Creative Industries
Policy and Evidence Centre

Led by Newcastle University Business School with RSA

Discussion paper

Creative Industries and Place: Configurations and Scales

Patrycja Kaszynska and Graeme Evans

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.23235865

DP Number: 2026/4

November 2026

Creative PEC is funded by: UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council

About the Authors

Patrycja Kaszynska is Senior Research Fellow at the University of the Arts London (UAL) and Research Fellow at the Creative PEC. Her expertise is in cultural value: how the value of art and culture is articulated and evidenced in policy and decision-making. She has contributed to shaping national debates in the UK through a series of influential projects including: AHRC Cultural Value Project, Cultural Value Scoping Project and AHRC- and DCMS-funded Scoping Culture and Heritage Capital Project. With Graeme Evans she co-authored the OECD evidence-based policy report: Culture-led Regeneration and Place Transformation. Her research interests span critical theory, cultural studies, cultural policy, arts management, and cultural economics – exploring how cultural value is articulated, expressed, and contested across disciplines.

Graeme Evans is Emeritus Professor of Culture & Creative Economy at University of the Arts London and Creative PEC Research Fellow. He has led longitudinal studies of creative clusters using spatial data analysis, cultural mapping and participant observation, and has undertaken international comparative studies of creative spaces and urban policy (Creative London, OECD, UNESCO). He has developed guidance and toolkits for cultural planning, asset mapping and place shaping for DCMS, HM Treasury, and was PI for the AHRC/UKRI Creative Industries Cluster project: Business of Fashion Textiles & Technology, including a £3m R&D programme for SMEs, with major brands, the V&A Museum and createch firms. Prior to academe he was a director of Inter-Action, a large arts and social enterprise centre in London which pioneered community media, publishing, adult and children's theatre and performing arts training.

About the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) supports growth of the UK's creative industries through providing independent and authoritative evidence and policy advice.

Led by Newcastle University, with the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and funded by the UKRI via Arts and Humanities Research Council, Creative PEC comprises a core consortium of Newcastle University, Work Advance, the University of Sussex and the University of Sheffield.

Disclaimer

This discussion paper is published by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. The Creative PEC is funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and is hosted by Newcastle University in partnership with the Royal Society of Arts.

The views and interpretations expressed in this paper lie solely with the authors and may not be shared by the Director of the PEC, the editor of the Discussion Paper series, Newcastle University, the RSA and the AHRC. Readers who wish to challenge the evidence and/or interpretations provided are encouraged to do so by directly contacting the lead author and/or by writing to the Series Editor Prof Giorgio Fazio at giorgio.fazio@pec.ac.uk

Citation

If the information in this report is used in any subsequent research and/or publications, please cite as follows:

Kaszynska, P. and Evans, G. (2026) Creative Industries and Place: Configurations and Scales, Creative PEC Discussion Paper Series, Available at: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23235865

Abstract

This discussion paper examines the relationship between cultural and creative sectors and Place, through the concepts of scale and configuration. Drawing on a Creative PEC-funded research Network that brought together scholars and practitioners from across cultural policy, economics, planning and humanities disciplines, **the paper explores how place-based factors shape cultural sector and creative industry (CI) production, knowledge exchange, communities of learning and practice – and creative innovation systems**. Moving beyond conventional approaches that treat place as a fixed geographical unit, the paper argues that creative development emerges from dynamic configurations of physical, social, cultural, and institutional assets and their interplay.

Recognising that innovation in the widest sense arises through complex interactions between actors, institutions and places that are not visible in conventional policy frameworks and datasets, the paper calls for approaches that attend to the relational and systemic dimensions underpinning value creation. Seven policy considerations are outlined to support this orientation:

- First, intermediary organisations and support organisations – from co-working and maker spaces, to place-based sector networks and FE&HEIs – should be recognised not just as key actors that connect sectors and enable collaboration but also as integral to cultural infrastructure in places.
- Second, workspace and the mix of uses and local amenities need to be supported, valued and protected in order to retain and attract CI clusters and innovation in place.
- Third, stronger multi-level governance mechanisms are needed to align local, regional, and national priorities, in particular targeting the relationally constituted 'mezzo' level of decision-making.
- Fourth, protected spaces for experimentation and risk-taking are needed in place-based contexts, with access to risk capital lacking in cultural and CI sectors, to support prototyping and occasionally 'failing', such as campus (CI and HEI), lab/studio and showcase spaces.
- Fifth, investment is required in boundary-spanning and translational research capacities and capabilities that connect disciplines, sectors, and forms of knowledge. To effectively capture how creative ecosystems operate in practice, multi-scalar datasets (economic, environmental, social and cultural) – reflecting multi-disciplinary knowledge – are needed.

- Sixth, evaluation frameworks should move beyond activity and outputs to measure relationships, trust, and collaborative capacity.
- Relatedly and finally, appraisal should take into account strategic option value: the value of creating future possibilities under conditions of uncertainty, including developing capabilities, relationships and knowledge that expand the range of future courses of action available in places.

Together – rather than separately - these recommendations offer a framework for more effective place-based innovation policy, governance and management, and where the whole will exceed the sum of the individual elements. This report stands to make a significant contribution to the implementation of 2025 Industrial Strategy which describes itself as 'unashamedly place-based' and to support the growing emphasis on the importance of devolved and regional leadership in relation to innovation policy. It also builds and capitalises on the most recent 2026 update to the Green Book which introduces more future-sensitive approaches to complement conventional economic valuation. In this report we emphasise the need for assessment of option-creating effects. This is particularly important for place-based, mezzo-level policy in regard to cultural and creative sectors, where the objective may be less to select a predetermined 'winner' than to cultivate the relationships, capabilities and configurations through which future innovation can emerge. In this sense, cultural and creative activity can have strategic option value – not only because of the economic value it generates today, but because it can alter the future opportunity set available to a place.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION 5
2. APPROACH 6
3. BACKGROUND 6

3.1 Place-based Concepts 7
3.2 The Development of Area-based Approaches, Historically and Today 9
3.3 The Concepts of Scales and Configurations and their Relevance to Innovation 11
TEXTBOX 1. KEY ANALYTICAL CONCEPTS 14

4. DISCUSSION TOPICS 15

4.1 Place Matters - the Continuing Importance of Place 15
4.2. Place Affordances and Urban Morphology 16
4.3. Co-working Spaces, Creative Enterprise Zones and Land Trusts 19
4.4 Infrastructures and Intermediaries 21
TEXTBOX 2. INTERMEDIARIES AS INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDERS IN AFRICA 23
4.5 The Role of HE and FE Institutions 23
4.6 Governance complexity 26
4.7 Innovation, Creative Industries and Place-Based Cultural Ecosystems 27
TEXTBOX 3. PROBLEMS WITH DATA SETS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS 29
4.8 The Mezzo Level of Policymaking and the Need for Imagination 30
TEXTBOX 4. INNOVATION IN THE BROADEST SENSE: FROM CCS ACTIVITY TO ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCE 31

5. EMERGING THEMES ACROSS THE NETWORK 34

5.1 Relational Approaches to Value and Innovation 34
5.2 Infrastructural and Systemic Analytical and Policy Framework 34
TEXTBOX 5. TOWARDS A MORE SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING OF POLICY OBJECTS 34
5.3 The Need for New Evaluation and Appraisal Approaches 37

6. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY 38

6.1 INTERMEDIARIES: Recognise intermediaries as strategic actors 38
6.2 SPACE: Protect workspace, mixed-use and heritage use-values 38
6.3 GOVERNANCE: Strengthen multi-level governance 39
6.4 EXPERIMENTATION: Create protected spaces for experimentation 39
6.5 TRANSLATION: Invest in boundary-spanning capacity 39
6.6 RELATIONSHIPS: Develop relational evaluation models 39

7. CONCLUSION 40
REFERENCES 41
APPENDIX I. NETWORK RESEARCH FELLOWS (*CONVENERS) AND RESPONDENTS 53

APPENDIX II. WEBINAR TOPICS 54
APPENDIX III. FINAL EVENT PROGRAMME 55

1. Introduction

This Discussion Paper arises from the Research Network funded under the Creative PEC's Small Grants scheme in 2025/26 on the theme of **Creative Industries and Place: national vs local policies**. The Network brought together a group of eight PEC Research Fellows matched by a further eight expert respondents (see Appendix I), to discuss and investigate this place-based theme from different disciplinary perspectives – historical, philosophical, economic, policy, planning, evaluation and data/statistics.

The Network has examined the relationship between the cultural and creative sectors and innovation, broadly defined, through a place-based lens. Innovation is by nature creative (Akcigit and van Reenen, 2023) and in a place-based creative ecosystem the development of new products, processes and services is enabled by advantages of place, proximities, productivity and the generation of economic, social and cultural value. Specifically, we looked at different area-based policy constructs, such as clusters and corridors, districts, quarters and zones - and the role of intermediaries such as universities/FE and art colleges, specialist workspace providers and networks. The motivation was to advance our understanding of how place factors and affordances (the ways in which the physical, social and symbolic characteristics of a place enable or constrain particular forms of activity, interaction and value creation) contribute to cultural sector and creative industries development and innovation. Specifically, the network examined the importance and concepts of **scales** in places, dataset construction, analysis and policy interventions, and **configurations** of different place factors that combine to support endogenous, 'good' growth in creative economies.

These themes have been considered in the context of research on the relationship between cultural sector, Creative Industries (CI) and innovation, and more broadly, multi-factor productivity (MFP) – such as networks, proximities, spillovers - that place-based approaches help to generate. The intention was to prompt new research questions and identify barriers/blind spots and evidence gaps in current research and policymaking, leading to recommendations on how these can be addressed, as discussed in this Paper (see *6. Future Directions for Research and Polic*y, below).

2. Approach

Following an initial review of literature and key policy initiatives in this field, in particular building on Evans and Kaszynska/OECD 2025 and other Network member's own research, a series of webinars were organised with presentations from Network Fellows and with responses from expert Respondents, followed by a general discussion (see Appendix II). From each webinar a summary report was produced and circulated to participants together with the presentations. Selected interviews were also conducted with key practitioners and policy-makers in place-based CIs initiatives.

As a form of both engagement and feedback, a final in-person event was held at University of the Arts London on 23 April 2026 in which Network Fellows and invited experts working on place-based approaches considered the topic in three panel discussions with a live audience, following a keynote address from Professor Rebecca Madgin, Glasgow University and the AHRC's Place Champion (Madgin and Gigante 2026).

Panellists were drawn from place-based policymakers, researchers and practitioners, including Creative Enterprise Zones, Community Development Trusts and Production Corridors, working at local and regional scales. The event was streamed online to make it available to a wider group of participants, including Network Fellows based overseas, e.g. in Canada and South Africa. An edited video of the event is being made available via the Network website: https://www.arts.ac.uk/knowledge-exchange/our-funded-projects/creative-industries-and-place

3. Background

One impetus for this Network theme was a preceding study undertaken by the authors for the OECD *Place Transformation* programme on the related topic of *The Role of Culture-led Regeneration in Place Transformation* (OECD Local Economic and Employment Development Papers - Evans and Kaszynska, 2025). This international evidence-based policy report considered the contribution that cultural investment and assets make to place transformation through major capital projects, events and festivals, as well as the importance of grassroots community cultural infrastructure and cultural districts to place identity, innovation and economies.

3.1 Place-based Concepts

In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) argued that place emerges when undifferentiated space becomes invested with **human meaning through lived experience, memory, and emotional attachment**. Place is therefore not simply a physical location but a relationship through which geographical location becomes meaningful. Building on this tradition and drawing on place attachment theory, Rebecca Madgin argues that 'felt experiences' are fundamental to understanding why places matter, that meanings are not inherent in places themselves but emerge through people's (and firm's) interactions with lived experiences of them and their reflection on these relationships (Madgin, 2025). In our cultural and creative sectors context, place therefore matters because social networks are grounded in particular places where culture is produced and consumed (Markusen, 2004) and space is provided for the generation of inspiration and identity (Helbrecht, 1998). This reconfigures our understanding of place and presents a challenge to conventional policy frameworks.

Underpinning our current work was the recognition that attention to how places function – rather than the spatial scales that drive most regional cluster analysis, e.g. city-region, NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics), Travel to Work Areas (TTWA) and zonal designation - has featured increasingly in policy over the last decade, with the terms and concepts of **place-making, place-shaping and place-branding** characterising local economic development, area-based improvement (DCMS, 2016a) and cultural development (ACE, 2019; 2020). Although used interchangeably and loosely, there are important distinctions between these terms: place-making often inferring physical changes through urban design; and place-branding associated with place marketing and promotion, including place values ascribed by residents, firms, as well as visitors and investors (Evans, 2014).

This is echoed in the USA with the promotion of *Creative Placemaking* as a strategy to encourage neighbourhood and 'main street' regeneration through arts business development and governance which emphasises partnership between public, private and community sectors to 'animate public and private spaces, rejuvenate structures and streetscapes, improve local businesses viability and public safety, and bring diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired' (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010, p.3). In this context, place-shaping suggests a more inclusive - and less top-down process - which ensures greater group ownership and participation and therefore emphasises a bottom-up approach often led by community and cultural groups, local firms and social enterprises looking to change or improve aspects of their locale and economy (Lew, 2017).

