified; and priorities shift. This appears to be less of a feature of research-driven collaborations, which are focused on specific outcomes, such as exhibitions. However, those with wider social or economic aims often undergo significant changes in their form and purposes'. They therefore suggest that 'collaborations should be regarded as 'conversations': they may take off in different directions at any time, rather than necessarily pursing a linear relationship between clearly targeted objectives and results.'

A taxonomy of activity

Many of the reports on partnership concentrate on describing a set of activities that are undertaken in partnership between HEIs and the cultural sector (whether organisations or freelance individuals). Sarah Fisher lists nine in 2012, the Clearer Picture report from 2016 lists 13, the Hidden Story report from the year after lists 12. The range of activities is quite varied, but they are commonly grouped into those involving students, research or venues. A typical list might contain:

- Public programmes, especially festivals
- Civic engagement with local government and communities
- Research and new knowledge
- Knowledge transfer
- Use of collections and archives
- Course delivery, teaching and student experience
- Talent and broader professional development
- Student development and linking with sector employers
- Consultancy
- Marketing, PR, dissemination
- Venue management and capital projects

The challenge of defining 'knowledge exchange'

Traditionally, a lot of what HEI partnership is directed towards, and what dominates the discourse in the sector, is the theory and practice of 'knowledge exchange' (KE). Defining what KE actually entails has been a contentious task for decades, and it continues to pose a challenge: early indications from the 2021 NCACE Arts Professional Survey are that practitioners in the sector define KE more widely than the academics might.

When Hewlett was reviewing the 2014 REF Impact Case Studies for King's College London in 2017 she found that one small collaboration may lead to (or be nested in) a much more impactful process of KE: 'Collaborations with curators might lead to outreach in schools; workshops with practitioners may prompt invitations to act as a consultant on related projects, or to brief cultural policymakers. There was no set point at which these pathways began, and no one form of collaboration that enabled them. While some were the product of collaborative partnerships, others reported on research being picked up by the sector, sometimes years after a large body of work had already been published.'

When Oakley and Selwood (2010) talked to leaders in the arts and HEIs about partnerships they found that 'academics in the arts and humanities do not always consider their external

engagements to constitute knowledge transfer. Their activities may be characterised as part of the so-called 'gift economy' that characterises much informal collaboration, and outside the formal mechanisms used to record and measure knowledge transfer.' They also observed that increasing commercialisation and privatisation would be likely to hinder not incentivise partnership work. This also may explain a lower level of engagement with business and KE infrastructure in the early 2010s identified by the AHRC in their Hidden Connections report. It is also a driving force in the development of what KE infrastructure we see today (see Section 4).

Inter-/trans-disciplinarity

In the arts and cultural sector it's well understood that interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approaches yield the most interesting and innovative outcomes. This comes through very strongly in the two 'hidden' reports: Hidden Story in 2017 report and the AHRC's 2011 study on 'Hidden Connections' – both of which examined partnerships between HEIs and academics in various disciplines with the commercial and civic sectors.

The appetite for inter-/trans-/multi-disciplinary partnership work means that larger organisations tend to be the favoured partners over small ones. When Bonacchi and Willcocks (2016) looked at museum-university partnerships they found 'a relative over-representation of national museums compared to local authority and independent museums, considering that the latter are more numerous across England' and that may be as much for disciplinary reasons as resources, with larger institutions commanding a far greater breadth of expertise in their staff and networks. A 2019 review by Newcastle University of the 2014 REF Impact Case Studies also found that 'the larger heritage agencies, such as the National Trust and Historic England' were the most commonly cited partners.

Perhaps the sharpest end of transdisciplinary work is when an artist is commissioned or invited to be part of an engagement in another discipline. Burnard et al. (2015) wrote a paper 'Artists and Higher Education Partnerships: A Living Enquiry' which cites many examples sponsored by the Leverhulme Trust in which 'the artwork has been understood to be of epistemological value' to researchers; for example, a 'residency in a mathematics department facilitated the questioning of established taxonomies and systems of classification.' It's clear from work such as Sheridan and Pring's 2007 study of arts and health collaborations that engaging an artist in a transdisciplinary research endeavour isn't just an exercise in communicating research, but an act of willingly testing assumptions, complicating narratives, and generating new leads of enquiry.

Core/supplemental

There is an interesting diversity of opinion about whether partnership work is a core intrinsic essential part of what HEIs do, or it is an added extra which lies (as the 2017 Hidden Story report puts it) 'beyond the traditional role of HEIs as providers of learning infrastructures and facilities, and educators of the next generation of practitioners'.

Back in 2010 Oakley and Selwood were prompted to report that 'universities' collaborations with cultural organisations were often considered to be peripheral to their primary priorities of teaching or research – even within the humanities.'

When partnership is supplemental or additional to core activity it needs its own governance vehicle. In their 2018 report on international partnerships between culture and HE, SQW identified the following possible structures:

- Co-funding – in which both HEIs and cultural organisations put funding into the 'pot' to drive a specific project
- Co-production – where a cultural organisation lends their expertise to a HEI product to help raise revenue designed to support original artistic works
- 'In-kind' support – providing administrative workspace, rehearsal space and access to students to smaller arts organisations to help lighten their revenue burden
- Joint-funded projects – where a HEI and cultural organisation collaborate on a project funded by a third party, usually a research council or foundation
- NPO spin-outs – some HEI based cultural activities have spawned 'spin out' cultural entities
- Community projects, with replicability potential – several HEI/cultural partnerships have focused on social or civic issues (e.g. loneliness, placemaking, etc)
- Memoranda of Understanding – a codification of shared objectives and delivery approaches

The role of individuals

This research has discovered a lot about best practice and setting the right conditions for partnership, but individuals are also important: as leaders, as straddlers of worlds, as people with passions and interests, and perhaps most of all as the 'doers' of partnering. Cultivating, supporting, rewarding the right kind of individuals with the right kind of attributes to act in the right way is crucial.

SQW used their 2018 report to emphasise 'the fundamental importance of personal connections to form and nurture the creative collaboration' when it works well the connections between individuals can be 'extremely agile', and quickly respond to opportunities created through 'national frameworks, policy imperatives and funding incentives'. A point that is picked up later in this report is that while individuals might be agile, large institutions are not, and the authors of the Clearer Picture report from 2016 heard of frustrations that universities 'can be slow and less agile compared with a small arts organisation.'

Well-networked individuals can command great influence and support major partnerships that are of use and benefit to HEIs and the cultural sector. Comunian and Gilmore in 'Beyond the Creative Campus' (2015) point out that 'there is a clear acknowledgement both within academia and the arts world that collaborations and exchanges are based on individuals and their networks and knowledge.'

