

Cities of
Culture
Network



ONLINE
24TH & 25TH
JUNE 2021

**CULTURAL
POLICY &
EVALUATION
SUMMIT
SUMMARY &
PROGRAMME
REVISITED**
SEPTEMBER 2021

THE ROAD AHEAD – CREATING IRREVERSIBLE EQUITABLE CHANGE

This document summarises the key insights that emerged from the on-line ‘Coventry Cultural Policy and Evaluation Summit’, held on June 24th and 25th 2021.

This AHRC Cities of Culture Network event was hosted by The University of Warwick and Coventry University.

The Summit was designed to bring together local, regional and national cultural leaders to consider the post-pandemic road ahead for cultural mega-events and culture more generally in the context of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 (UKCC21).



Image: Andrew Moore



A WIND OF CHANGE

by Laura Nyahuye

Sitting on the edges

Sitting on the fence

Mind enquiring...

Questioning...

Is this the wind of hope?

The wind of change?

Hope arising...

Standing on the edges Peering...

A glimpse of hope...

Hope in the arts...

A wind of change

A shift...

Tensions arising

Familiar becoming Unfamiliar

Coming together

Communities Gathering Conversing

Discovering Uncovering

Connecting Disconnecting

Our differences a Cause to Celebrate

A wind of change

Hope in the arts

Are we ready?

To fuse To merge To blend

To see To be seen

A wind of change

Are we ready?

To embrace?

To celebrate you?

To celebrate me?

To collaborate?

A wind of change...

Hope in the arts

Do you feel it?

Do you see it?



John Knell: Summit Rapporteur

The Summit was inspiring, and this short summary cannot possibly fully capture the richness of the debates that took place across the two days of this gathering nor do justice to the wide range of technical and practical questions raised by delegates both in the chaired Q&A sessions, and in the constant lively hum of the zoom Chat.



The summary offered here is therefore necessarily selective, highlighting the most important strands of debate and conversation that emerged from our collective discussions together (and where

possible you can view YouTube clips of some of the key moments and contributions by following the underlined links).

THE ROAD AHEAD...

Happily, for my role as Conference Rapporteur, an incredibly coherent conversation quickly emerged that began to run and intertwine as we moved from session to session. Figure One opposite attempts to summarise the Summit’s ‘Road Ahead’ conversation in its totality.

For many who attended, the schema opposite may be all they need to trigger powerful memories of what was said, and what mattered most to them.

For those that didn’t attend, let’s say a little more about the insights and commitments that emerged out of the Summit, and how we can all work together to create irreversible equitable change.

Now that really would be a powerful legacy arising from Coventry UKCC21.