At the same time, a discourse connecting the geographical presence of CIs with **economic growth** has emerged. Drawing on concepts developed in agglomeration theory, clusters of particular industries (and visitor attractions and amenities, e.g. arts, heritage and entertainment) have been observed to produce higher rates of growth (in existing and new firms) and productivity gains through innovation, economies of scale and other advantages of 'place'. This was the basis of Porter's *Clusters and the New Economics of Competition* (1998) which continues to influence UK national and regional economic development policy, including the identification of CIs clusters as a basis for investment, such as the City Growth Strategy (Bagwell, 2008; Frontier Economics, 2025) and most recently, the UK Industrial Strategy Creative Industry Sector Plan (2025) and *Creative Spaces Fund* (below).

Following the 2007 Lyons' Review of local government which **foregrounded place-shaping**, a DCMS-commissioned feasibility study *Art of the Possible* (2011), informed the first quantitative study which sought to measure the role of culture in place-shaping in terms of CIs growth and location over time (DCMS 2016b). This longitudinal research found significant and positive association between creative firm location density and turnover/GVA and the concentration of cultural assets (including cultural events, tangible heritage). Investment in cultural infrastructure was also strongly and positively associated with the concentration of creative firms in both major and smaller urban centres and with firm competitiveness and productivity. This location choice and CIs growth scenario is further evidenced by Creative PEC research (AEA, 2022) and creative-digital cluster studies where the pattern of CI formation and growth in former cultural production quarters (e.g. arts, crafts/designer-making, publishing/printing, design, textiles) and in re-used industrial and cultural heritage spaces, defines many of our successful cultural and CI districts (Evans, 2024). The availability of larger-scale and specialist cultural spaces – venues, studios, arts centres, has proven to be a vital infrastructure for CI development through gatherings, meet-ups, showcasing/events and content creation and production.

In the UK, place-focused cultural policy has also sought to address and 'level-up' spatial inequities in arts and cultural engagement and funding (DCMS, 2016a, ACE, 2019, 2021). The government's *Pride in Place Strategy* (MHCLG, 2025), and grant and capacity-building schemes (e.g. skills development) have targeted designated Priority and Culture Priority Places (n=54), as well as cultural infrastructure investment (e.g. the North-East) and the expansion of UK Cities and Towns of Culture programmes, whilst Creative Places and Regional Growth Funds combined with greater devolution, seek to support the growth of CI firms outside of London. In Research & Innovation (R&I) policy, the Creative Industries Sector Plan (2025) is the main vehicle for investment in CI growth and skills, with the extended

Cluster Programme (CICP - 2027-2032) targeting a further round of CI sectors (and regions) for university-SME collaboration towards innovation and growth.

It should be noted however that spatially-determined, and place-sensitive approaches in policy remain nascent. For instance, the UKRI/AHRC Creative Industries Cluster R&D programme has not focused on either place or geographic clusters in its first iterations of funding (2017-) which are CI sector-based (e.g. fashion & textiles, immersive tech), although some projects have a city-regional development scope linked to more localised ecosystems and clusters (e.g. Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff). The latest funding round does however highlight place-based ecosystems in its funding award criteria, and a greater understanding of what this means in place-based innovation and how this might be evaluated and measured will be needed - and given the timing of new awards (late-2026) hopefully be informed by our Network findings.

3.2 The Development of Area-based Approaches, Historically and Today

Heritage spaces as a distinct cultural asset-type are of particular significance and an attraction to creative firms (DCMS 2016b). In Nottingham's historic Lace Market for instance, 67% of firms rated this as crucial for their business, for meeting and networking with suppliers and collaborators, and 70% as a location for business and social interaction. In the UK 25% of businesses agreed that the heritage setting was an important factor in deciding to locate there, particularly smaller, independent firms (in 2011 there was an estimated 138,000 business located in listed buildings alone). Historic England research also found that 89% of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) felt that heritage was vital to their local placemaking and branding activities, whilst placemaking studies, including those from Savills and BIDs, demonstrated that integrating heritage and high-quality design directly improved commercial value, boosted footfall, and created community spaces (HE, 2016).

This positive combination, where CIs firms prefer to locate in areas of high cultural and heritage assets, is also seen across the **USA** where cultural districts (n=99) with a high concentration of cultural facilities found multiple positive effects: growth in property values, income and employment, with evidence of more skilled residents moving in, and increased population (WhatWorks, 2016). Similar positive effects were found in 'Natural Cultural Districts' in Philadelphia and New York using Market Valuation Analysis to inform community revitalisation and neighbourhood change (Stern, 2007; 2010). The effects of cultural districts combined with the presence of art & design colleges also found that colleges were positively associated with higher levels of employment growth, with media-arts employment even higher in US cities with art schools and research-intensive universities (Noonan & Breznitz, 2013; 2018) - and with

faster rates of media arts patenting. In **Toronto**, investment in artist live/work and studios in mixed-use developments was found to be strongly associated with economic growth, image improvement and further investment (Jones et al., 2003).

Creative districts have also proven to be key to place transformation in recovering cities such as **Bogota, Colombia** where following effective breakdown in government control of the El Bronx neighbourhood, two district authorities started the process of culture-led regeneration of the area through the re-use of two large heritage buildings, leading to the creation of 'El Bronx' Creative District (BCD). The initiative made these historic spaces available for cultural events and creative entrepreneurship that promotes innovation and collaborative work. In El Bronx, over 3,800 people are engaged in the cultural economy, including traditional crafts, as well as printing, graphic design, fashion and textiles, with Colombia's first public fabrication laboratory. El Bronx was the first cultural district in Colombia - today 15 districts are recognised in Bogotá alone, and in 2021 the city inaugurated the District Network of Creative Districts to coordinate their development and city-wide strategy (Evans and Kaszynska, 2025).

Cultural districts are also a priority for **Saudia Arabia's** national cultural strategy with Jax District, Hayy Jameel, Royal Arts Complex, Al-Balad, Old Town (AlUla), Soudah, Diriyah, and an anticipated cultural district as part of the forthcoming Expo 2030. The SA Ministry of Culture consulted with our Network in order to exchange knowledge and learn lessons from the more organic development of cultural and creative districts in the UK, and the value of 'place' therein. The Kingdom's cultural districts are taking shape within a period of accelerated urban transformation, and while current development initiatives are advancing at an unprecedented scale and pace, cultural expression in Saudi Arabia has long been embedded in the spatial and social fabric of cities and regions - shaped through craft traditions, oral histories, architectural forms, pilgrimage routes, and everyday practices of community life (Ministry of Culture, 2026). International membership organisations also support cultural district development, including the Global Cultural District Network (GCDN) that undertakes comparative studies of district impacts, enhancing the evidence base and transferring good practice (GCDN, 2019).

In these quite different contexts, area-based approaches have therefore been a common feature of public policy - economic, cultural, heritage, regeneration, planning – notably through the designation of cultural and creative clusters and variants such as districts, hubs, quarters, corridors and zones (and, by extension, design, knowledge and innovation quarters). The dimensions and parameters of place implied in these spatially-determined

approaches have however been neither apparent nor specified - and therefore not defined, measured nor accounted for in planning and policy terms. Even though there have been some notable attempts to put creativity on the map in literal and figurative senses (Bakhshi, 2017; Higgs et al., 2008), the interaction between cultural and creative sectors and places has not received enough attention. This led us to the question driving our Network: **what conditions and elements of a place contribute and influence CI location, development and innovation – and how are these place-based factors best configured, and at what scale?**

3.3 The Concepts of Scales and Configurations and their Relevance to Innovation

Scales and configurations have been considered across a number of disciplines, including urban planning and human geography, design research, innovation, science and technology studies (STS), to name just a few. Economic geography, in particular, has looked at the spatial dimensions of cultural and creative firm concentration through cluster effects and their impact on innovation and location decisions (Pratt, 2004; 2006; , 2000; 2004; Scott, 2001; 2004; 2006), including sector-specific studies (e.g. Film/TV clusters in London suburbs – Pratt, 2009, Gornostaeva, 2008) and more recent creative digital clusters (Evans 2019). Regional innovation studies have extended this scalar dimension with notions of polycentric clusters, corridors and regional innovation systems (RIS) in cultural production sectors (Clifton and Cook, 2009; Clifton et al., 2016). To date, RIS analyses have not connected the micro 'place' with the regional scale, however in a recent conceptualisation of RIS (Weidenfeld, Broekel and Clifton, 2026) a dynamic network-based perspective argues that the interaction between generative network mechanisms and three systemic dimensions together shape RIS evolution and integration. These dimensions: *Coherence* (alignment amongst actors), *Unifying function* (shared aims, common innovation challenges) and *Boundedness* (spatial limits/ embeddedness) have some resonance with our place-based framework and exemplar creative clusters in terms of their relatedness, proximity and the enabling infrastructure and assemblages (e.g. intermediaries, morphology) that together maintain a cultural and creative innovation ecosystem.

Novel research using non-economic data to identify CI activity and clusters, such as meet-ups, product/service launches (Nathan & Rosso, 2022) and web scraping (Siepel, 2022) also offer particular insights beyond the limitations of firm level and output data relied upon in most economic analysis in this field, although more biased towards particular CI sectors than others. Siepel's PEC research on microclusters offers the most useful contribution to place-based CI clustering and the benefits of proximity/ hyperlocality. From a place perspective, the distribution and presence of microclusters is unsurprising. Managed workspaces, arts

and studio complexes and dense street/block occupation of former industrial and civic spaces hosting 50 to over 200 micro firms, forms the basis of many creative ecosystems, from Hackney Wick and Halifax to Hastings (conversely when facilities are lost to property development/change of use, these vibrant clusters and the benefits they support, are lost). Evolutionary economic geography has perhaps come closest to capturing the cognitive proximity/relatedness ('cognitive-cultural capitalism', Scott, 2014) of creative clusters in fostering both innovation and growth in the wider economy (Innocenti & Lazzeretti, 2018), however there is little empirical evidence to support these models and the measurement of innovation and relatedness, nor the configurations that best support these clusters and help explain their evolution and longevity.

It is fair to say therefore that few of these disciplinary approaches have considered the place-based 'affordances and assemblages' which have been the subject of our Network enquiry, or the interplay between social and sectoral networks and place-enabled knowledge exchange and infrastructure services. A reason for this, firstly, is the nature of the secondary data used to analyse innovation (outputs, processes) and production chains which does not capture (or consider) these place-based or fine-grained relationships, transactions and flows, and secondly, analysis is generally undertaken at much larger (regional/city-region) scale, effectively 'top-down' (including so-called exemplars of the *Creative Class*, Florida, 2005). A long-established resource of sector-based case studies, combining qualitative, mixed methods, network and spatial analysis, perhaps provides the most detailed (but largely descriptive) evidence of cultural and creative places from a historical and comparative perspective, notably cultural quarters (Legner, 2009, Roodhouse, 2010, Bell & Jayne, 2004), and artisanal clusters such as fashion and heritage districts (Evans, 2024).

An interesting avenue for research in this respect looks at the urban design scale, which has focused on the *morphology* of cultural and creative districts in terms of mixed-use, building typologies and firm inter-action (Evans & Foord, 2009) and which speak to concepts of configuration (see 4.2 below), whereas amenity, buzz and scenes have been the focus of research on the creative class and the so-called experience economy (Florida, 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Silver & Clark, 2013). Constructs such as Cultural Ecosystems Services (Fish, Church & Winter, 2016) – the human benefits arising from interactions with natural and semi-natural environments – have also been found to provide foundational landscape, identity, and inspiration for aesthetic and creative practice that is both relational and strongly embedded with place, and that can appeal to certain types of creative endeavour and content, e.g. music (Coscieme, 2015).

To our knowledge, however, scale and configuration have not been the primary objects of research in the context of cultural economics and cultural policy. We think that bringing the notions of scale and configuration – understood as interdisciplinary concepts (see Textbox 1 below) – to the foreground of our discussions has *potential to move existing research questions and policy agendas in a fruitful direction, in particular in relation to the concept of innovation which, by definition, cuts across different scales and involves different configurations.*

For the purposes of our Network, we have considered scales and configurations in the context of literature on CIs and innovation and by extension, productivity and R&D. The rationale for limiting the scope for the Network's inquiry is that this is an intensely researched topic currently, one where the frontiers of standard economic analysis are tested and pushed and the need for more multi- inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches is becoming apparent.

Here we recognise that there is a well-established body of knowledge discussing the link between innovation and CIs (e.g. Bakhshi et al., 2008, Potts and Cunningham, 2008, Chapain, 2010). However, explicit place-based approaches with a policy translation remain to be developed (cf. Chapain & Comunian, 2010; In Situ, 2026; Jones et al., 2023). Our goal was thus to look at the evidence concerned with cultural and creative sectors innovation, growth and infrastructure in order to make implicit links and assumptions more explicit in place-based contexts.

Our approach also aligns with evolutionary and ecosystem frameworks to innovation associated with Jason Potts and others (see, for instance, Hitchen, Campbell & Wang, 2025), who argue that innovation should not be understood simply as technological invention or ideation, but as a broader social and institutional process involving adoption, adaptation, diffusion and embedding within everyday practices and networks. Potts (2009a, 2009b; also Potts & Cunnigham, 2008) suggests that CIs play a crucial role within innovation systems precisely because they facilitate the uptake and social integration of novelty, providing the 'adoption and adaptation services' through which new ideas, technologies and practices become meaningful, usable and institutionally embedded[1]. Innovation therefore emerges not from isolated breakthroughs alone, but through interconnected ecosystems composed of firms, cultural actors and spaces, intermediaries, institutions and communities, including trade festivals, open studios and regular open meet-ups, pitches/launches and networking.