As might be expected, the "Matthew Effect" is present in the data on which individuals and institutions can command the largest networks. (Over time, thanks to the gravitational force of specific individuals, and the gearing of powerful institutional resources, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.) The Hidden Story Report (2017) explains: 'Universities that have highly developed partnership networks funded through major funders are likely to attract more funding' and 'universities that attract the most funding from major funders are more often co-publishing and operating across many different projects.' But the really important observation is that it's individuals – not the institutions – that are the link between the various projects at these particular universities. The report goes on to say that 'projects tend to have very low connectivity with one another, often making key Principal Investigators the linking node. This makes those networks reliant on individuals and therefore very vulnerable.' This means that when a well-networked individual moves from one HEI to another they will take that network with them.

Power imbalances

There is a discernible power and resource imbalance in many HEI partnerships. A consequence of this is pointed out by SQW in their 2018 report on international collaboration: 'there is limited agency on the part of the arts and cultural partners. Particularly for smaller organisations, they are more often the 'object' of research or opportunities or play a supporting role in larger consortia and research bids, than seen as a core partner.'

Looking at the state of sector leadership in 2010, Oakley and Selwood were prompted to observe that 'arts and humanities collaborations tend to be prompted by HEIs. By comparison, their partner arts and cultural organisations are often relatively small, under-funded, less well connected and lack the formal incentives to pursue such relationships. This determines power relationships within collaborations and cultural organisations may not always be able to engage on equal terms.'

The one exception to the usual HEI power imbalance is the media's use of academics as talking heads or experts. In her study of REF Impact Case Studies for King's College London Kirstie Hewlett found 'just 13% of all references to engagement with media companies described a project that the researcher devised or took a central role in producing, be it in collaboration with a media company or independently.'

Drivers to partnership

Researcher/HEI motivations

In their 2018 report on international partnerships between HEIs and arts organisations, SWQ said that HEIs were motivated by 'enriching academic practice and research', 'enhancing the reputation or profile' of the institution, and 'improving the cultural landscape in an area to attract and retain high-quality students and staff'.

In reviewing the REF 2014 Impact Case Studies Hewlett found that the initiation of partnerships with media or policy organisations came from them, not the academics, who

were often being asked to perform advisory roles or to appear as an invited speaker, often prompted by some news story. However, 'in the case of TV and radio production, these collaborations largely appear to have been fortuitous, based on a researcher's reputation as an expert in the field'. Hewlett doesn't say this directly, but a main driver for researchers to participate in such collaborations must be to increase the reach of their work and enhance their profiles (egos).

Cultural sector motivations

SQW's impression from their work on international partnerships was that cultural organisations are motivated by the opportunity to secure new and larger forms of investment (understandably, a commonly cited motivation in all accounts of cultural sector partnership work), the availability and perspectives of students, graduates and other experts, and finally the opportunities afforded by collaborative research which results in new knowledge and practice.

Katie Pekacar's review of HEI partnerships with public libraries articulated another important motivation which is perhaps too obvious for some accounts: namely that the student and staff body at any university is going to be a large potential audience for any cultural venue and partnerships can not only raise awareness but build an affinity to the venue among an educated and affluent set of locals.

Motivations for both sectors

Returning to the idea that partnerships are often the fruit of individual action, Facer and Enright's 2016 evaluation of the AHRC Connected Communities programme identified six broad characteristic groups of people with distinct motivations to partner: 'generalists and learners (who are interested in new ideas and connections), makers (who are interested in getting something tangible made or changed), scholars (who are interested in finding opportunities to pursue specific interests), entrepreneurs (who are attracted by the funding opportunities), accidental wanderers (who end up in the programme by happenstance), advocates for a new knowledge landscape (who are explicitly looking to experiment with new ways to create knowledge).'

Similar forms of symbiosis were uncovered at the institutional level for museums and HEIs by Bonacchi and Willcocks in 2016. They found that motivations for initiating museum-university partnerships include: 'enabling research; nurturing resilience; steering innovation; developing institutional identity; supporting student learning; delivering public engagement; developing new audiences; exchanging expertise; generating and evidencing impact.' But that mostly when it came to activity undertaken 'a substantial part of museum-university partnerships revolves around student learning and exhibition-centred models that also become opportunities for enriching and opening-up museum collections.'

Barriers to partnership

A lot of the work undertaken to understand partnership work is about removing barriers. In her report from 2015 Jane Ellison found that the barriers to partnership tended to relate to:

- Failure to engage all partners in decision making
- Responsibility for success of partnership being left to those who are too senior/busy (or too junior to be able to make a decision)
- Difficulties in staffing leading to overworking
- Unclear communication of responsibilities
- Different understandings of appropriate quality and standards
- Partnership occurring when a 'bought in' service may have been more appropriate
- Decisions not being made in a timely fashion
- Incoherence of external communications

Under-resourcing

Lack of resourcing is a frequently cited cause for not engaging in more partnership work, and it cannot be compensated for with more guidance, training or toolkits. This is especially true for sectors where money is especially tight such as in public libraries, as Katie Pekacar discovered in 2018: 'The greatest barrier to partnership is lack of resource for both public libraries and higher education institutions and infrastructure and strategic partnerships are perceived to require greater resource than other partnerships.'

Clash of culture(s)

It's been long acknowledged that the collision of different working cultures inhibits partnership working. It crops up in just about every piece of research we studied.

When Sarah Fisher reviewed the sector in 2012 she found friction in the 'differing understanding of what is meant by terminology, especially 'research' 'engagement' and 'education'; differing operational timescales with HEIs generally considered less fleet; differing levels of autonomy with HEI departments working with risk adverse central finance and marketing departments; differing commitments, for example arts organisations are public facing, and most resources – both facilities and staff – are in the first instance dedicated to public facing activities; differing pay scales which causes problems when looking at shared posts.' Fisher emphasises that 'developing understanding of each other's culture takes time and perseverance, and that in practice this is not readily available.'

The different working cultures were also a feature of Oakley and Selwood's report on sector leadership from 2010: 'the cultural differences between HEIs and cultural organisations often the represented the greatest challenge for collaborations to overcome. This was manifest in several respects: the relatively decentralised, consensual management of academic institutions versus the sometimes more charismatic models in the cultural sector; different approaches to time (academic institutions were often seen as slower) and to stakeholders (the notion of an 'audience' was perhaps stronger for cultural organisations).'

Learning each other's language is key; but it's a perpetual challenge. So much of Dawson and Gilmore's advice in their 2009 report to prospective partners in either HEIs or museums and galleries is not just about the use of language, but of being cognisant of each other's agendas, all the while recognising that the most attractive partners often can pick and

choose who they work with. Speaking a shared language is a functional necessity, and isn't the same thing as becoming fused beyond the authentic remit of the two halves of the partnership. While it is worth spending time ensuring that each other's needs and goals are well understood and aligned, they needn't be exactly the same.