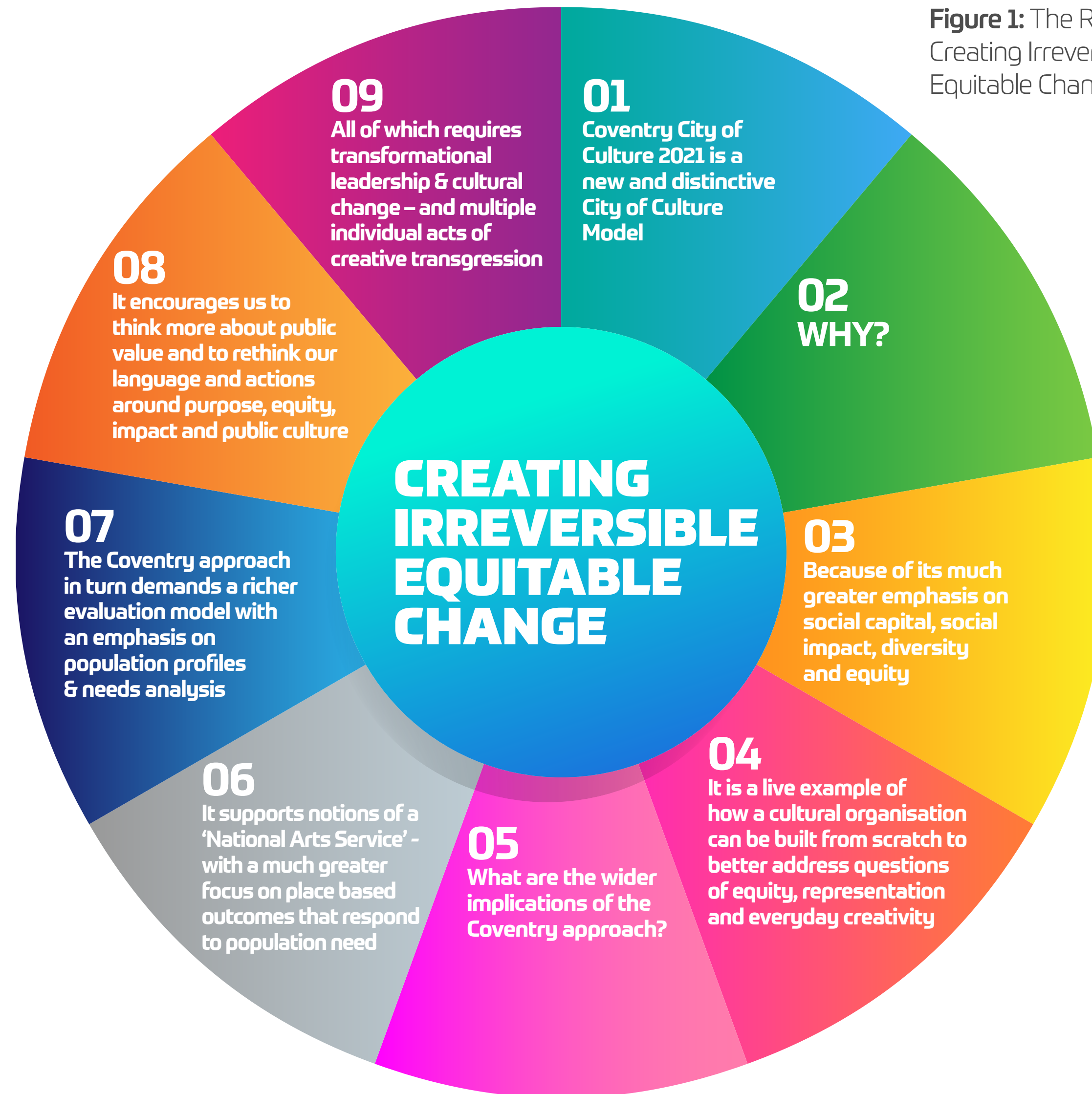


Figure 1: The Road Ahead – Creating Irreversible Equitable Change

Laura Nyahuye's wonderful poem, and contribution, set running the urgent rhythm and narrative of the event.

TO ME THE SUMMIT FELT LIKE A PLAY

WHY A PLAY?

Because like all good drama and improvisation, the sessions brought forward raw emotions, sharp challenges, insightful reflections, and most importantly of all, a sense that things must break, be changed, and reset.

There was drama and discussion; uncomfortableness and disturbance. The three young Coventry chairs were skilful at opening up discussion and asking challenging questions for presenters to respond to with honesty and candour.

Like a coherent piece of theatre, the story developed across 3 Acts, providing a structure for everyone's performances.



ACT ONE

was about whether Coventry City of Culture 2021 is a different and distinct City of Culture model, and if it is, why might this matter?



ACT TWO

was a rich, disruptive, but ultimately crystal-clear discussion about what it means to deliver a mega cultural event in changed times – in a moment of great disruption – when questions of equality, diversity, inclusion now feel paramount, rather than just urgent. What are the lessons from Coventry for all cultural leaders and organisations trying to deliver irreversible change?



ACT THREE

was about what the road ahead needs to look like if we are to meet the challenges expressed in Act Two. What does this mean for our purposes, our practices, our evaluation methods, and for individual acts of creative transgression?