[1] This was the case in London's archetypal creative-digital cluster which spawned early fintech, fashion tech and now bio-tech clusters in a dense, cultural production district in proximity to advertising and finance clusters – key clients, and providers of specialist support services (Evans, 2019; Foord, 2013).

This should be seen in the context of the expanded field of policymaking with regard to appraisal and the recent recommendations from HM Treasury which recognises that occasionally Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) may not be possible and that not all options can be monetised and assessed through Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR). Indeed, the Green Book 2026 explicitly states that the preferred option should not be determined by the initial BCR alone, but by a broader judgement incorporating significant unquantifiable benefits, uncertainties and risks; the accompanying guidance on government investment similarly notes that an option with a relatively low BCR may represent better value for money where this is outweighed by significant non-monetisable strategic benefits. This presents BCRs as one among many considerations that appraisal should consider as relevant to an investment decision.

This provides greater scope for recognising *strategic option value*: the value of creating capabilities, relationships, knowledge and opportunities that expand the range of future choices under conditions of uncertainty. For cultural and creative sectors and place-based policy, this means recognising that experimentation, prototyping, network formation and engagement may have value not only through realised economic returns, but through reducing uncertainty, increasing absorptive capacity and keeping future courses of action open.

TEXTBOX 1. KEY ANALYTICAL CONCEPTS

In order to support cross-disciplinary inquiry, and to open up new research avenues, Network activities were underpinned by the analytical concepts of **scales** and **configurations** that were developed with an intention of spanning different areas of research.

What do we mean by scale?

In economics, scale is a concept that helps analyse how changes in the size of production or economic activity affect costs, efficiency, and competitiveness (e.g. 'economies of scale', agglomeration). In design research for example, scale refers to the level, scope, or granularity at which a design problem, solution, or inquiry is addressed.

For us, firstly, scale applies to the level of policy intervention and effectiveness, particularly where they intersect with different levels of administration and governance (typically at local, regional and national levels) reflected in how data sets and information systems are constructed. Secondly, the scale describes how the boundaries of spatial constructs – e.g. CI clusters, districts or zones – are conceived and governed. We have

therefore concentrated on scales as applied to both data sets and 'evidence' used in policy and decision-making, and the 'spatial fix' of the objects of policy-making.

What do we mean by configuration?
Configuration, simply put, stands for how items are related (and in our case, what place-based factors combine to influence and enable CIs in relation to innovation). This is linked to the idea of *assemblage* originating in continental philosophy (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; DeLanda, 2006), and which has been used to describe how heterogeneous elements (bodies, things, ideas) combine to form functional wholes that are not fixed but dynamic and constantly reconfigured. Crucially, assemblages generate properties that cannot be reduced to their parts or deduced from a larger whole. This points to zones of emergence where novelty arises from the specific interactions within a mid-level (mezzo) formation (Sampson, 2026) – an interesting consideration for the 'scale' and spatial zoning issue, above.

In the context of our Network, we use configuration to emphasise the relationality of elements in place-related research constructs. A creative quarter, for instance, is an assemblage of people, firms, buildings/facilities, amenities, regulatory systems, as well as histories and economic flows that are functionally enabled by a configuration of different elements, and that understanding how these constructs operate requires that we look transversally across different policy portfolios, such as regional development, social regeneration and skills development, R&D/innovation, economic development, culture and urban planning.

4. Discussion Topics

Findings emerging from our four 'Delphic' webinar discussions, practitioner interviews and the final event, and as supported by the review of relevant literature and related policy developments, can be broadly summarised as follows:

4.1 Place Matters - the Continuing Importance of Place

A major concern running throughout the Network discussions was the **continuing importance of place within creative and cultural economies** despite long-standing claims that digitalisation, globalisation and remote working would weaken spatial dependence ('death of distance'). Network contributors repeatedly challenged technologically determinist assumptions suggesting that proximity no longer matters. Instead, the discussions

demonstrated that innovation within CIs remains deeply spatial, relational and infrastructural, notwithstanding regional, national and global networks and flows (Castells & Gustavo, 2005).

The Network firstly explored **historical continuities between nineteenth-century artisanal districts and contemporary creative clusters** and their location preferences and practice. Despite significant technological and economic transformations, contributors identified remarkable similarities in the spatial and organisational logics underpinning creative production. Historically, artisanal production depended upon dense and walkable urban districts facilitating exchange, coordination and collaboration between specialised producers. Contemporary creative economies continue to operate through similar dynamics, where proximity enables informal knowledge exchange, labour mobility and project-based collaboration 'in place'. Kloosterman and Pratt* (*expert respondent and panellist) in their study of Global Production Networks (2026) also highlight the dual necessity of territorial embeddedness (how local context, regulations, and localized knowledge shape production) and network embeddedness (how actors connect to global, multi-scalar markets). This latter point is important since place-based clusters and networks of cultural and CI sectors, whilst generating and supported by pre-existing affordances and mix of enabling amenity-types, are also able to operate and market globally but without losing their endogenous 'sense of place'. Indeed, this is a relationship familiar in long-established cultural production 'brands' and place associations, such as Emilia Romagna (textiles/crafts), Paris (*haute couture*), Soho, London (film post-production) and Austen (new country music): 'for all entrepreneurs the physical environment is important in reproducing and strengthening their and their companies reputation of being creative - In this sense, place becomes a marketing device' (Heebels & van Aalst, 2010, p. 359).

Both artisanal districts and contemporary CIs therefore rely heavily upon flexible and distributed production systems. Networks of small-scale specialised producers operate through collaborative relationships, subcontracting and distributed supply chains. Contributors repeatedly highlighted continuities between historical workshop systems and spaces and contemporary freelance and micro-enterprise ecologies within CIs.

4.2. Place Affordances and Urban Morphology

Another issue that emerged is that **place affordances** — how people and firms engage with and make use of places — are difficult to capture through standard datasets (administrative and economic). As mentioned, affordances mean the ways in which the physical, social and symbolic characteristics of a place enable or constrain particular forms of activity, interaction and value creation.

The concept of place affordance originates from the ecological psychology of James J. Gibson, who introduced the concept to describe the action possibilities that environments offer to individuals relative to their capabilities (Gibson, 1979). Affordances are neither purely objective properties of the environment nor purely subjective perceptions (Madgin, 2025); rather, they emerge from the relationship between an actor and their surroundings. The concept was subsequently adapted to environmental psychology, human geography and urban studies, where scholars began to examine how particular places enable, constrain, or invite specific forms of behaviour (e.g. firm locations decisions), interaction, and experience.

However, current policy approaches struggle to account for the importance and presence of affordances, whilst analysis often overlooks the intangible, relational, and small-scale dynamics that shape creative ecosystems, as well as the importance of buildings and spatial 'mix' of an area (Evans & Foord, 2009). Here data typically collected at national or regional levels does not support fine-grained, place-based analysis and decision-making[2]. As a result, key aspects of innovation, productivity, and the potential of place are often underestimated or entirely overlooked (for an alternative approach, see Hitchen et al., 2025). This also risks the serial replication and 'fast policy transfer' (Peck & Theodore, 2015) of creative district and place branding strategies that are inappropriate and not likely to embed or succeed in places with different conditions (affordances) and trajectories (e.g. 'levelling up', path dependencies).

Relatedly, participants stressed that creative production depends not only upon economic conditions but also upon **urban morphology**. Flexible mixed-use environments, affordable workspaces, co-working and opportunities for co-location, continue to be essential to creative ecosystems. This is supported by Zihan Wang et al's recent research (2026) that emphasizes that co-working spaces serve as critical, ground-up vehicles for local skills development. Furthermore, in left-behind regions, these spaces are vital for delivering targeted training and technical-digital skills, functioning as essential hubs that bridge the gap where formal education and institutional support fall short. Our Network discussions strongly reinforced the importance of informal exchange, everyday interaction, co-presence, trust, and communities of practice (Evans, 2019).

[2] For example, the Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) programme in London uses a helpful online dashboard and visualisation of results to measure employment, firm births and deaths etc., and the increase in new and converted workspace provision (GLA 2023). However, as with other CI economic activity analysis, official data sources do not capture sole traders/freelancers or wider place-based factors and transformations arising through CEZ networks and spillovers, understating both innovation, economic development and the intrinsic values of these creative places.

Martins' (2015) concept of the 'extended workplace' proved particularly resonant in this regard, highlighting in the case of the creative-digital cluster, how cafés, co-working spaces, public spaces and informal venues (including the night-time economy) become integral to creative production, knowledge exchange and innovation, whilst the benefits of co-working spaces and inter-action in a study of South Wales included higher levels of innovation and growth amongst participant firms and co-workers (Clifton, 2019). Conversely, where these place amenities, design qualities and affordances are absent, even where agglomeration is evident, firm interaction is limited (for example in Slough and High Wycombe software clusters – Chapain et al, 2010). A lack of mix, morphological and social variety and character is too often absent in new-build, larger scale complexes, as is seen in cases such as the Orestad city-extension in Copenhagen (where artists were reluctant to locate), Montreal's *Cité du Multimédia*, and Salford's Media City, where SMEs are in decline and moving away from these developments that have been the subject of major public and private investment and strategic re-location (Evans & Kaszynska, 2025). Furthermore, major corporations (private and public) tend to design and locate their incubation/innovation spaces in-house (e.g. major tech innovation labs, AI 'campuses') limiting the scope for place-based collaboration, knowledge exchange and access. Research into the relationships between the physical environment and creativity on the other hand, found that significant physical attributes including light, technical support, spatial variety, sense of control, combined with spatial types (e.g. social spaces, exploration zones, mixed-use, recharging spaces, production labs) were most frequently linked to a wide range of creativity concepts such as inspiring creative idea generation, high divergent or convergent thinking, and supporting creative performance (Lee & Lee, 2023).

From studies of microclusters (Siepel, 2022) and creative-digital clusters (Evans, 2019: Martins, 2015; Wood & Dovey, 2015), spatial proximities strongly point to a 'walk time' of c.20 minutes/0.5km distance within which firms, co-working spaces and the extended workplace amenities function in a creative and social innovation ecosystems of knowledge exchange, collaboration and production. This is relevant for policies towards mixed-use, land-use and related licencing controls that combine to engender these vibrant creative areas. An observation in terms of this concentration at building/block and neighbourhood scale and mix of uses, is that London is unique in having 40% land developed, where in all other English regions this is only 7% to 9%. **This factor is an important one for regional development and for the location and model for CI clusters and workspace development in post-industrial urban areas.** Density here is also important since the higher density of cultural, creative and other services, the greater and frequency of face-to-face inter-action, tacit knowledge exchange leading to innovation and productivity gains (Evans, 2019).

4.3. Co-working Spaces, Creative Enterprise Zones and Land Trusts

The value of managed and supported co-working spaces should not therefore be understated but they require a modicum of protection through planning, zoning, covenanting (legacy vs. change-of-use) and recognition as key elements in place-based cultural infrastructure. For example, by limiting change-of-use and footplate size in order to protect large studios/workshops and to prevent break-up into smaller units, as in Copenhagen and Barcelona (Evans, 2024; Evans & Kaszynska, 2025). The UK has a long tradition in artist studio organisations since the 1970s who have expanded their remit to housing, enterprise development, social and training programmes, and as social property developers. This has been a key driver of the Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) programme in London (GLA 2023)[3] that has targeted areas of creative production facing loss of workspace through gentrification and higher use-values (e.g. housing, larger firms - including CIs).

As part of these CEZ initiatives, creative community development trusts and social/ mixed-use redevelopments have also been funded to ensure creative workspace in perpetuity. The Land Trust model is increasingly being used to address the need for more creative workspaces, drawing inspiration from successful models such as Sydney's Creative Land Trust and San Francisco's Community Arts Stabilization Trust which has secured long term affordable workspace for artists through innovative funding mechanisms and partnerships with philanthropists, investors, and government (Evans & Kaszynska, 2025). In the UK, the *Artist Windows* scheme matches vacant retail and high street premises (14% vacancies nationally, higher in areas of disadvantage) with local artists for both meanwhile/pop-up and longer-term cultural usage. However, barriers (short-term leases, planning-uses, rate relief) need to be addressed in order to roll-out this programme in these important everyday spaces that can double as both production and showcase venues. Where affordable artists studios and creative workspaces are lost through commercial redevelopment and major public regeneration projects (e.g. London's Olympic park[4]) - typically former industrial and civic buildings - the damage to creative ecosystems and places is severe, often irreparable – with hundreds of small firms displaced and cluster benefits lost (Evans, 2024). Where new-build studios are recreated elsewhere, they are unable to replicate the ecosystem and collaborative innovation spaces that have built-up over many years.

[3] https://pec.ac.uk/blog_entries/why-london-is-investing-in-creative-enterprise-zones/
[4] Over the course of land acquisition and clearance of the Lower Lea Valley, businesses employing c.15,000 workers were forced to move, with some firms offered locations over 50 miles away. Nearly 30% of relocated firms had closed by 2015. Demolished buildings included ACME studios housing 140 artists/designer-makers, and whilst new studios have been incorporated into new developments in and around Stratford, these have only replaced a fraction of the number, scale and density of affordable provision (Evans & Tasci-Edizel, 2024, 412).