Conditions for partnership

Katie Pekacar's 2018 Independent Mind report states that the most successful partnerships have:

- Shared aims: the most successful partnerships are based on shared values and desired outcomes
- Commitment: all partners want to engage and are prepared to commit resource to the partnership
- Understanding: each side is prepared to learn each other's language and drivers of partnership
- Value: the partnership has a clear value to both sides that justifies the time and effort of working together
- Reciprocity: contributions from and benefits for all sides
- Adaptability: flexible approach to working together to respond to changes as they occur
- Clarity: each side knows what is expected from them and the other party, and there are dedicated contacts in each organisation and processes for managing the partnership

The list above is typical of the many other reports surveyed for this project. The right conditions are a cocktail of contextual circumstances, governance modalities, and individual competencies and characteristics.

Many of the reports on this topic are at pains to point out that (as Sarah Little put it in 2015) 'there is no one-size-fits-all approach to partnership working that has emerged, instead successful examples of practice focus on flexibility, interpenetration and continued dialogue between parties.'

In theory, the arts should be the most well positioned discipline to engage in partnerships beyond the academy. As Comunian and Gilmore (2015) point out, 'the arts are a source of knowledge assets for academia, as theoretical knowledge requires the importing of practice-led expertise, such as professionals engaged in teaching as guests and sometimes even in tenured, permanent positions. Early career researchers undertaking study for professional development are developing similar research-led practices which are applicable in both arts and cultural management and within practice-based research.'

Partnership from the top

The Clearer Picture report (2016) is full of sensible advice to practitioners and arts leaders working up to a partnership with HEIs. It suggests the key to success includes 'strong leadership from senior figures within both organisations', 'a memorandum of understanding

can help create stability while also allowing both parties to act flexibly' that 'some material investment, no matter the size or scale' will help focus minds, and the 'the creation of neutral or shared spaces' to overcome any power dynamics.

The idea that partnerships need to be led from the top is echoed in Sarah Fisher's 2012 report: 'High level championing of partnerships within an institution, has a trickle-down effect, especially in sanctioning the allocation of resources – both staff time and money. In practice this is about conferring legitimacy, both allowing different people to take on leadership as position, expertise or ability suggests, and investing in the partnership because high level strategic benefits are clearly acknowledged.' This is also echoed by Katie Pekacar who said in 2018 that long-term partnerships that really worked at a strategic level had 'engagement from senior staff in each organisation'.

Without visible commitments from the top backed up with resource the partnership will function using invisible labour. This has all sorts of disadvantages, as Sarah Fisher points out 'many joint ventures happen because individuals develop 'under the radar' activity and buy-in at the most senior level was recognised as an important tool for legitimising work on partnerships as 'part of the day job' and more crucially for enabling succession planning.'

Some of the conditions for partnership are about enacting best practice, and some are about the environment in which a partnership takes place.

Best practice and organisational/individual values

In her 2013 evaluation of UCL's Share Academy Annabel Jackson found that best practice for partnership embodied the following values:

- Clarity: A clear statement of objectives and outcomes, early identification of the time input that the partners could contribute, a clear statement of responsibilities, a precise timetable, and articulation of any terms including any financial liabilities
- Professionalism: A professionally produced project plan, Gant chart, progress report, evaluation plan, and memorandum of understanding
- Value added: A project which uses staff time sparingly and respectfully, and exploits opportunities to add value

The SQW research on international partnerships from 2018 'captured perspectives on enabling conditions. Of these, 'personal relationships' was reported to be most important. This is followed by expertise and knowledge of collaborators and reinforced through geographic proximity with collaborators. Many consultees also identified the importance of shared values, the strategic support of the HEI and the role of civic interests in the partnership.'

The best of all practice: taking the time

Taking the time to play and explore together seems to be vital to a sustainable partnership. This can be done most effectively in a third space (see below) and mustn't be rushed if it's to be a true partnership rather than just a one-off transactional collaboration. Sarah Little

says 'a research partnership, especially if it is to be sustainable, is a long-term endeavour that requires commitment and ongoing investment from all parties' and that 'a longer term investment in partnership is also important for taking the time to build trust between parties. We should not be afraid of 'slow burning relationships' between organisations and extended conversations in response to the issue of how to find and develop partnership opportunities.'

In recounting the work of FACT in Liverpool and similar outfits, McKinley and Wright (2020) vividly describe the jeopardy of partnerships entered into without adequate forethought: 'Arts professionals, beyond HEIs, can operate as academic sociopaths, unwittingly stumbling into conflicting situations where intellectual property and careers are at stake through an over-friendly enthusiasm to share with others. The academic community can easily fall prey to frustration born out of the rapid pace of ideation and iteration in arts organisations that leaves no room for systematic, empirical research to be carried out.'

Partnership through serendipity

As we saw in many responses to our call for evidence, a little good fortune makes a lot of difference. In their 2018 report, SQW state that 'the majority of collaborations, at their outset, are serendipitous. Drivers of engagement have included introduction by mutual friends, meetings at civic events, shared interests in a specific topic or direct approaches to provide insights or ideas to a specific artistic work or programme of research. In other words, there is little structure or method to engagements. Whilst many have developed into long-term research partnerships or more complex, multi-faceted relationships, even these set-ups are usually born from small beginnings and a degree of 'test and check' before the partnership flourishes. It should be noted that much of this 'serendipity' is fostered by formal networks, events and structured introductions rather than pure chance.'

The most important part of the ecology: the third space

The metaphorical ivory tower remains an intimidating and impenetrable prospect for cultural practitioners on the outside. For their report from 2017 Kingston University found several projects whose instigators 'talked about the importance of having non-university spaces as the meeting ground for partnerships to develop; collaboration needs co-working spaces that are neutral. University sites are often a barrier to collaboration for industrial partners.'

Third spaces can be engineered to perform a key role in the wider ecology (which can be more or less conducive to partnership working). In fact, people in the sector told Oakley and Selwood (2010) that it was necessary to 'produce the ecology' where it did not already exist, and that active management of a brokerage function was a key part of sectoral leadership.

Annabel Jackson's 2013 review of Share Academy found 'strong support for a brokerage role' which looks very much like a third space and would help:

- Give information to stimulate thought about possible collaborations
- Make connections between universities and museums with similar interests

- Identify the right person within an institution
- Provide guidance and resources on good practice e.g. model memoranda of understanding
- Provide an independent trouble-shooting function

Benefits of partnership

There are many lists and frameworks which spell out the benefits of partnership. The Kingston University report from 2017 says that creative industry partners benefitted from working with universities because the HEIs bring:

- Funding and resources
- In-kind investment (time, networks and spaces)
- Knowledge Base (including archives and collections)
- Brokerage and co-production

The same report outlines the benefits accruing to universities from creative industry partnerships:

- Student benefit (ranging from teaching and curriculum design to training and showcasing)
- New challenge-led research projects for staff and graduate students
- Engagement and Impact (commercial, civic, public)

Sarah Little's report from a day-long conference in 2015 on the primary benefits of partnership work with HEIs for cultural organisations also highlights access to funding, but also:

- A critical research partner and co-creator
- Skills, technologies and communities provided by the HEI and its staff and students
- Rigour and credibility

In evaluating the AHRC Collaborative Communities programme, Facer and Enright (2016) frame benefits in terms of impact and legacy. Recognising that there are 'plural notions of legacy, which include: the creation of new products (websites, guidelines, toolkits, academic papers, software, exhibitions, booklets, artworks, reports, performances); the creation of new networks and relationships; the development of new theories, ideas and concepts (relating to communities, histories of community and means of researching community); the strengthening and evolution of institutions (community partners are developing new services and strengthening their research capacities, universities are adapting their systems and developing greater capacity for collaboration).'

Returning to the importance of individuals as key nodes of partnerships between HEIs and cultural organisations, Sarah Fisher observed in 2012 that 'partnership working for both the HEIs and cultural organisations provides opportunities to develop 'leadership at all levels' as individuals who are central to such partnerships often assume dual roles as academics or practitioners and as cultural leaders.'

Section 3: Policy context in 2021

The 2016 vote to leave the European Union (EU) was hugely unpopular in both the HE and cultural sectors. The UK formally left the EU at the end of 2020 and it has already resulted in major complications for work, travel and import/export in both sectors. On the HEI side, there is disruption to collaborative funding and research instruments and a question about the status of EU staff and students. On the cultural side, the difficulties in touring and work-related travel have already become apparent. A greater divergence in policy for both culture and HE between England and the devolved nations is likely as they assert different paths post-Brexit (especially in Scotland where policy was already somewhat different and independence has become resurgent).

More broadly, the Brexit debate has stoked a culture war in the UK which has influenced the tone and politics in both sectors. Issues like free speech on campus, decolonialising, gender and racial justice have become flashpoints and put longstanding principles like academic freedom and the arms-length principle under pressure. In some regards this had led to a clear affinity of values between the majority of people working in HE and the cultural sector. Put another way, they find themselves on the same side in the culture war.

To address some of the economic concerns associated with de-industrialisation and the social impacts of an increasingly digital economy the government has instigated a "levelling up" agenda as part of its wider industrial strategy. This has meant that greater attention is being paid to how the HE sector can play a role in supporting a better skilled and better paid workforce. For some this has signalled an attack on arts and humanities subjects which don't obviously put graduates on the path to riches as a degree in a STEM subject might. Nonetheless the cultural and creative industries have been huge beneficiaries of investment in the industrial strategy through the work of UKRI and Innovate UK: both of whom are increasingly building partnership working into their preferred operational models (see Section 4).

This all comes at the end of a decade of continual degradation of the national infrastructure through government cutbacks. A good deal of the literature on partnership working is prompted (if not fully driven) by the cutbacks following the financial crash of 2008/9 (e.g. Boys & Boddington 2017). The strategies and infrastructure that facilitate partnership in 2021 often have their roots in the early "austerity" period. This inevitably shapes the character of partnership working today.

Facer and Enright (2016) emphasise that 'bureaucracy matters' especially when 'jobs are being cut, funding sources are drying up, the demand to identify and secure new funding streams is increasing. In this context, the potential for community partners to collaborate with universities has two clear economic attractions – first, as a new funding source to bring in resource; second, as a route to evaluating, evidencing and promoting organisations' activities to better secure resource from other funders'. These pressures are real and academic research and KE doesn't operate in a platonic politics-free context. Facer and Enright point out the pressure to 'secure research grants and their overheads, and precariously employed individual academics are often looking for funding to provide employment for themselves or junior colleagues'. And finally, there is the instrumental

benefit of being able to tell a good story: 'Collaborations with community partners that demonstrate public benefit therefore increasingly have a monetary value, as these activities can be translated into 'Impact Narratives' that bring with them central funding for research.'

In summary, the pandemic and lockdown has come at a time when the UK was in the midst of a turbulent and fractious political and policy episode. Somewhat paradoxically this has heightened the need and logic of partnership-making. As the UK becomes more isolationist its institutions are prompted to forge their own networks and reinforce and reassure themselves that they have allies and shared values, domestically and overseas.

For all of the intrinsic, constant and universal benefits of partnership espoused in the literature, Rachel Pattinson's blogs about the Vital North partnership between Seven Stories and Newcastle University (https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/vitalnorth/) are a really clear example of how partnership works in practice, and the ways in which it is enabled and buffeted by different expectations brought about by time-limited policy and funding schemes. Her story makes it clear that whatever happens between partners with the right intentions and resources, the policy context still matters.

This is further echoed by SQW in their 2018 report who found that the most fruitful partnerships 'benefit from a supportive policy and organisational infrastructure at national and regional level. Specifically, through provision of strategic leadership, and providing a supportive environment for the personal relationships which sit at the core of the most fruitful partnerships to spark and ignite.'

A general trend in the cultural sector in the last ten years has been to frame partnership as a bulwark against the effects of cutbacks. As Ellison noted, 'at a time when policy makers are emphasising partnership to maximise the use of resources, to find new money and develop new ideas, we found ambivalence about using it just to access funding and suspicion of partnerships that were imposed rather than being allowed to develop organically, especially when this is perceived as a tool only to save money.'

Let's Create

The Arts Council's current 10-year strategy is Let's Create. It follows Achieving Great Art and Culture for Everyone. Many years ago, the Arts Council had a proliferation of strategies, each one dedicated to a particular area of work. Prior to 2010 the Arts Council's work with the HE sector was guided by its 2006 strategy *Arts, enterprise and excellence: strategy for higher education*. That document now feels quite dated but nonetheless located a "home" in Arts Council England (ACE) for HEI working which is now absent (see Section 5).

In Let's Create ACE states that 'our current partnerships with local authorities and higher education institutes are among our most significant and valuable assets.' It commits them to 'work with a wider range of partners, including the other National Lottery distributors, local government, further and higher education and schools' and to assist the organisations they fund 'to forge new partnerships with further and higher education'. The benefits of partnership are clearly articulated in the document and are expected to result in a more

highly skilled sector, more effective use of data and research and ultimately more thriving places to live, work, study and visit.

It remains to be seen how ACE's stated support for partnerships will be manifested in their funding decisions and sector development interventions.

Section 4: Contemporary collaboration infrastructure

An increasingly large and complex ecology of culture and higher education has prompted policymakers, practitioners and other interested parties to develop both *ad hoc* and centrally organised infrastructures to facilitate partnership and exchange. Peer to peer exchange within the academy has always existed through various learned societies and professional associations. Partnership between HEIs and the wider world has taken all manner of guises. Much of it is built from a recognition that universities are home to reserves of talent and resource that could be put to good use for social and economic ends.