Unlike elsewhere in Europe, where better direct support for artists and creative workers has been the norm (e.g. ateliers and artist residencies in France and Germany, state-supported artists' income in Ireland), studio/workspace has been a mainstay of place-based cultural and creative policy in the UK, including the digital economy where counterfactually, 'place still matters'. A recent survey of 160 co-working spaces (CWS) across the UK found that they are associated with the development of both social-cognitive and digital skills. In left-behind regions, members of CWS particularly benefit from the structured resources offered, such as access to physical infrastructure and targeted training opportunities, whereas in non-left-behind regions, skill development tends to emerge more organically, bottom-up, through informal social interactions within these more established workspaces (Wang et al., 2026).

At the same time, the Network discussions warned strongly against branding and romanticising creative clusters and ringfencing through 'quarterisation' and zoning - and the consequent risks of gentrification, crowding-out and 'creative destruction'. As Schumpeter observed in the 1940s, 'creative destruction' favours innovators, investors and new business/market models at the cost of 'old', so-called obsolete forms of production, employment and organisation (whilst also tending towards monopolisation by these new entrants and investors - Akcigit and van Reenen, 2023). However, where this occurs in contemporary place-based cultural and creative sectors ecosystems, collaborative and social networks are disrupted and cultural skills and knowledge fragmented and lost - and hard to reproduce and re-introduce at a later date. A further 'destructive' phenomenon also sees larger firms (e.g. media, tech) acquire successful and innovating creative SMEs, not to grow or innovate more, but to stifle competition, using patent and other IPR 'blocking' strategies.

Gentrification exacerbates this impact where (often temporarily) higher-value creative enterprises, e.g. audio-visual, advertising, architecture, advanced producer services, displace established cultural and creative firms and spaces, e.g. designer-makers (product, fashion, jewellery design), performing and visual arts and media, as property, leases and associated costs rise substantially along with local services and amenities - for example in the first dot.com boom and bust in SoMa San Francisco; historic cultural and crafts production districts of Clerkenwell and Shoreditch, London; Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte, Berlin; and large-scale post-industrial complexes such as Liberty Village, Toronto (Evans, 2024).

Radical change-of-use of premises, such as from light industrial or civic, to housing, offices or hotels, has produced wholesale loss of cultural and creative workshop spaces, breaking up long-established artists studios and workspaces and dispersing place-based networks and clusters. Evidence on the gentrification effects of arts and creative firms, confirms the pattern

of artist occupation of low cost areas/buildings ('loft living') leading to subsequent property-led development, whereas CI firms tend to (re-)locate to already gentrifying areas (Titsos, Nathan and Gutierrez-Posada, 2023). However, this work measures *residential* property prices, not *commercial* property gentrification, changes-of-use (loss of mixed-use to mono-use) and associated place branding effects on local economies (Evans, 2014, 2024). Research is therefore needed into these combined effects on local creative clusters and ecosystems, including post-occupancy studies of dispersed firms, survival rates and relocation trajectories.

Historical continuities between artisanal labour systems and contemporary gig economies also highlighted the **structural precarity** underpinning much creative labour. Flexibility and independence frequently coexist with economic insecurity and dependence upon volatile markets and intermediary structures. This resonates with some recent findings more broadly, for instance, Tether (2019) highlights persistent regional inequalities within UK CI policy, while Tether (2022) also emphasises the coexistence of creative growth and deprivation within urban creative economies. In a similar vein, Gutierrez Posada et al. (2021) demonstrate that CIs can generate significant multiplier effects within local economies, including the wider economy (Frontier Economics, 2023), but stressed that these benefits are unevenly distributed and frequently dependent upon fragile labour ecologies. Place-based development on the other hand is better-positioned to include and target local residents and young people in skills, training, apprenticeships and other opportunities, including open studio/taster events, for example CEZ programmes which include skills development (e.g. coding, capacity-building, digital design), start-up and subsidised workspace for local people and graduates. University place-making programmes linked to college campus-based graduate enterprise development can also boost local economies through start-ups and outreach and 'access-all-through' programmes, including foundation degrees, vocational skills/short courses (e.g. City & Guilds), with local schools and FE colleges (below). European-wide research has also found significant effects on productivity levels for firms operating in close proximity to cultural and creative sectors organisations as the additional innovation spurred by creative firms raises productivity in adjacent businesses (Boix-Domenech, Peiro-Palomino and Rausdell-Kodter, 2021), through supply chain linkages, and the movement of people and ideas between cultural and creative sectors and other sectors (OECD, 2024).

4.4 Infrastructures and Intermediaries

The discussions significantly expanded conventional understandings of infrastructure. Rather than treating infrastructure simply as physical assets or cultural venues, Network contributors conceptualised **infrastructure as assemblage**: as encompassing social, civic,

organisational and governance dimensions that, when interconnected, enable creative and cultural activity (See Textbox 4.). This broader infrastructural perspective reflects growing convergence between research on cultural and social infrastructure (Panayotopoulos-Tsiros, et al., 2025), public value (O'Connor, 2024) and the need for more systemic understanding of policy objects (Kaszynska, *forthcoming*).

Within this framework, cultural infrastructure can encompass:

- physical and organisational assets (e.g. venues, institutions, networks)
- governance structures and funding mechanisms
- practices of production, participation and engagement
- the valuation and evaluation – and valorisation – frameworks through which cultural and CI activity is understood and justified

When broken down further, in terms of specific 'agents' who need to come together in place-based contexts, this includes (and this is not exhaustive and will vary across context): workspaces - co-working and managed, artist-run and owned studios (including live-work premises) - as well as technical and innovation facilities (e.g. prototyping, modelling), venues (e.g. rehearsals, large scale, production, VR/blue/green screen, performance, showcasing, trade events, product launches), digital systems and data processing, alongside participatory processes, governance arrangements and place-based/sectoral network organisations and intermediary organisations such as trade bodies, F&HE institutions.

Intermediaries emerged as particularly important actors within fragmented creative innovation ecosystems. Participants described intermediaries as organisations and individuals who: broker relationships, connect sectors, facilitate collaboration, support access to finance, translate between policy and practice - and levels and portfolios of policy - and often provide infrastructure directly. The last point was particularly salient. In contexts where formal institutions are fragmented or weak, intermediaries may themselves become **infrastructural actors**. This insight was particularly important in relation to contemporary creative economies characterised by freelance labour, project-based work, fragmented governance, and weak institutional coordination. Contributors repeatedly stressed that many creative ecosystems depend heavily upon invisible forms of relational labour undertaken by intermediaries and brokers whose work often remains poorly recognised within policy frameworks and funding regimes (Belfiore, 2022). This also occurs when local and regional authorities (and in some cases national government) 'take over' the initiative and narrative,

impose new governance structures (e.g. enterprise zones, Tech City and Media City imaginaries), from place-based networks and established intermediary organisations.

TEXTBOX 2. INTERMEDIARIES AS INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDERS IN AFRICA

From the vantage point of **South Africa**, PEC Network Fellow Avril Joffe, describes a scenario where institutional voids, due to weak institutional structure and a lack of cultural policy capacities, have led to the emergence of informal intermediaries and community-based infrastructure. Here intermediaries fill this gap and drive innovation in digital and mobile solutions such as the ccHub in Nigeria.

Traditional cultural gatekeepers such as galleries, music companies and retailers also adapt to stay relevant, as in the Maboneng Township Tours and home-based digital recording for new value networks (Joffe, Larasati and Newbigin 2022). Intermediaries are thus drawn from academic, public and private (and PPPartnership) sectors, NGOs, and international organisations filling the roles of connectors, facilitators, cultural brokers, platforms, aggregators, distributors and financiers/funders.

Examples include the Maboneng cultural precinct (CFLGI, galleries, crafts workspaces and clubs) with private developers partnering with the city of Joburg; the Newtown cultural precinct in west Joburg, multiple innovation hubs in Nairobi and the Kenyan tech-creative iHub, which combines tech infrastructure with creative institutions and intermediary service providers. Addressing challenges of scale in the context of weak institutional infrastructure means that mobile and digital intermediaries play an important role in connecting rural communities of artists and creative workers, whilst diaspora networks of African creatives serve as intermediaries for creators 'back home'.

4.5 The Role of HE and FE Institutions

Creative clusters and other spatial formations are therefore sustained not simply by buildings and spaces, but by broader infrastructures of learning, association and social interaction, including art schools, technical institutions, informal meeting spaces, trade networks and communities of practice. Participants repeatedly emphasised that universities contribute far more than skills and research – they can also provide: place-based civic leadership, public engagement, brokerage functions, symbolic identity, and long-term institutional stability. This chimes with Davies and Lyons (2022) who argue that universities can play a crucial role in strengthening creative clusters through network formation, student start-ups and spin-outs (which often stay within the university area where they originated), as well as

knowledge exchange and infrastructural support. This intermediation and mediating role is also combined or 'hybridised' by 'simultaneously shaping what counts as valuable culture and legitimate creativity through their pedagogies, research agendas, evaluation practices, and civic engagements (*cultural intermediation*)' (Dovey & Virani, 2026, 2).

This also resonates with the discussions of how the presence of universities can distort and upset local 'ecosystems'. For instance, Network Fellow Gilmore's research shows how universities can become agents of uneven development when they are embedded within creative-city and innovation frameworks that concentrate resources, legitimacy, and decision-making and symbolic power in already successful places (Gilmore & Comunian, 2016; Gilmore & Burnill-Maier, 2023). In 'Cold spots, crap towns and cultural deserts: The role of place and geography in cultural participation and creative place-making', Gilmore argues that policies inspired by Florida's creative class thesis often assume that attracting talent, cultural consumption, and CIs will drive regeneration (Gilmore, 2013). In practice, however, these models frequently privilege already successful urban centres and can fail to recognise local cultural practices and assets. Dovey & Virani (2026, 2) also observe that university structures introduce frictions and power asymmetries: contractual and payment regimes built for large institutions can be difficult for micro-enterprises; knowledge hierarchies can marginalise non-academic expertise; and 'impact' measurement practice can privilege commercialisable outputs over artistic, social and civic value (Roberts et al, 2026; Pullinger et al, 2026).

Although presenting radically different arguments, all suggest that universities increasingly function as infrastructural actors within place-based ecosystems rather than simply educational providers, notwithstanding their missions which may be 'global' and 'world leading', versus local/regional (Kaszynska, 2020). Universities thus have an increasingly vital role in CI innovation and growth. As the recent Creative PEC study of *Creative Clusters, Geography and University-Industry links* (Siepel & Wang, 2026) reported, the relative importance of the CIs to regional economies increased for every region and nation of the UK between 2011 and 2024. However the depth and range of HEI- cultural and creative sectors collaboration varies significantly and their role in enabling local creative innovation ecosystems remains uneven across the UK. The role of HEIs in place shaping linked to local economic development is likewise variable and this reflects their local context (including campus/green field, urban, distributed), the extent of their 'open-ness' (e.g. to local people, SMEs), and their trajectory and student/disciplinary profile and portfolios, however, where place, curriculum and research are focused, significant benefits can be achieved in creative

education and enterprise development[5]. As Komorowski and Fodor observe (2026) in the case of the Cardiff (University)-led R&D cluster programme: 'university engagement significantly amplifies the marginal effects of networking, training and funding, providing empirical evidence that universities can function as 'innovation agents' beyond traditional research and education roles', and as Lewis adds: 'universities can act as active cultural intermediaries in critically informed cluster-building, challenging both policy boosterism and anti-economic critique' (Lewis, 2026).

A similar perspective emerges from two recently published 'deep dives' into universities and arts colleges in the *i-PLACE Compendium on place-based innovation* (2026). Albi Lamaj's analysis of university commercialisation shows that rather than treating universities as isolated producers of intellectual property whose role is to transfer knowledge into the market, what is needed is regional approaches to commercialisation that recognise innovation as a shared ecosystem activity. The paper challenges institution-centred models of innovation and instead positions universities as convenors, brokers, and facilitators of wider regional networks. Knowledge creation alone is insufficient; what matters is the capacity to connect knowledge, resources, organisations, and opportunities across institutional boundaries. Innovation therefore becomes a function of the quality of regional relationships as much as the quality of individual research outputs. This will require different metrics and indicators of 'success', as Bakhshi notes in his Forward to the PEC report on HE and Arts and Culture sectors (McAndrew et al., 2025): 'the time is right for fresh thinking on what data is needed to enable a more holistic assessment of HE and its contributions to the creative economy'.

Further Education (FE) Colleges on the other hand present a particular model in vocational education/training and local enterprise development, more embedded in place through their catchment, governance and representation, e.g. local authorities and businesses/employers. This relational understanding of innovation is reinforced in Abdulfatah, Grainger, Webb and Parkinson's (2026) contribution on FE colleges. The authors argue that these institutions have been systematically overlooked within innovation policy despite their unique position within local economies and communities. Unlike many universities, FE colleges often possess deep connections to local businesses, learners, and civic organisations. Their contribution lies not primarily in generating new knowledge but in

[5] University of the Arts (UAL) registered 479 student start-ups in 2024/25, 10% of the UK total and twice as many as the next productive university through a combination of creative enterprise tailored support, business and idea funding, industry placements/collaborations, founder networks and incubator programmes, and generated by individual colleges distributed across London (Camberwell, Chelsea, King's Cross, Shepherd's Bush, Stratford, Wimbledon), as well as London-wide Accelerator programmes.

translating, brokering, and diffusing knowledge across local systems[6]. Innovation, from this perspective, depends not only on centres of excellence, but also on the institutions capable of extending access and participation, and more rapidly responding to community and professional skills needs.