The key player in public engagement is still the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), which seeks to support universities to increase the quality and impact of their public engagement activity and has done substantial work in the cultural space like the Museums University Partnership Initiative (a precursor to the University Museums Group). The MUPI project created connections between museums and university partners via facilitated networking events bringing together museum staff and academics, and cumulated in the funding of projects involving 107 museums and 59 universities. All the resources for the events (including partnership prompt materials) are on the NCCPE website and there is a fine 2017 report from Laura Crossley outlining how the HE sector can be 'opened up to smaller and medium sized museums whose unique collections and engagement expertise are often an under-utilised resource within the Higher Education sector, whilst at the same time adding value to the work of the museums involved and contributing to their long-term resilience.'

The Civic University Network has worked to facilitate the linkage of HEIs and deployment of university resources to support placemaking, local social enterprise, high street renewal and other forms of civic engagement. The intersection with the arts crops up in one report connected to the Gulbenkian Foundation's ongoing Civic Role of the Arts Project. The Rethinking Relationships report (ICC 2017) makes mention of the breadth of partnership work by HEIs that speaks to 'the civic role'.

A smattering of sector-specific networks also perform a vital role linking various parts of the HEI-culture infrastructure. Frequently this partnership infrastructure has a local or regional footprint. For example, the London Arts and Humanities Partnership brings together eight university partners and six core delivery partners (Museum of London; The National Archives; the Metropolitan Police; Google; the Victoria & Albert Museum; and the Wellcome Trust) to support doctoral research and other collaborations. The culture forums are regional of course, but also previously were the Local Development Agencies or Regional Arts Associations. Whatever the levels of partnership and exchange may have been in the past, they are certainly greater today as a result of the novel incentive structure for how academics and HEIs are evaluated.

Partnership incentives in the REF, KEF and TEF

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is an attempt to evaluate the performance of HEIs through peer review by senior academics of the quality of outputs (e.g. publications, performances, and exhibitions), the impact of these outputs beyond academia, and the

environment that supports research. It began in 2014 and now is accompanied by the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcome Framework (TEF) and most recently of all the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). Each of these measurement frameworks is administered by a different HE sector agency. The REF, TEF and KEF are all designed to recognise and reward the work of universities and academics in ways that allow for outside comparison between them and incentivise behaviour and strategy among university leadership.

The arrival of the REF, particularly the component on impact, has prompted a good deal of fresh activity relating to partnership. This has also generated a lot of useful data for those of us interested in measuring the size and shape of that activity (e.g. Hewlett 2014 and Newcastle University 2020).

The HE sector has certainly made strides in becoming more visible and porous since Sarah Fisher wrote this in 2012 in a report for ACE: 'without establishing an on-going relationship with universities, it is difficult to know which researchers might be interested in working with you and whether, having found a researcher, their research methodologies are appropriate'. In commissioning research from consultants, arts organisations can struggle to locate and learn from existing like research'. This is the kind of story that prompted King's College London to build CultureCase.org and they and other HEIs to establish Cultural Institutes or Centres which face into the sector on behalf of their faculty expertise.

Proliferation of Cultural Institutes and partnership job roles

Jane Ellison (2015) found that people often made 'references to the various important roles played by individuals in managing partnership. They were described as 'enablers, people who connect people and take that chance, so partnerships can come into being''. Sometimes those roles are distributed across an organisation but increasingly there is a cohort of professionalised and dedicated job holders. These people often have a mission on their hands to keep command of all possible partnership activity across their institutions or regions.

Cultural Partnership Managers

We spoke with a handful of HE cultural partnership managers. A good deal of the work is to hold a network of relationships together: making and maintaining connections to increase efficiency and decrease duplication. It's sometimes a role that doesn't offer immediate or obvious benefit to the university (the research or teaching dividend can be hard to identify in the early stages). Triage, translating, redirecting, and signposting are recurring descriptions of the work of these post-holders. They are the person who answers the call when somebody makes contact with a HEI in search of a partner.

It's quite possible for a vibrant partnership ecology to develop without the involvement of these post-holders. Individual academics and cultural practitioners form bilateral connections all the time. Nonetheless it was made clear to us that there is value added by people who can refine and enhance the typical proposition that comes into a university by

encouraging richer multidisciplinary perspectives, or ensuring that all the paperwork is legally above board and serving both parties.

In cities where there are missing pieces of arts development infrastructure it is the partnership team in the HEI which often fulfils those functions (either in house or through the establishment of a new organisation) – for example Creative Manchester or Coventry's Cathedral Quarter Alliance.

These roles needn't be exclusively housed inside one HEI. In Liverpool, the jobs are shared between organisations, as McKinley and Wright (2020) explain: 'To facilitate and manage [a] developing collaborative culture, FACT created two specific posts that grew out of a department set up in 2011 – the Research and Innovation Department. These posts consisted of a Head of Innovation and a Research Director. Of significance, the Research Director's role was appointed as a full-time member of staff at Liverpool John Moores University, on the agreement that they would spend 50% of their time at FACT developing the research strategy. This original appointment consolidates a permanent collaboration between FACT and Liverpool John Moores University'.

It's worth reflecting on who tends to do the spadework of partnership inside HEIs. With one eye on the precarious academic labour market Facer and Enright (2016) observed that 'research assistants, who are junior members of the team but who tend to have the most time formally allocated to projects, tend to take a disproportionate responsibility for the success of these collaborations'. The development of dedicated consortia to support work bridging the cultural and creative and academic sectors (see below) have taken a slightly different approach: apportioning responsibility for work around a large constellation of academics by buying out one or two days a week of their time and co-ordinated via a small central secretariat.

CDAs and IROs

The growth of this type of work has gone hand in hand with the Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) scheme and Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status, both of which are designed to recognise and facilitate active research outside the boundaries of HEIs. They are both largely well regarded in the sector. The experience of one heritage organisation prompted a 2019 Newcastle University study to report that 'involvement in doctoral programmes was seen as one of the more productive types of working relationship, particularly in so far as the ability to act as Principal Investigator on doctoral training partnerships often provided an opportunity for agencies to advance their research agendas and have research questions that were useful to them as individual organisations met.'

Hill and Meek's 2019 review of the CDA scheme found that 'the model of partnership that is at the heart of the collaborative studentship between higher education and other sectors works effectively and is well established. It can provide lessons for other forms of partnership, research projects and delivering impact for research. Collaborative doctoral students provide a route to diversifying the pool of research students in the arts and humanities. Former collaborative doctoral students have high employment rates in both the cultural and heritage sectors as well as higher education. Collaborative doctoral students

make up a significant proportion of AHRC-funded studentships in some subject areas and are shaping the portfolio of research in these areas supported by the AHRC. Collaborative doctoral students have made a substantial contribution to the work of cultural and heritage organisations, enabling these organisations to achieve their aims more effectively and undertake research that would not otherwise have happened.'

The same is true for the awarding of IRO status to sectoral bodies. The aforementioned Newcastle report mentioned above stated that 'for those organisations with IRO status, the key factor in these new, strategic partnerships, is their ability to set the agenda and select the projects and partners they want to work with on the basis of the questions they need answered.'

CCV, PEC, NCACE, etc.

In addition to the Cultural Forums, the UK is currently home to at least three centres of connection and exchange between HE and the cultural and creative sectors.

The Centre for Cultural Value (CCV) was established in 2019 and is a national research centre based at the University of Leeds. Core partners are The Audience Agency, The University of Liverpool, The University of Sheffield, The University of York and Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. It is funded by the UKRI AHRC, ACE and Paul Hamlyn Foundation over five years. The central team works alongside cultural practitioners and organisations, academics, funders and policymakers to: summarise existing evidence to make relevant research more accessible; support the cultural sector to develop skills in research, evaluation and reflective practice; convene discussions around questions of cultural value; shape policy development; and offer funding for research partnerships.

The PEC (Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre) was established in 2018 and is led by Nesta, the innovation foundation, and involves a UK-wide consortium of universities. They are Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Work Foundation at Lancaster University, London School of Economics, Manchester, Newcastle, Sussex, and Ulster. Its core research programme is focused on: geography of the creative industries; the value of arts and culture; international, trade, and immigration; skills, jobs and education; intellectual property and regulation; R&D and innovation; diversity and inclusion; business models and access to finance; public service broadcasting.

NCACE (the National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange) was established in 2020. It is led by TCCE and funded by Research England and currently has four regional hub partners: Bath Spa University, Birmingham City University, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Northumbria University. NCACE facilitates and supports capacity for KE between HE and the arts and cultural sector across the UK, with a particular focus on evidencing and showcasing the social, cultural, environmental, as well as economic, impacts of such activities.

Two other pieces of the sectoral infrastructure complete the picture: the University Centres for the Arts Network (UCAN) is a consortium of arts centres, theatres, concert halls and galleries based in the UK, each with the University as a major stakeholder. It was created in 2019 off the back of the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value with a

secretariat based at the University of Warwick. There is also the Russell Group Culture Network, bringing together the arts and culture leads from the 24 elite research HEIs in the UK and is co-ordinated from Newcastle University.

Creative Clusters, R&D, etc.

Although this report focuses predominantly on the arts and culture sector, it is worth a quick detour into the overlapping field of the creative industries, where there is a great deal of investment designed to link HEIs with local social and commercial enterprises.

The Creative Industries Clusters Programme brings together researchers with companies and organisations from across the UK's four nations in a first-of-its kind research and development investment of £80m from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, as part of the Government's Industrial Strategy. Nine HEI-led creative clusters are spread around the country and are complemented by the PEC (see above) and a National Centre for Immersive Storytelling. The Clusters join a wider sector infrastructure in the creative industries which frequently incorporates universities and others with an interest in research and knowledge. Perhaps most important is the Creative Industries Federation (a sector membership body which represents, champions and supports the UK's creative industries and has a strong presence of HEIs in its membership).

There have been many attempts over the years to link the creative industries with the work underway in HEIs but they have struggled to navigate the disciplinary divides between 'creative industries' and 'arts and humanities'. Things like Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) only somewhat impacted the working life of arts and culture researchers. A 2011 AHRC study found that 'academics from the Arts and Humanities are more likely to be unaware of TTO services compared to those academics from other disciplines'.

Nonetheless, research by Universities UK from 2010 collated a 17 case studies which highlighted the 'ways that universities across the UK are contributing to the growth of the creative economy as a result of the scale, credibility and international standing both of individual institutions and of the UK's higher education system as a whole'. They are worth sharing here as they are equally applicable in parallel 'arts and culture' settings. These ways included:

- Anchoring regional clusters through the attraction and retention of academic, graduate and business talent
- Engaging significant industry players and facilitating connections with creative SMEs, creating new routes to major market opportunities
- Building international reputation and credibility in ways that both enhance the UK's reputation and deliver direct benefit to regional creative businesses
- Supporting active networks and bringing together business, academic and public sector partners – the triple helix of innovation

Section 5: Concluding thoughts

Facer and Enright's evaluation of the AHRC in 2016 concluded that 'public value' from research is derived from 'substantive conversations between the different sets of expertise and experience that university and community partners offer, and in so doing, enabling the core questions that both are asking to be reframed and challenged. Such a set of relationships is far from the naïve economic model that would see the value of research judged by its immediate utility. Instead, it is about the creation of a new public knowledge landscape where communities, and the universities that form part of those communities, can collaborate to question, research and experiment to create new ways of understanding, seeing and acting in the world.'

Some enduring principles for good partnership

Keep it real

Reflecting on all the above it seems that good partnerships must be what Oakley and Selwood (2010) describe as 'genuine partnerships based on shared ambitions, rather than marriages of convenience prompted by funding opportunities'.

There is a need to avoid performative or tokenistic or synthetic partnership, which can be especially treacherous when pursuing expedient funding opportunities. Facer and Enright (2016) describe 'examples in which both the idea of 'the community' and the idea of 'the university' are simply harnessed to give a patina of either authenticity or credibility to partnerships.'

Have an eye to equity and diversity

Both the cultural and higher education sectors have deeply engaged with the reinvigorated debate about racial justice in light of the murder of George Floyd and a worldwide Black Lives Matter movement. The 2018 Common Cause report from David Bryan et al. sets out some of the best approaches to 'Research Collaborations between Universities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities'. Both HE and cultural sectors understand more than ever how important and relevant these are. Diversity extends beyond ethnicity of course, and the approaches are likely to act in support of the involvement of all currently marginalised groups. The approaches include working with trusted mediators and brokers, respecting and making room for contested debate and multiple types of expertise, ensuring that there is adequate time and resource allocated to partnership building, removing unnecessarily burdensome bureaucracy which acts to exclude. In the end they settle on ten principles of fair and mutual research partnerships comprise:

1. A commitment to strengthening the partnering community organisation
2. A commitment to mutual benefit
3. A commitment to transparency and accountability
4. Fair practices in payments
5. Fair payments for participants
6. A commitment to fair KE

7. A commitment to sustainability and legacy
8. A commitment to equality and diversity
9. A commitment to sectoral as well as organisational development
10. A commitment to reciprocal learning

Play to intrinsic strengths

Artists and arts leaders are public-facing and engaging by default. Therefore, if HEIs are looking for partners to amplify the public reach and impact of their research then (as McKinley and Wright 2020 put it), the sector 'can be the perfect paradigm changer for making public and accessible research work through the lens of the artist.'