4.6 Governance complexity

Governance complexity also emerged as a key issue. While devolution and place-based policymaking create opportunities for local leadership and experimentation, contributors noted that they also produce fragmented governance landscapes involving overlapping jurisdictions, competing priorities and uneven institutional capacities. Effective coordination across scales (and boundaries) therefore emerged as a major condition for successful place-based policy.

This particularly applies where creative places straddle borough boundaries, and in some cases are located on the edge of regional boundaries which are perceived as putting them at a disadvantage in more centralised regional strategies (including culture). Examples of long-term governance and planning (25+ years) and local-regional growth and investment around cultural and creative clusters are seen in France (Lille and La Friche, Marseilles) and Essen, Germany, with a continuity and vision that is lacking in the UK (Evans & Kaszynska, 2025).

In this context, the discussions raised significant **critiques of benchmarking approaches** and quantitative comparative indicators frequently used within CIs and innovation policy evaluation (see Textbox 3. *Problems with Datasets and Information Systems*). Participants argued that benchmarking models privilege measurable outputs over outcomes and relationships, overlook local trajectories and histories, obscure power relations, and fail to capture processual dimensions of change – leading to top-down 'models' of governance.

The discussions also strongly reinforced the importance of **participatory governance** within place-based policy. Contributors argued that successful place-based cultural strategies depend upon combining quantitative evidence with local knowledge, participation and co-design processes. Effective governance therefore requires mechanisms capable of connecting national policy priorities with local capacities, identities and needs. Extending this

[6] A prime example is the Incubator facility owned by Hackney Community College in Shoreditch, on London's City Fringe, in what became the heart of the 'Creative-Digital' cluster and host to the Digital Shoreditch network and Accelerator programme for tech start-ups (Evans, 2019). No research-led universities were involved in innovation or knowledge transfer activities or support. This same FE college had previously pioneered the provision of CAD training for architects transitioning to this paradigm-shift in building and spatial design practice, in an area with a high concentration of architectural firms.

notion further, the concept of **participatory budgeting** as practised in cities such as New York[7]. Here, a participatory budget of $1.5m is allocated to each local borough councillor to fund proposals for local initiatives and schemes, such as improvements to libraries and arts programmes. Projects have to cost at least $50,000 and last five years or more, and which go through an iterative process of *Idea Generation*; *Project Evaluation*; *City-wide Voting* (residents aged 11+ can vote) from which final selection is made and then implemented with capital and other budgets attached ($30m a year) and facilitated through local not-for-profit organisations, not the city itself. This aligns closely with emerging debates around relational governance, deliberative decision-making and co-creation within public service logic and civic innovation research (Kaszynska, Thorpe & Mitchell, 2022).

4.7 Innovation, Creative Industries and Place-Based Cultural Ecosystems

A central topic across the Network discussions was the increasingly complex relationship between innovation, CIs, cultural production and cultural engagement - and place-based development. Contributors questioned narrow understandings and indicators of innovation rooted exclusively in science, technology and formal R&D (IPR, patents, etc., see also Textbox 3. above).

This problem of narrow and selective measurement is reflected in Community Innovation Surveys (CIS) that exclude micro-firms (employing under-10) despite the disproportionate representation of micro-firms in the UK CIs, whilst arts and cultural organisations in public/not-for-profit sectors are also excluded (OECD, 2024), undervaluing innovations in areas such as immersive tech in subsidised theatre and place-based innovations in cultural and creative sectors clusters. This is counterfactual, since evidence suggests that cultural and creative sector businesses engage in more product, process and organisational innovation than the rest of the UK economy (Nana-Cheraa & Roper, 2025). Existing measurement and information systems further struggle to capture firms with business models that rely on project-based working, freelancers, informal partnerships, internationally distributed production, and flat organisational structures (which in many cases are not captured as a single entity for HMRC or business data purposes). These data collection limitations conspire to understate both innovation and productivity (including GVA and MFP) in place-based creative ecosystems, despite their otherwise successful performance in product and service innovation and overall profitability, including export markets.

[7] The tradition began in Brazil where it has been used successfully since the late 1980s. It has since spread and over 300 municipalities have used participatory budgeting including in Venezuela, Canada, USA, Spain and France (Evans & Kaszynska, 2025).

This is not just a problem of measurement. There is a need for broader conceptions of innovation capable of recognising the role of culture, creativity, design, participation and social infrastructure. In a nutshell, innovation depends on connecting distributed forms of knowledge (Hitchen et al., 2025). Earlier work by Bakhshi, McVittie and Simmie (2008) and Chapain (2010) demonstrated that CIs contribute to innovation across the wider economy through design, branding, digital content, storytelling and problem-solving capabilities. Creative skills and methods—including design thinking, visual communication, storytelling, user-centred design and cultural interpretation—increasingly shape innovation processes in sectors far beyond the cultural economy itself. Creative PEC research has repeatedly demonstrated that creative clusters contribute disproportionately to innovation intensity and that creative occupations are distributed across many sectors of the economy rather than confined to formally designated cultural and CI sectors. Subsequent work has expanded this understanding significantly: increasingly, innovation is understood as emerging through interaction between organisations, infrastructures, institutions, communities and places rather than solely through technological invention or formal research processes. This perspective resonates strongly with developments in regional innovation systems theory, social innovation research, mission-oriented innovation and civic innovation approaches (see also Potts 2009a; 2009b). Lee (2020) also highlights the importance of "relatedness" between CIs and other sectors, demonstrating that creative capabilities diffuse through local economies via networks, labour mobility and cross-sector interaction. CIs therefore function not simply as isolated sectors but as enablers for wider economic adaptability and innovation. This perspective has become increasingly influential within UK policy discourse.

Creative PEC discussion papers have substantially contributed to this understanding. Tether (2021) argues that innovation within CIs frequently occurs outside traditional R&D frameworks and instead depends upon design intensity, tacit knowledge and creative experimentation – often place-based - likewise in creative-digital clusters (Evans, 2019). Furthermore, Tether and Yu (2022) demonstrate that firms engaging in design and innovation activities are significantly more likely to export successfully, highlighting the economic importance of their creative capabilities.

The discussions also highlighted the growing importance of understanding **peripheral and non-metropolitan innovation ecosystems**. McFadzean et al. (2022) demonstrate that innovation within CIs is not confined to major metropolitan centres but also emerges within seaside towns and rural contexts through distinctive local networks, identities and infrastructures (see also In Situ, 2026). These more peripheral and remoter areas also successfully exploit their heritage and natural environments as part of their place-based cultural and CI strategies (Evans & Kaszynska, 2025; Evans, 2017). The formative DCMS study

(2016b) also reported that significant CI growth and was strongly associated with a cultural asset base and continued investment in small urban centres. This work directly challenges assumptions that innovation necessarily depends upon large-scale metropolitan agglomeration, as is borne out by PEC studies of microclusters (Siepel et al., 2022) and the geography of creativity (Mateos-Garcia & Bakhshi, 2016; Siepel et al., 2023).

TEXTBOX 3. PROBLEMS WITH DATA SETS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Not surprisingly, the central critique that has emerged from Network's activities is that existing datasets and information systems are poorly suited to understanding place-based innovation and development because they are designed around administrative units, sectoral categories and siloed indicators, rather than the relational and emergent dynamics through which innovation actually occurs.

This was the key concern for CICERONE H2020 project which concluded that current information infrastructures struggle to capture the networked and multi-scalar organisation of creative production. This is because conventional datasets are typically organised around firms, sectors and administrative territories, producing static representations of economic activity. However, innovation in the cultural and creative sectors operates through complex networks of organisations, intermediaries, freelancers and places whose relationships often cut across formal boundaries. Consequently, many of the interactions through which knowledge is exchanged, collaborations are formed and innovation emerges remain invisible in official statistics. The problem is therefore not simply a lack of data, but the mismatch between the relational nature of creative ecosystems and the categories through which they are observed (Pratt, 2023; Kloosterman et al., 2026). As Virani observes (2023), creative ecosystems are often constituted through scenes, reputations, informal networks, and symbolic economies that are only partially captured by firm-location data-sets. As a result, policy-makers are often unable to identify the intermediary functions, dependencies and connections underpinning the resilience and innovative capacity of local creative ecosystems.
The recommendation emerging here is the development of relational information infrastructures capable of representing creative economies as networks rather than collections of isolated actors. Pratt's Cultural Creative Sector Observatory provides an example of such an approach by using a relational database to map organisations, functions, sectors and their interconnections from a Global Production Network perspective. The ambition is to enable policymakers to understand not only where creative activity is located and concentrated, but how it is organised, connected and

sustained, thereby providing a more appropriate evidence base for place-based policy and for supporting innovation within cultural and creative ecosystems.

4.8 The Mezzo Level of Policymaking and the Need for Imagination

Network discussions and recent work on place-based innovation policy suggests a significant shift away from linear models of innovation centred on research production, technology transfer, and firm-level productivity, towards a more relational understanding of innovation as an ecosystem process (see Textbox 4. *Innovation In the Broadest Sense: From CCS Activity to Economic Consequence*). Indeed, across a diverse range of topics, contributors to the debate repeatedly emphasise that successful innovation depends not simply on the generation of new knowledge, but on the existence of social, organisational, and institutional infrastructures capable of connecting actors, translating knowledge, and coordinating collective action. Innovation emerges not from isolated acts of invention, but from the capacity of places to cultivate relationships, build networks, and facilitate interaction between different forms of expertise.

This has clear implications for how we understand place, and how we think about place-based approaches. Regarding the former, as the editors of a recent volume concerning the role of universities and socially engaged art practices in places put it:

> Drawing from Doreen Massey's conceptualisation of place (2005), we contend that places are always in flux and do not require geographic bounding (Indeed, they can be imaginary or exist as a shared understanding between people who might live/reside in vastly different proximities. They are in effect just as socio-cultural as they are geo-political and emanate from the stories, histories and power-dynamics between people, things and environments (Wright and Broadhead, forthcoming).

This expanded understanding of place resonates with the conception of place as an assemblage spanning tangible and intangible elements proposed in this report. This socio-cultural perspective is also helpful in relation to the evolutionary view of innovation advocated here, stressing, as it does, contextual factors such as adaptation, adoption, diffusion and embedding (see Textbox 4).

What follows from this in terms of policymaking is a need for a more systemic understanding of policy objects and, with this, different modes of policy and governance. Sampson (2026) argues that innovation policy has traditionally focused either on macro-level strategy or micro-level interventions, while overlooking the intermediate spaces in which innovation

actually takes shape. These mezzo-level spaces consist of networks (both sectoral and place-based), partnerships, civic organisations, cultural institutions, local governance structures, and collaborative forums through which actors collectively interpret problems, negotiate priorities, and imagine possible courses of action. The central challenge for policy is therefore not only how to identify and fund innovation projects, but to cultivate and sustain the social, organisational and imaginative infrastructures that make innovation possible in the first place. This, in turn points to the need to re-define the theory of change or standard logic model presupposed in policymaking and project evaluation, i.e.:

Move away from**: project/intervention → outputs → impacts → £ value**
Towards: **CCS activity → mechanisms and conditions →innovation and economic effects → investment decisions**

This shifts the analytical and policy question from 'What outputs does activity in cultural and creative sectors produce and how to monetise them and then assess through cost-benefit analysis?', to 'Through what mechanisms and under what conditions does activity in cultural and creative sectors become economically consequential?' The latter question is inherently place-based because the mechanisms and conditions in question do not operate independently of their context. Their effectiveness depends upon the particular configuration of actors, infrastructures, institutions, spaces, networks and capabilities through which they operate. This puts the considerations of scale and configuration at the forefront of analysis and policymaking.

TEXTBOX 4. INNOVATION IN THE BROADEST SENSE: FROM CCS ACTIVITY TO ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCE

The discussion thus far points to the need to approach innovation in the broadest possible sense. Conventional innovation policy has tended to privilege the production of novelty, particularly through research and development, technological invention, knowledge transfer and the subsequent commercialisation and branding of new products and processes. The OECD's *Oslo Manual*, the principal international reference point for the measurement of innovation, defines innovation as a new or improved product or process that differs significantly from what existed previously and has been implemented or made available to users. Importantly, this definition already extends beyond invention: innovation encompasses processes of implementation, adoption and diffusion. Yet for place-based policy involving cultural and creative sectors, even this broader definition is insufficient to explain how innovation actually happens and becomes economically consequential.

The issue is not simply whether a new product, service or process has been introduced, but how (and why) novelty is developed, interpreted, adapted, adopted, diffused and embedded within particular social, organisational and institutional contexts. This expanded understanding is particularly important for understanding the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors. Potts (2009a; 2009b; see also Potts and Cunningham, 2008) positions CIs within processes of economic evolution, emphasising their role not simply in producing innovations but in facilitating their adoption, adaptation and diffusion. Cultural and creative activity can provide the social and cultural capacities through which new ideas, technologies and practices become meaningful, usable and embedded within everyday practices and networks (and markets). Innovation therefore extends beyond technological invention to encompass experimentation, interpretation, design, social, institutional and cultural coordination, and the formation of new patterns of use and interaction.

For places this means that what matters is not only the presence of firms open to innovation or the production of new knowledge, but the existence of the relationships, infrastructures and capabilities through which novelty can travel between actors and be embedded. Indeed, the Network's discussions suggest that innovation emerges through interaction between organisations, infrastructures, institutions, communities and places, and that creative capabilities diffuse through local economies via networks, labour mobility and cross-sector interaction.