There may still be a widespread reticence about appreciating and communicating the relevance and value of research in the arts and humanities. The 2011 AHRC 'Hidden Connections' report found that academics from the arts and humanities were much more likely than those in other disciplines to report that their research is of no relevance for external organisations. They were less likely to have taken out a patent, licensed research outputs, or formed a business or formed a spin-out or consultancy than other disciplinary groups. However, they were more likely than other academics to interact with community and non-profit sectors. Where they do interact with businesses it was more likely to be at a local level than nationally or internationally.

Considering the intrinsic facets of HEIs as opposed to any other type of organisation it shouldn't come as a surprise that Oakley and Selwood (2010) identify 'that in HEI collaborations, primacy in academic research remains a recognisable characteristic of leadership.' This suggests that there is (or was) some culture change to do in order to fully legitimise something other than primacy in academic research, or an honest confrontation with deeply held concepts of expertise and legitimacy.

Think afresh about what's needed to make it work

Facer and Enright (2016) sketch out a new set of job roles (or at least competencies) that support partnership work. Given the widely acknowledged resource and power imbalance in most partnerships it makes sense for HEIs to invest in these roles, but they might be located in the HEI or the cultural organisation or community. It would be a fun exercise to map these onto existing teams working in partnership and onto any framework or strategy:

- The Catalyser – this role involves making contributions that stimulate, initiate or disrupt the thinking on a project
- The Integrator – this role involves keeping an eye on a big picture, spotting where ideas, practices and people can work together
- The Designer - this role involves connecting up the different ideas and elements of a project and translating it
- The Broker - this role is concerned with building relationships
- The Facilitator – this role is concerned with enabling conversations to happen
- The Project Manager – this involves keeping track of aims, objectives, plans and progress

- The Diplomat – this role is concerned with institutional negotiations
- The Scholar – this role is concerned with connecting the project with the previous research and knowledge in the field
- The Conscience – this role is concerned with ensuring that the project accurately and ethically reflects the experiences and needs of relevant communities
- The Data Gatherer - this role is concerned with gathering information and data on the ground or in archives
- The Nurturer – this involves the emotional labour of taking care of participants in the project
- The Loudhailer – this is an outward facing role, about going out and promoting the project
- The Accountant – this role is concerned with managing how the budget is allocated

Don't rush it

A recurring observation in this study and others is that partnerships need time to blossom and mature. They might go on for years without any obvious deliverable or outcome, although they might be intrinsically stimulating and enjoyable for the parties engaged. A long-standing partnership built on trust is something stable in times of crisis, and pregnant with hard-to-predict possibilities. Facer and Enright reported that in their study of the Connected Communities programme one professor described the process of 'establishing a public research group over 20 years ago that brought together people from across the university and the city to exchange information, to reflect on cultural diversity and to get projects started; this in turn led to significant funding to create more accessible public archives and a series of smaller research projects in the same area over many years.'
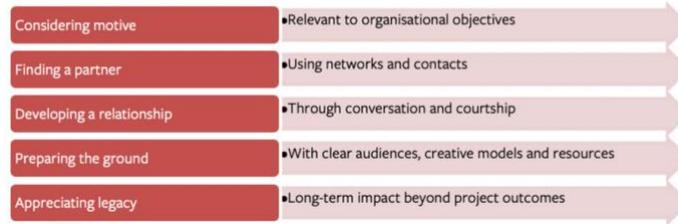
Points for policymakers and funders to consider

In their report SQW suggested that the Arts Council, AHRC and British Council develop shared objectives 'such that they make the system of fostering and supporting collaboration both more open and more navigable. This is especially important for cultural organisations.' This seems like a sound objective today, especially given the progress and limitations of the likes of the CCV, PEC and NCACE.

In reviewing museum-university partnerships, Bonacchi and Willcocks (2016) suggested funding bodies concentrate on being more generous and less outcome-driven, recognising that partnership work takes time to come to fruition.

A vital question for policymakers looking to encourage more and better partnership working is which of these stages (from Patrick 2020) can policy and influence?:

Initiation, development and delivery

There are five steps that make up the initiation, development and delivery of a research partnership.

Considering motive	• Relevant to organisational objectives
Finding a partner	• Using networks and contacts
Developing a relationship	• Through conversation and courtship
Preparing the ground	• With clear audiences, creative models and resources
Appreciating legacy	• Long-term impact beyond project outcomes

Or, more precisely, where in the partnership cycle (from Ellison 2015) can outside agencies really make a difference:
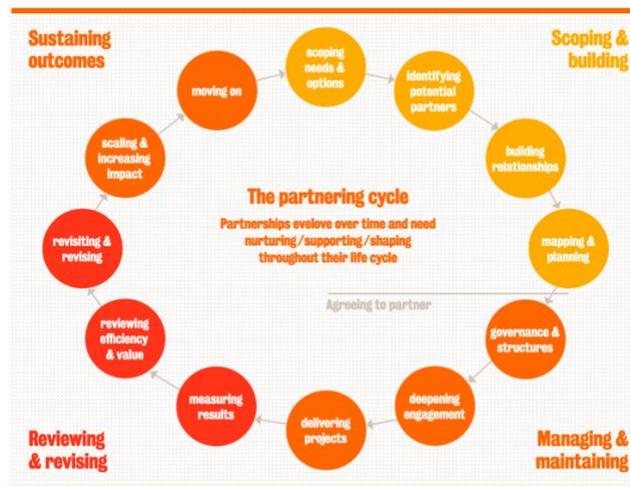
Good examples of funding for partnership work are in existence. The Future Arts Centres initiative was awarded some funding by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to dedicate time and resource within the network to exploring new partnership models. Feedback in relation to this seems to suggest that having space and time together, away from the day-to-day, is a vital component to making this a success. The model of gathering cohorts of like-minded arts leader "together and away" to explore "partnerships in partnership" might be replicated and scaled more widely across the sector.

Some messages for ACE in particular

A universal challenge seems to be finding a department or a role inside bureaucracies where partnerships work can reside. Back in 2018 SQW said that their consultation with the sector revealed the perceived ''orphaning' of higher education as a theme both with ACE itself, and in its funded organisations. Within ACE itself the brief falls between the core work of the education team, and that of the research team (with interests from international, skills and policy), whilst in cultural organisations engagement with HEIs is not usually part of an individual's responsibilities (and where it is present, this is usually under the guise of 'development').' This is something that has the potential to be remedied by operationalising the ambitions in Let's Create, and not in a way that leads to a new silo.

Some messages for HE funders in particular

The continuation of the highly successful CDA scheme will need to take on board some of the key recommendations from the 2019 review by Hill and Meek (some of which relate to sharing best practice) on the topic of encouraging more CDAs like those in museums, galleries, libraries and heritage and exploring how 'this model of collaboration' can 'work better with performing arts, small creative businesses, or other cultural organisations and individuals'. The fact that CDAs might spawn longer term partnerships means that small investments in schemes like this will yield larger long-term benefits.