Seen in this way, innovation is better understood as a process of **origination, experimentation, adaptation, adoption, diffusion and embedding.** Policy is not only concerned with identifying promising innovations and funding their development; it is concerned with creating the conditions under which actors can experiment, learn, adapt, connect and coordinate, and through which novelty can become economically and strategically consequential.

This provides the rationale for the revised theory of change proposed in this report:

CCS activity → mechanisms and conditions → innovation and economic effects → investment and strategic decisions

The significance of this formulation is that it makes visible the intermediate mechanisms through which activity in cultural and creative sectors generates economic consequences. In place terms this is manifested through affordances, assemblages and the configurations

and scales that combine to provide the optimum conditions for sustained cultural and creative sectors development. Rather than assuming a direct and linear relationship between activity and economic value, it asks what happens in between: what relationships are formed, what capabilities are developed, what uncertainties are reduced, what knowledge is exchanged, what enables ideas or technologies to be adopted and adapted, and what allows these processes to generate effects beyond the immediate activity.

A number of candidate mechanisms and conditions may therefore be particularly relevant to observe and, where possible, test in place-based contexts:

- **Experimentation** → technological and organisational learning in relatively safe environments, including learning from failure.
- **Prototyping** → reduction of uncertainty, including economic uncertainty, and the creation of option value in the narrower economic sense.
- **Interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration** → knowledge spillovers through the interaction and recombination of different forms of expertise.
- **Culturally specific design and interpretation** → improved relevance, usability and adoption of technologies, products and services in particular contexts.
- **Capturing attention, public imagination and engagement** → enhanced absorptive capacity: the ability of individuals and organisations to recognise, interpret and make use of new knowledge, technologies and possibilities.

The same intervention may therefore produce very different effects depending on the configuration through which it operates. Conversely, relatively modest interventions may become economically significant where they activate particularly productive combinations of relationships, capabilities and infrastructures. This reinforces the Network's argument that the mezzo level is a critical scale for policy design and governance: it is here that organisations, institutions, communities and networks interact and where new patterns of learning, adaptation and innovation can emerge. Scale and configuration are therefore not simply descriptive characteristics of place; they form part of the explanation of how innovation works.

Overall, the discussions pointed towards an increasingly ecosystemic understanding of cultural and creative development in which infrastructures, institutions and intermediaries are not secondary supports for economic growth, but central components of how innovation – and value – emerge in place-based contexts.

5. Emerging Themes Across the Network

From these discussions and exchanges, several overarching themes have emerged**:**

5.1 Relational Approaches to Value and Innovation

The project strongly reinforced a move away from purely transactional and output-oriented understandings of value and innovation, towards relational and co-creative approaches.

Value was seen as emerging through networks, partnerships and collaboration engendered through place-based approaches and understanding. This perspective aligns with broader developments in public service logic, cultural ecosystems thinking and contemporary innovation studies. In these contexts, experimentation, prototyping, network formation, etc can reduce uncertainty, build absorptive capacity and create opportunities for future innovation, even where their immediate economic returns are uncertain or difficult to quantify.

5.2 Infrastructural and Systemic Analytical and Policy Framework

One of the most significant developments emerging from the Network was the increasing use of infrastructural thinking. Infrastructure was framed not simply as support systems but as the underlying, enabling condition and a source of agency (See Textbox 5). In this respect, the findings and recommendations very much align with the new report by UKRI DCMS Cultural Placemaking Policy Fellow – *Cultural infrastructure and place-based investment* (Gilmore, 2026).

TEXTBOX 5. TOWARDS A MORE SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING OF POLICY OBJECTS

A recurring theme throughout the Network's programme of activities has been that place cannot be reduced to geography or physical infrastructure alone. Places function through configurations of relationships between institutions, organisations, communities, built environments/spaces, and symbolic meanings (including place 'brands').

This calls for a more systemic constructions of policy objects – transversally, across different policy portfolios and scales; and relationally to see how specific arrangements, alignments and configurations emerge in places and became causally active in the functioning of places (Kaszynska, forthcoming).

A systemic policy object prioritises relational and transversal features in its modelling. In the context of place-based approaches, it starts with seeing places as sets of material, institutional, social and cultural arrangements (see 4.4 above).

These elements interact and generate structures that cannot be reduced to their constituent parts, nor are visible just through aggregation. They create zones of emergence in which novelty arises through the specific interactions and relationships that constitute a particular formation (Sampson, 2026; Wright and Broadhead, forthcoming). These zones are neither macro nor micro, but mezzo: the level at which these structures are territorialised into concrete configurations and where local practices aggregate into new patterns of organisation, learning and innovation. Spatially these zones are not fixed and more likely to be part of polycentric clusters of multiple CI and other sectors, co-located in sub-regional scales across boundaries that are porous, allowing for expansion/new joiners and re-configuration, e.g. design and manufacturing, createch, co -design and -production (Chapain et al., 2010; Evans, 2019).

This has important implications for policy. If the most significant dynamics of adaptation and innovation emerge at the mezzo level, then policy cannot be conceived solely as either a top-down instrument of central government or as a collection of isolated local interventions. Instead, policy must engage with place-based assemblages as systemic policy objects in their own right. This is reflected in Creative Enterprise Zone differentiation that recognises CI and other sector specialisms and strengths, local assets and place-based affordances in targeted support (e.g. workspace, skills development, showcasing/trade festivals).

From this perspective, the mezzo level becomes a critical scale for policy design, coordination and governance. Rather than treating places as passive recipients of policy or as bounded administrative territories, policy must recognise them as relational systems whose capacities emerge through interaction, *viz*:

- First, relational interdependence means that outcomes depend less on the attributes of individual actors than on the quality, density and configuration of relationships between diverse participants. Policy effectiveness is therefore contingent upon the ability to cultivate productive connections, trust and collaborative capacity across sectors and institutions.
- Second, expertise is distributed throughout the assemblage. Effective governance requires drawing not only on formal technical evidence but also on tacit,

experiential and culturally embedded forms of knowledge held by communities, practitioners and local organisations.

- Third, governance should not be understood primarily as a matter of command and control (e.g. through strict zoning or KPIs), or by default, institutionalised via local authority and contrived delivery agencies (rather than place-based networks). Because outcomes arise from complex interactions, the role of policy shifts towards curating and creating the conditions within which productive forms of coordination can emerge. This involves curating relationships, enabling experimentation and addressing the structural failures associated with both hyper-centralisation and fragmentation (Gilmore, 2026).
- Finally, **the mezzo level constitutes a distinctive policy scale. It is not defined by policy portfolios, administrative boundaries, political jurisdictions or externally imposed place imaginaries and brands. Rather, it is a self-defined and relationally constituted area whose boundaries emerge from patterns of interaction, shared challenges, opportunities and collective action** between firms of similar and different size/scale of operation and maturity. Policy therefore requires mechanisms capable of recognising and engaging with these functional place geographies rather than relying exclusively on formal territorial units.

Seeing objects of decision-making in systemic terms also changes the 'semantic' field of policy (e.g., what definitions are seen as meaningful – see Kaszynska, forthcoming) and what success means in place-based decision-making, shifting attention away from outputs alone and towards the enabling capacities, connections, and the 'mezzo' forms of co-ordination (see above) through which places function and evolve, and where:

- Success is not measured just by what is produced (events, outputs, economic returns) or how much volume of value is delivered, but through the presence and quality of the conditions that make places function
- Attention shifts to the means through which change is created—the relational characteristics that enable ongoing cultural life
- Policy begins to recognise that invisible dynamics—like relational capacity, cultural capability, multi-scalar integration, institutional permeability, trust and reciprocity – as its point of focus and support.

5.3 The Need for New Evaluation and Appraisal Approaches

Participants repeatedly highlighted the inadequacy of existing data sources and evaluation systems for capturing the value generated through place-based cultural and creative activity, and with this, our inability to understand innovation in places and how this leads to economic, cultural and social development. There was growing support for indicators that are therefore:

- relational
- infrastructure-based
- and distribution/scale-sensitive

Policy and programme evaluation should therefore consider not only outputs and participation activity data, but also:

- relationship building
- institutional permeability
- collaborative capacity
- ecosystem strengthening
- inclusion and exclusion
- governance democratisation
- strategic option value
- long-term sustainability

Evaluation and policy appraisal should consequently consider not only what an intervention produces now, but whether it expands the future opportunity set of a place or ecosystem. This does not mean treating all possible future benefits as guaranteed economic returns, but recognising that, particularly at the mezzo level, the strategic value of activity in cultural and creative sectors may lie in keeping possibilities open and increasing the capacity to respond to what comes next, rather than in generating an immediately measurable economic return. This relates directly to the need to consider strategic option value in pace-based contexts. Strategic option value arises when an intervention creates, preserves or expands future possibilities under conditions of uncertainty. Reduction of uncertainty is one important mechanism through which this value can be generated, but so too – in a broader sense – are the creation of new capabilities, relationships, knowledge and configurations that expand the range of future courses of action available to a place.

6. Future Directions for Research and Policy

The Network discussions raised several important implications for cultural and CI policy, innovation and economic development. Successful place-based innovation depends not only on funding projects, but on supporting the conditions that that enable collaboration, learning, and adaptation. This means that long-term investment in relationship, multi-actor governance capacity and collaborative brokerage are essential, as evidenced in European creative innovation regions. Policy and resource distribution is still highly centralised in the UK, including R&D, training, land-use planning, however there is variation in how legislation and guidance is interpreted locally (and creatively), notably in planning re. mixed-use, live-work, re-use of industrial and civic heritage spaces and targeted place-based cluster support. Where there is collaboration and integration across regional and local levels (including R&D, HEIs), place-based CI development is more apparent (e.g. Creative Enterprise Zones, Creative Development Trusts (London, Manchester), Creative City-Regions (Bristol-Bath, Cardiff).

Several targeted policy recommendations therefore follow from the Network's deliberations, with a focus on what we see as six key drivers of successful place-based approaches to CI innovation and endogenous growth: Intermediaries; Space; Governance; Experimentation; Relationships; and Translation:

6.1 INTERMEDIARIES: Recognise intermediaries as strategic actors

Place-based innovation depends on organisations that connect sectors, firms, communities, institutions, and funding systems. Policymakers should establish dedicated support for intermediary organisations, notably workspaces/maker spaces, hubs, creative quarters, place/sector-based networks (e.g. 'Digital Shoreditch', 'Creative Wick'- Evans, 2024) and recognise co-working, brokerage, convening - and network-building as legitimate innovation activities within funding and evaluation frameworks. This is particularly important for micro-firms who may lack capacity and intermediary resources, and for bridging place-based knowledge gaps and opportunities.

6.2 SPACE: Protect workspace, mixed-use and heritage use-values

The importance of creative workspace provision, co-working and cultural infrastructure to CI innovation and flourishing creative clusters has been demonstrated repeatedly and is a global phenomenon. Policy however lags behind practice and need - a direct consequence of which is continued loss of workspaces and creative production capacity. Planning policy has to protect creative workspaces and mixed-use areas; whilst heritage/conservation

policy (e.g. listing, tangible and intangible heritage) needs to recognise and protect *use-values*, not just facades/architectural heritage in re-use.

6.3 GOVERNANCE: Strengthen multi-level governance

Effective place-based innovation requires alignment between local, regional, and national priorities. Policymakers should create non-hierarchical mechanisms for regular coordination across governance levels, including joint planning structures, shared strategic priorities, and cross-sector decision-making forums. These co-ordination mechanisms are best located at the mezzo level of decision-making.

6.4 EXPERIMENTATION: Create protected spaces for experimentation

Innovation emerges through exploration, collaboration, and learning rather than through predetermined outcomes and linear R&D alone. This requires high risk tolerance (and risk/venture capital, lacking in cultural and CI sectors), prototyping and occasionally 'failing'. Policymakers should dedicate a proportion of innovation/R&D funding to exploratory, cross-sector, and higher-risk activity, e.g. place-based 'living labs', where outcomes are not fully specified in advance, alongside conventional project funding.

6.5 TRANSLATION: Invest in boundary-spanning capacity

Innovation depends on collaboration between sectors (cultural, creative and 'non-creative' industries, and users/consumers) that operate with different languages/codes, priorities, evidence standards, and timescales. Policy and research institutions should support inter-disciplinary and novel research connecting cultural policy, urban studies, ecological economics, public value theory, innovation studies and social infrastructure research, and boundary-spanning roles that help organisations understand one another and their creative/innovation processes, as well as build trust, and develop shared agendas and research/ R&D propositions. These collaborative activities could support the creation of multi-scalar datasets – reflecting multi-disciplinary knowledge – to effectively capture how creative ecosystems evolve and operate in practice. Translation should be recognised as a strategic capability.

6.6 RELATIONSHIPS: Develop relational evaluation models

Existing evaluation systems often overlook the networks and partnerships that enable place-based innovation and growth. Policymakers (and evaluators/researchers) should incorporate indicators relating to partnership quality, network diversity, trust/values, capacity-building, and long-term collaboration alongside conventional output measures.

6.7 FUTURE: Make policy sensitive to strategic option value, not just economic value

Conventional appraisal tends to privilege realised and measurable economic effects, but this is particularly limiting for place-based cultural and creative activity, where value may lie in changing the conditions from which future innovation can emerge. As this Network has argued, innovation is not produced by individual assets or interventions in isolation, but through particular configurations of actors, infrastructures, relationships and capabilities operating across different scales. Policy should therefore assess not only what an intervention produces, but what it makes possible in the future in relation to strategic option value.

7. Conclusion

The Network project has demonstrated that contemporary debates concerning CIs and place are increasingly moving towards relational, infrastructural and distribution-sensitive understandings of value creation and innovation.

Rather than treating creative economies simply as collections of assets or sectors, Network contributors emphasised the importance of understanding the transversal conditions that sustain cultural production and that enable CIs to emerge and endure in place.

From this perspective, the role of policy is not to direct or determine outcomes from above, but to engage with place-based assemblages as complex adaptive systems. Intervention should focus on nurturing the relationships, flows and capacities through which collective action emerges, while preserving the contextual specificities and local forms of organisation that generate value within each assemblage (for examples of this kind of approach see Hitchin and Waldie, 2026; Hitchin et al., 2025).

The role of research in this endeavour is thus to improve the conditions for collective understanding and action. By connecting different forms of knowledge, translating across disciplinary, sectoral and organisational boundaries and scales, and making relationships and interdependencies visible, research can help diverse actors navigate complexity and identify opportunities for collaboration through these place advantages.

The project therefore points to an approach to place-based policy centred on cultivating systemic capacity: translating across different constituencies, strengthening the relationships, collaborations and governance arrangements through which creative ecosystems and innovation emerge.

References

Abdulfatah, A., Grainger, C., Webb, K. and Parkinson, M. (2026) 'Integrating FE in innovation ecosystems', in Beech, N. and de Graaf, K. (eds.) *Innovation Ecosystems: i-PLACE Compendium No. 1*. Key Cities Innovation Network, pp. 173-196.

ACE (2019) *The value of the Arts and Culture in Place shaping*. Wavehill for Arts Council of England.

ACE (2020) *Arts and Place shaping: Evidence Revie*w. Wavehill for Arts Council of England.

AEA (2022) *The Relationships Between Cultural Organisations and Local Creative Industries in the Context of a Cultural District*, Discussion Paper 2022/02. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Bagwell, S. (2008) 'Creative clusters and city growth', *Creative Industries Journal*, 1(1), 31–46.

Bakhshi, H., McVittie, E., & Simmie, J. (2008). *Creating innovation: Do the creative industries support innovation in the wider economy?* London: NESTA.

Bakhshi, H. (2017). *Putting creativity on the map: Classification, measurement and legitimation of the creative economy*. London: Nesta.

Barker, V & Jordan, J 2022, 'Finding the sweet spot: critiquing a cultural ecosystems approach to civic cultural strategy making', *Journal of Cultural Economy*, vol. 15 (3), 277-292.

Belfiore, E. (2022) 'Who cares? At what price? The hidden costs of socially engaged arts labour and the moral failure of cultural policy', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 25(1), 61–78.

Bell, D. and Jayne, M. (eds) (2004) City of Quarters: Urban Villages in the Contemporary City, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Black S., Hitchen, G. and Terras, M. (2026) Supporting innovation in the creative industries through data reporting: insights and implications from the UK's Creative Industries Clusters Programme. *Frontiers in Communication*, 11:1684358.

Breznitz, S. and Noonan, D. (2018) Planting the seed to grow local creative industries: The impacts of cultural districts and arts schools on economic development, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 50, 1047-70.

Castells, M. and Cardoso, G. (eds.) (2005) *The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy. Washington*, DC: Johns Hopkins Center for Transatlantic Relations.

Chapain, C., Cooke, P., De Propris, L., MacNeill, S., & Mateos-Garcia, J. (2010). *Creative clusters and innovation: Putting creativity on the map*. London: NESTA.

Chapain, C. and Comunian, R. (2010) Enabling and inhibiting the creative economy: The role of the local and regional dimensions in England. *Regional Studies*, 44(6), 717-734.

Clifton, N. and Cooke, P. (2009) 'Creative Knowledge Workers and Location in Europe and North America', *Creative Industries Journal*, 2(1), 61–74.

Clifton, N., Chapain, C. and Comunian, R. (eds.) (2016) *Creative Regions in Europe*. London: Routledge

Clifton, N. et al. (2019) Coworking in the digital economy: Context, motivations and outcomes, *Futures* 135: Article 102439.

Comunian, R. Chapain, C. and Clifton, N. (2010) Location, location, location: exploring the complex relationship between creative industries and place, *Creative Industries Journal* 1(3), 51-10.

Coscieme, L. (2015) Cultural ecosystem services: The inspirational value of ecosystems in popular music, *Ecosystem Services*, 16, 121-124,

Creative London (2005) *Strategies for Creative Spaces: Phase 1 Report*. London: Cities Institute.

DCMS (Evans, G,L., TBR] (2011) *The Art of the Possible: Using secondary data to detect social and economic impacts from investments in culture and sport: a feasibility s*tudy. London: Department for Culture Media & Sport.

DCMS (2016a) *Culture White Paper*. London: Department for Culture Media & Sport.

DCMS [Evans, G.L., TBR & NEF] (2016b) *The Role of Culture and Heritage in Placeshaping*. London: Department for Culture Media & Sport.

DeLanda, M. (2006) Deleuzian social ontology and assemblage theory. In M. Fuglsang & B. M. Sørensen (eds.) *Deleuze and the social*. Edinburgh University Press, 250–266

Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (1987) *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.

Dovey, J. aand Virani, T. (2026) Universities as creative industry intermediaries: University-led creative cluster policy in the UK, *City, Culture and Society,* 45: Article 100712

Evans, G.L. (2009a) Creative Cities, Creative Spaces and Urban Policy, *Urban Studies* 46(5-6), 1003-1040.

Evans, G.L. (2009b) From cultural quarters to creative clusters: creative spaces in the new city economy, in M.Legner (ed) *The sustainability and development of cultural quarters: international perspectives*. Stockholm: Institute of Urban History, 32-59.

Evans, G.L. (2014) Rethinking Place Branding and Place Making through Creative and Cultural Quarters, in M.Kavaratzis, G.Warnaby and G.Ashworth (eds) *Rethinking Place Branding: Comprehensive Brand Development for Cities and Regions*. Vienna: Springer, 135-158.

Evans, Graeme (2017) *Creative cities - an international perspective.* In: G.Richards and J.Hannigan (eds) *The Sage Handbook of New Urban Studies*. Sage Publications, 311-329.

Evans, G.L. (2019) Emergence of a Digital Cluster in East London: Birth of a New Hybrid Firm, *Competitiveness Review*, 29(3), 253-266.

Evans, G.L. (2024) *Cultural Spaces, Production and Consumption*. London: Routledge.

Evans, G.L. and Tasci-Edizel, O. (2024) London 2012. In Gold, J. & Gold, M. (eds) *Olympic Cities*. Routledge, 394-418.

Evans, G.L. and Foord, J. (2009) The Generation of Diversity: Mixed-Use and Urban Sustainability. In: *Urban Sustainability Through Environmental Design: Approaches to time-*

people-place responsive urban spaces. Sergio Porta, Kevin Thwaites, Ombretta Romice, Mark Greaves (eds.) London: Taylor & Francis.

Evans, G. and Kaszynska, P. (2025) *The role of culture-led regeneration in place transformation*. OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Papers, 2025/06. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Fish, R., Church, A. and Winter, M. (2016) Conceptualising cultural ecosystem services: A novel framework for research and critical engagement, *Ecosystem Services*, 21B, 208-217

Florida, R. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2005) *Cities and the Creative Class*. New York: Routledge.

Foord, J. (2013) The new boomtown? Creative city to Tech City in east London, *Cities*, 33, 51-60.

Frontier Economics (2023) *Creative spillovers: do the creative industries benefit firms in the wider economy?*, London: Department for Culture Media & Sport.

Frontier Economics (2025) *Evaluation of the Create Growth Programme (CGP) 2022 to 2024*. London: Department for Culture Media & Sport.

GCDN (2019) *The Social Impact of Cultural District*s. Global Cultural Districts Network. Boekman, https://catalogus.boekman.nl/pub/P19-0667.pdf. Amsterdam.

Gibson, J. J. (1979) *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Houghton: Mifflin. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203767760

Gilmore, A. (2013) 'Cold Spots, Crap Towns and Cultural Deserts: The Role of Place and Geography in Cultural Participation and Creative Place-Making', *Cultural Trends*, 22(2), 86–96.

Gilmore, A. (2026) Cultural infrastructure and place-based investment. Research Report by Professor Abigail Gilmore, UKRI DCMS Cultural Placemaking Policy Fellow, DCMS.

Gilmore, A. and Comunian, R. (2016) 'Beyond the Campus: Higher Education, Cultural Policy and the Creative Economy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 22(1), 1–9.

Gilmore, A. and Burnill-Maier, C. (2023) 'Keeping to the Margins: Understanding the Role of Symbolic Violence and Institutional Fields in Creative Ecosystems', in Virani, T.E. (ed.) *Global Creative Ecosystems: A Critical Understanding of Sustainable Creative and Cultural Production*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 271–292.

GLA (2023) *Creative Enterprise Zones Impact Report 2018-2021*. London: Greater London Authority.

Gornostaeva, G. (2008) The film and television industry in London's suburbs: lifestyle of the rich or losers' retreat? *Creative Industries Journal,* 1(1), 47-71.

Gutierrez Posada, D., Kitsos, T., Nathan, M. and Nuccio, M. (2021) *Do creative industries generate multiplier effects? Evidence from UK cities 1997-2018*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) Discussion Paper. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

HE (2016) *Heritage Counts: Heritage and Place Branding*. (G.L.Evans, Pomegranite & TBR) London: Historic England.

Heebels, B. and van Aalst, I. (2020) 'Creative Clusters in Berlin: Entrepreneurship and the Quality of Place in Prenzlauer Berg and Kreuzberg', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 92(4), 347-363.

Helbrecht, I. (1998): The creative metropolis. Services, symbols, and spaces, *Wolkenkuckucksheim. Internationale Zeitschrift zur Theorie der Architektur*, 3 (1).

Higgs, P., Cunningham, S., & Bakhshi, H. (2008). *Beyond the creative industries: Mapping the creative economy in the United Kingdom*. London: Nesta.

Hitchen, G., Campbell, T., & Wang, R. (2025). *A brief history of creative R&D in the UK: 1994–2024*. Zenodo. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15526302 (Accessed: 4 June 2026).

Hitchin, J., Little, M., & Waldie, A. (2025). *Place and evidence in the UK*. Place Matters. Place and Evidence in the UK (PDF)

Hitchin, J., & Waldie, A. (2026). *A pattern book of place-based change: Place and evidence: An open, collaborative inquiry into place-based work in the UK* (Version 1). Place and Evidence.

Howells, J. (2006) Intermediation and the role of intermediaries in innovation, *Research Policy*, 35(5), 715–728

Hutton, T.A. (2004) 'The New Economy of the Inner City', *Cities*, 21(2), 89–108.

Hutton, T.A. (2006) 'Spatiality, Built Form, and Creative Industry Development in the Inner City', *Environment and Planning A*, 38(10), 1819–1841.

Innocenti, N. and Lazzeretti, L. (2018) Relatedness and growth: The impact of creative industries to the wider economy, *Papers in Evolutionary Economic Geography* (PEEG) 1819, Utrecht University.

IN SITU (2026) *Innovation Policy Proposals (for KICs) for CCIs in Non-Urban Areas – Deliverable 5.3 (D5.3)*. Work package WP5 – Innovation and Cultural Policy. CultureActionEurope.

Joffe, A., Larasati, J. and Newbigin, J. (2022) How Governments Could Better Engage with the Working Practices of the 21st Century Creative Economy. In: *Creative Economy 2030: Imagining and Delivering a Robust, Creative, Inclusive, and Sustainable Recovery*. Asian Development Bank Institute.

Jones, K., Lea, T., Sharpe, D., Jones, T. and Harvey, S. (2003) *Beyond Anecdotal Evidence: The Spillover Effects of Investments in Cultural Facilities*. Toronto: Ryerson University.

Kaszynska, P. (2020) *Value in Places and Places in Systems*. Social Design Institute (SDI) Working Paper 2.3.3. London: University of the Arts London.

Kaszynska, P., Thorpe, A., and Mitchell, S. (2022) *MAKE (E)valuation Report*. Project Report. London: University of the Arts London.

Kaszynska, P. (forthcoming) Culture-as-infrastructure: the functional, the political and the need for poetic. *Journal of Cultural Economy.*

Kloosterman, R.C., Pratt, A.C., d'Ovidio, M. and Greco, L. (2026) 'Widening the web: Applying a production network approach to the cultural and creative sectors', *City, Culture and Society*, 38, Article 100692.

Komorowski, M., & Fodor, M. M. (2025) Universities as innovation agents for the creative industries: An exploratory quantitative study from Wales, *City, Culture and Society*, 43, Article 100670.

Lamaj, A. (2026) 'Unlocking shared commercialisation pathways: the case for regional practice in university innovation', in Beech, N. and de Graaf, K. (eds.) *Innovation Ecosystems: i-PLACE Compendium No. 1*. Key Cities Innovation Network, 149-172.

Lee, J.W. and Lee, S. (2023) Relationships between physical environments and creativity: A scoping review, *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 48, Article 101276.

Legner, M. (ed) (2009) *The sustainability and development of cultural quarters: international perspectives*. Stockholm: Institute of Urban History.

Lew, A. A. (2017) Tourism planning and place making: place-making or placemaking? *Tourism Geographies*, 19(3), 448–466.

Lewis, J. (2025) Rethinking innovation in creative clusters, *City, Culture and Society*, 42. Article 100669.