Further Education

It is striking that very little attention has been paid to further education partnership work. To some extent this is the domain of specialist arts training colleges, arts schools and conservatoires. Further education is also sometimes within the remit of cultural education partnerships which would otherwise be concerned with schools, and primary and secondary education in particular. There is no doubt that private sector provision of the arts in further education is blessed with resources and facilities that might be of significant value to local communities. It is also a sector which is a vital section of the engagement and talent pipeline and as such is crucial for furthering equity, diversity and fairness within it.

Further education institutions can be a hybrid of schools and HEIs, with flexibility and autonomy and a student body able to fully pursue their own learning goals. As such the drivers, barriers and conditions for partnership with the cultural sector are also likely to be a hybrid of those faced by schools and universities.

One of the few reports to mention further education is the 2018 Independent Mind study into connections between HEIs and public libraries. Its author Katie Pekacar says that 'further education institutions should be considered as an important additional stakeholder in any work to develop partnerships between public libraries and higher education.' She said also that three-way partnerships (HE, FE, libraries) are common and there is 'similar enthusiasm among public libraries for further education partnerships as for higher education partnerships and similar motivations for engaging in partnership. However, more work is required to identify relevant national representative or strategic bodies for further education colleges.'

Lessons from Scotland: research pooling and Interface

It may be that research pooling of some kind will help foster a more collaborative culture, as Universities Scotland describe in their 2011 report: 'Established 2004, research pools, have been funded by the Scottish Funding Council as a way of fostering very close collaborative research links across universities, sharing staff, resources, facilities and ideas, to strengthen the critical mass of Scotland's collective research base and enhance international standing. Of the formal research pools currently in existence, almost all are anchored within in the science and engineering disciplines.'

The same report claims that 'Scotland is unique in regard to knowledge exchange in so far as it is home to *Interface'* which acts as 'a free one-stop-shop for match-making business needs with the research and innovation expertise in universities'. In 2011 Interface worked 'across

all 20 higher education institutions and research institutes in Scotland and across all industry sectors and is aimed primarily at SMEs' and had 'initiated over 330 collaborative partnerships between universities and business.'

Market failures

Oakley and Selwood (2010) are insistent that the supportive infrastructure to incentivise and facilitate true partnerships need to be fabricated as they 'do not grow up naturally in market economies' and that market measures of success might not be appropriate. This is a point echoed by Universities Scotland in a report a year later 'the collaborative and iterative nature of the interaction between creative businesses and universities does not fit well with metrics developed for science-based research and commercialisation activities. Collaborative, people-based interactions that work in the creative economy do not always translate well into academic publications.' It remains to be seen whether these sentiments are compatible with the direction taken by the REF, TEF and KEF.

Points for CFN to consider

CFN needs to cultivate the attributes of a functioning 'third space' in which communities of practice can gather to collaborate as reciprocal equals with shared goals. As Comunian and Gilmore explain: 'Third spaces as spaces which are neither solely academic spaces nor solely creative and cultural production spaces but an open, creative and generative combination of the two. They provide an opportunity for the academic communities (staff, researchers and students) to engage with creative producers and arts knowledge and for further exchanges to happen. They are often frameworks and opportunities for exchange: they can sometimes be virtual, they can be event-based or they can be a mix of different forms of exchange happening across time and space '

These third spaces are important for smoothing the power imbalances for formal institutional governance between HEIs and smaller arts organisations, especially when these partnerships are held with individual academics. As Sarah Fisher observed back in her 2012 report for ACE, 'HEI institutional ratification of MOUs may not be possible or desirable with smaller arts organisations, although MOUs are used to define collaborations on projects and developed at department level.' This sentiment is echoed by Bonacchi and Willcocks who say that the power imbalance can be the result of 'substantially greater possibilities of accessing funding for HEIs and IROs than for museums that are not recognised as having research capacity.'

The role of the third space might be most important once a partnership is underway, but it can also be part of the partnership-instigation process. And that's where CFN's role as a broker is worth considering.

Given that so little has changed since Sarah Little's report from 2015 it's worth revisiting a main conclusion of hers on the need for 'research networks that can broker partnerships between arts organisations and research organisations looking for partners. For smaller arts organisations access to suitable partners can be an obstacle and therefore it is important to

maximise the role of organisations such as the Arts Council and University Research Exchanges in supporting the introduction of potential research partners.'

SQW said back in 2018 in relation to the Culture Forums: 'In the spirit of HEI/cultural collaboration, they should continue to be led by their constituents, with a continued commitment to engaging new partners, and to established set piece thematic events or 'sandpits' designed to provoke ideas that accelerate collaboration.'

The turbulent events of the last 16 months seem to make all these conclusions more relevant than ever. Knowing the direction that the Arts Council is taking in Let's Create, combined with the dominance of HEI perspectives in previous reports and ongoing investment in partnership infrastructure, it is clear where CFN and the other forums can add value in our recovery from the pandemic.

Appendix

About this research

This research was a partnership between Arts Council England, Culture Forum North (CFN), the South East Cultural Innovation Forum and Midlands Higher Education and Cultural Forum. It aimed to:

- Identify key areas of benefit and risk to higher/further education and cultural sector partnerships in 2021
- Understand the immediate and longer-term impacts of the pandemic
- Devise a set of strategic recommendations for the future work of partnership networks
- Understand the financial, physical and human resources needed to sustain this work

The project began with a thorough review of the previous literature on the topic of partnership work between HEIs and the cultural sector. This identified a relevant corpus of over 20 reports, academic books and papers, blogs and grey literature. A call for examples was circulated via the CFN website, newsletters and other social channels for project partners. This resulted in about 30 submissions of examples of partnership work. These supplemented others which had been uncovered through initial desk research. The examples were grouped into themes which seemed especially relevant for partnership work in 2020/21 and a series of four 45-minute group interviews were conducted over Zoom. These were recorded and auto-transcribed using Otter.ai. The audio and transcript were then used as the basis for the relevant sections of this report. The interviews themselves followed this outline:

> Introductions
> Q1: How did this partnership begin? Who instigated it?
> Q2: What is/was easy and what was hard about working in partnership?
> Q3: How has the partnership addressed diversity, equity and inclusion?
> Q4: How will the work evolve after the pandemic has receded?
> Q5: What advice would you give others seeking to develop partnerships with culture/HEIs?
> Q6: What do you need from funders, policymakers or brokers like Culture Forum North?
> Explainer of what happens next

This report brings together previous research into one place and consolidates what we know about the value of HEIs working collaboratively with cultural sector organisations and artists. It brings our understanding right up to date by focussing on experiences and case studies since March 2020. The research draws out best practice for partnership working and produce a systematic framework for developing partnerships within regional forums.

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