Lyons, M. (2007) *Place-shaping: a shared ambition for the future of local government final report.* London: HM Stationer's Office.

Lyons, M.S. and Davies, J. (2022) *The Role of the University in Enhancing Creative Clusters: Comparing the Cardiff Capital Region and the West Midlands Combined Authority*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) Discussion Paper 2022/10. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Madgin, R. (2025) *Why Historic Places Matter Emotionally: Responses, Attachments, Communities*. Cambridge Elements in Critical Heritage Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Madgin, R. and Gigante, L. (2026) *The role of felt experience in place-based innovation.* In: Beech, N. and de Graaf, K. (Eds.) (2026) *Innovation ecosystems.* i-PLACE compendium no.1, 15-34. Key Cities Innovation Network. April.

Markusen, A. (2004): 'Targeting occupations in regional and community economic development', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 70 (3), 253–268.

Markusen, A. and Gadwa, A. (2010) *Creative Placemaking*, Washington DC: National Endowment for the Arts.

Markusen, A. (2013) Fuzzy concepts, proxy data: why indicators would not track creative placemaking success, *International Journal of Urban Sciences*, 17(3), 291–303.

Martins, J. (2015) The Extended Workplace in a Creative Cluster: Exploring Space(s) of Digital Work in Silicon Roundabout, *Journal of Urban Design*, 20(1), 125-145.

Massey, D. (2005) *For Space*. Sage Publications.

Mateos-Garcia, J. and Bakhshi, H. (2016) *The geography of creativity in the UK: Creative clusters, creative people and creative networks*. London: Nesta.

McAndrew, S., O'Brien, D., Taylor, M. and Wang, R. (2025) *Higher Education and the Arts and Culture Sector*. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

McFadzean, L., Giannachi, G. and Evans, J. (2022) *Creative Industries Innovation in Seaside Resorts and Country Towns*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) Discussion Paper. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Ministry of Culture (2026) *White Paper of Cultural Districts (draft).* Saudia Arabia Ministry of Culture.

MHCLG (2025) *Pride in Place Strategy*. London: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Nana-Cheraa, R. and Roper, S. (2015) *What can we learn abou the innovation performance of the creative industries from the UK Innovation Survey. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.*

Nathan, M. and Rosso, A. (2022) Innovative events: product launches, innovation and firm performance, *Research Policy*, 51. Article 104373.

Noonan, D. (2013) 'How US Cultural Districts Shape Neighbourhoods', *Cultural Trends*, 22(3-4), 203–212.

Noonan, D. and Breznitz, S. (2013) Arts Districts, Universities, and the Rise of Media Arts. In: *Creative Communities: Art Works in Economic Development*, M.Rushton (ed.) Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

OECD (2024) *Boosting Innovation and Productivity Through Cultural and Creative Industries*. Paris: OECD.

Panayotopoulos-Tsiros, D., Garling, O., Marks, R., Alexandrova, A., Coyle, D., and Kenny, M.(2025) *Measuring Social and Cultural Infrastructure*. London: The British Academy.

Peck, J. & Theodore, N. (2015) *Fast Policy: Experimental Statecraft at the Thresholds of Neoliberalism*. University of Minnesota Press.

Potts, J. (2009a) 'Introduction: Creative industries and innovation policy', *Innovation*, 11(2), pp. 135–139.

Potts, J. (2009b) 'Why creative industries matter to economic evolution', *Economics of Innovation and New Technology*, 18(7), 663–673.

Potts, J. and Cunningham, S. (2008). Four models of the creative industries. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 14(3), 233-247.

Pratt, A.C. (2000) 'New Media, the New Economy and New Spaces', *Geoforum*, 31(4), pp. 425–436.

Pratt, A.C. (2004) 'Creative Clusters: Towards the Governance of the Creative Industries Production System', *Media International Australia*, 112, 50–66.

Pratt, A.C. (2023) *The CCS Observatory Pilot and Web Application: A User Guide*. CREATINNES Project Working Paper. Zenodo.

Pratt, A. and Gornostaeva, G. (2009). *The role of production chains in the London film & television industry cluster.* UK Data Service.

Pullinger, K., Pottinger, S. and Virani, T. (2026) Intermediating policy affordances in creative clusters. The Boost initiative, *City, Culture and Society*, 44. Article: 100695.

Roberts, L., Lowe, J. and Moreton, S. (2025) Unpacking the university-creative economy assemblage: The discourses, dynamics and possibilities of creative R&D programmes, *City, Culture and Society*, 41. Article 100637.

Roodhouse, S.. (2010) *Cultural quarters: Principles and practice* (2nd edn.), Bristol, Intellect Books.

Sampson, T. (2026) Unlocking shared Mezzo-level: imagination as policy infrastructure commercialisation pathways: the case for regional practice in University innovation. In: Beech, N. and de Graaf, K. (Eds.) (2026) *Innovation ecosystems.* i-PLACE compendium no.1. Key Cities Innovation Network. April, 73-92.

Scott, A.J. (2001) 'Capitalism, Cities, and the Production of Symbolic Forms', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 26(1), 11–23.

Scott, A.J. (2004) 'Cultural-Products Industries and Urban Economic Development' (likely one of several related papers from this period).

Scott, A.J. (2006) 'Creative Cities: Conceptual Issues and Policy Questions', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 28(1), 1–17.

Scott, A. J. (2014) Beyond the Creative City: Cognitive–Cultural Capitalism and the New Urbanism, *Regional Studies*, 48(4), 565–578.

Siepel, J. (2022) *Creative Industries Radar. Mapping the UK's creative clusters and microclusters*. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Siepel, J., Ramirez-Guerra, A. and Rathi, S. (2023) *Geographies of creativity*. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Siepel, J. and Wang, Z. (2026) *Creative clusters, geography and university–industry links*. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Silver, D. and Clark, T.N. (2013) 'Buzz as an Urban Resource', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 38(1), 1–32.

Stern, M.J. and Seifert, S. (2007) *Cultivating "Natural" Cultural Districts*. Philadelphia: Penn University.

Stern, M.J & Seifert, S (2010) 'Cultural clusters: The implications of cultural assets agglomeration for neighborhood revitalization.' *Journal of planning education and research*29.3 (2010), 262-279.

Tether, B. (2019) *Mind the Gap: Regional Inequalities in the UK's Creative Industries*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) Discussion Paper 2019/01. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Tether, B. (2021) *R&D, Design and Innovation: Examining the links in the Creative Industries*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) Discussion Paper 2021/07. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Tether, B. (2022) *Creative clusters and sparse spaces: Manchester's creative industries and the geographies of deprivation and prosperity*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) Discussion Paper 2022/11. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Tether, B.S. and Yu, X. (2022) *What distinguishes creative industry exporters? And does engaging in innovation, R&D and design matter?* Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) Discussion Paper. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Titsos, K., Nathan, M. and Gutierrez-Posada, D.(2023) *Creative Destruction? Creative firms, workers and residential gentrification*. Newcastle and London: Creative PEC.

Tuan, Y.-F. (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Virani, T. (2023) Towards a creative and cultural industries ecosystem perspective. In Global creative ecosystems: A critical understanding of sustainable creative and cultural production (pp.1-20). Cham: Springer.

Wang, Z., Fai, F. M., Tomlinson, P. R., Barzotto, M., & Ehrhardt, B. (2026) Coworking spaces: a place-based approach for skill development in left-behind regions. *Regional Studies*, 60(1), Article 2639508.

Weidenfeld, A., Broekel, T. and Clifton, N. (2026) Towards a dynamic conceptualisation of the regional innovation system: the systemic knowledge network continuum, *Industry and Innovation*, DOI: 10.1080/13662716.2026.2710707.

What Works (2016) *How to evaluate sport and culture: the effect of cultural districts* (statistical approach). London: LSE.

Wood, S. and Dovey, K. (2015) Creative Multiplicities: Urban Morphologies of Creative Clustering, Journal of Urban Design, 28(1), 52-74.

Wright, J. & Broadhead, S. (Forthcoming). Socially-Engaged Arts Practices, Universities and Place. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Appendix I. Network Research Fellows (*Conveners) and Respondents

Network Co-Leads:

Prof. Graeme Evans, Emeritus Professor of Cultural & Creative Economy, UAL, UK

Dr Patrycja Kaszynska, Senior Research Fellow, UAL, UK

Network Members:

Prof. Abigail Gilmore, UKRI Policy Fellow, DCMS Place-making and Levelling Up/ Professor of Cultural Policy, Manchester University, UK

Avril Joffe, UNESCO Chair of Entrepreneurship and Cultural Policy, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg/South Africa

Dr Diana Marcela Rey Vásquez, Researcher Strategic Policy, Planning and Research, Patrimoine canadien -- Canadian Heritage/Individual Specialist, UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Prof. Geoffrey Crossick, Distinguished Professor of Humanities, School of Advanced Study, School of Advanced Study (SAS), University of London, UK

Dr Ricky Lawton, Director of Economic Evaluation, Public Affairs, IPSOS, UK

Dr Salvatore Di Novo, Lecturer in Culture, Media and Creative Industries, King's College London, UK

Expert Respondents:

Dr Victoria Barker, Coventry University, UK

Prof. Franco Bianchini, Fitzcarraldo Foundation, Turin/Italy

Dr Emily Hopkins, Creative PEC, UK

Dr Valentina Montalto, KEDGE Business School, France

Prof. Andy Pratt, City University, UK

Rupert Allen, Canadian Heritage, Ottawa, Canada

Prof. Jonothan Neelands, Warwick University, UK

Owen Garling, Bennett School of Public Policy, Cambridge University, UK

Appendix II. Webinar Topics

1. ***Is there something in the Stones? Artisanal Districts and Creative Clusters***

Presenters: Prof. Geoffrey Crossick, SAS, London/UK and Prof. Graeme Evans, UAL, UK.
Respondents Dr Victoria Barker, Coventry University, UK and Prof. Franco Bianchini, Fitzcarraldo Foundation, Turin/Italy.

2. ***Creative Industries and Place: Infrastructures, Institutions and Intermediaries***

Presenters: Prof. Abigail Gilmore, Manchester University, UK and Avril Joffe, Wits University, Johannesburg/South Africa.
Respondents, Dr Emily Hopkins, Creative PEC and Dr Valentina Montalto, KEDGE Business School, France.

3. ***Data Information Systems and Place***

Presenters: Dr Salvatore di Novo, Kings College London, UK and Dr Diane Rey, Cultural Statistics Expert, Canada.
Respondents Prof. Andy Pratt, City University, UK and Rupert Allen, Canadian Heritage, Ottawa/Canada.

4. ***Culture-as-Infrastructure***

Presenter: Dr Patrycja Kazsynska, UAL, UK.
Respondents Prof. Jonothan Neelands, Warwick University, UK and Owen Garling, Bennett School of Public Policy, Cambridge University, UK.

Appendix III. Final Event Programme





Research Network Event – Culture & Creative Industries and PLACE

Date: Thursday, 23 April 2026
Venue: UAL, Sketch House, 36 Clifton Terrace, Finsbury Park N4 3TD
Time: 9:30 – 15:30 (inc. lunch, coffee/tea breaks)

Programme:

Chairs Welcome (9:30-9:40) - Patrycja Kaszynska and Graeme Evans, UAL
Keynote (9:40-10:00) – Prof. **Rebecca Madgin**, Urban Studies, University of Glasgow
Programme Director for the AHRC's Place-based Research Programme

I Network Fellows and Respondents Panel (10:00-11:10)
Chair/Contributor – Dr **Patrycja Kaszynska**, Senior Research Fellow, UAL

Introduction to the Network – Prof. **Graeme Evans**, Emeritus Prof. Culture & Creative Economy, UAL

Contributions: Dr **Ricky Lawton**, Director of Economic Evaluation, Ipsos UK; Dr **Victoria Barker**, Postdoc Research Fellow, Centre for Creative Economies, Coventry University; Dr **Salvatore di NoVo**, Lecturer in Culture, Media & Creative Industries, Kings College; Prof. **Andy Pratt**, Emeritus Professor of Cultural Economy, City University; **Owen Garling**, KE Facilitator, Bennett School of Public Policy, Cambridge; Dr **Emily Hopkins**, Policy Adviser, Creative PEC.

Q&A

II Perspectives from Creative Universities (11.20-12.10)

Chair/Contributor – Prof. **Jonothan Neelands**, Warwick University Business School

Contributions: Prof. **Adam Thorpe**, University of the Arts London; Prof. **Abigail Gilmore**, Professor of Cultural Policy, University of Manchester; **Katie Wylie**, Partnership Development Manager, SHAPE Research and Innovation, Loughborough University; Dr **Michael Eades**, Head of Civic Engagement, Goldsmiths, University of London

Q&A

III Perspectives from Creative and Place-Based Practices (12:20-13:10)
Chair/Contributor – **John Hitchin**, Stories of Change/Place and Evidence
Contributions: **Alexander Mann**, Policy Officer, Thames Estuary Production Corridor, GLA; **Patrick Scally**, CEO Wick Community Development Trust; **Florence Kettle**, Archway Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) Officer
Q&A

IV Perspectives from National & Regional Decision-Making and Policy & Closing Remarks (13.10-13:40)
Chair – Prof **Graeme Evans**, UAL

Amanda Decker, Senior Programme Manager **-** CEZs, Greater London Authority
Bernard Hay, Policy Director, Creative PEC

Dr **Patrycja Kaszynska** – Next Steps