**‘COVENTRY CITY
OF CULTURE 2021
WAS A GIFT, WITH
RESPONSIBILITY.’**

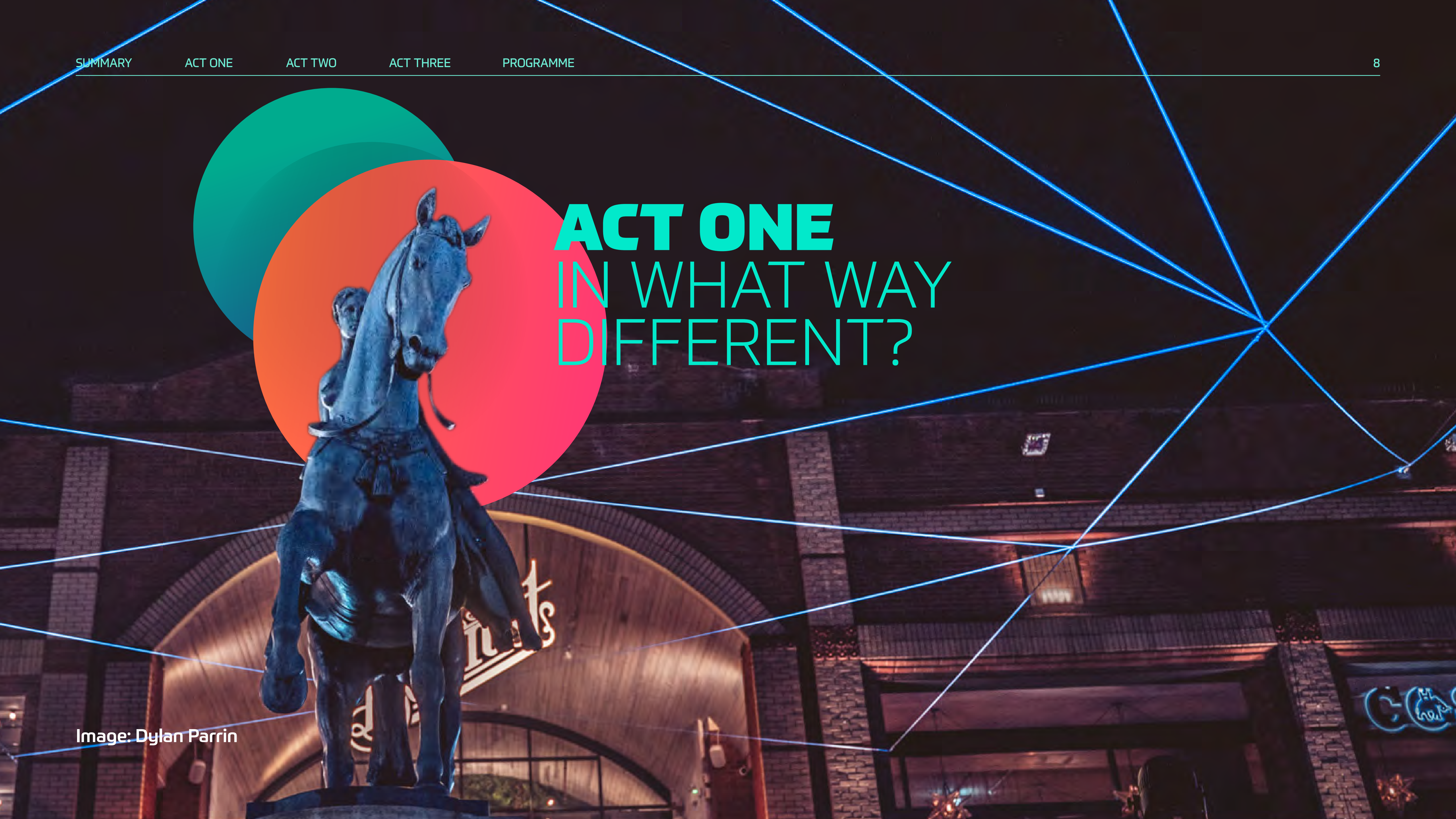
Martin Sutherland, Executive Director
Coventry City of Culture Trust



ACT ONE

IN WHAT WAY DIFFERENT?

Image: Dylan Parrin



The ambition of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 is to ‘re-imagine the role of culture in a diverse, modern Britain, demonstrating that culture is a force that changes lives, moving Coventry and the region forward.’

Figure 2 opposite, taken from [Professor Jonathan Neelands’ presentation](#), summarises how the Coventry 21 team has translated this overarching ambition into powerful outcomes that fit within a publicly agreed story of change which places transformational impacts for the people of Coventry at the heart of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021.

In this sense, Coventry UKCC21 is best envisaged as a powerful city change programme – a systemic attempt to create long term change and address inequalities.

But is Coventry 21 a new and distinctive model for mega events?



There was strong agreement that it is, judged on both its ambition, and its methods.

As [Professor Franco Bianchini](#) from the Centre for Cultural Value commented in his presentation:

‘With Coventry we are seeing a new type of City of Culture, with still of course a focus on economic development... but with a much greater focus on social capital, social impact,

Figure 2: Coventry 21 – From a theory of change to a story of change

human rights, intercultural dialogues, diversity, inequality, health and well-being, and young people.’

Delivering on these ambitions has demanded new methods and mindsets.

There was agreement that UKCC21 is trying to break the mould through its approach,

by fundamentally rethinking how a ‘one off’ cultural mega event can seek to embed new roots so deep in the fabric of the city, and new innovations so profound, that Coventry UKCC21 will hard wire systemic change in the way arts and culture can help deliver future change and transformation in Coventry.

Coventry is trying to meet these ambitions through an asset based, partnership driven approach, which seeks to build the social capacity, social power and infrastructure of its people, connecting together the amazing assets, people and opportunities in Coventry. [View the Road Ahead session here.](#)

We heard through the presentation *Levelling Up* how this has involved the Coventry UKCC21 team responding to a wide range of voices, and reacting to how communities across the city want to shape, lead and create. As *Chenine Bhatena*, Creative Director, Coventry City of Culture Trust commented, 'ultimately it's about freeing rules of engagement, to make the collaboration more democratic and that we slowly build trust and shift power.'

As Nick Henry commented on Chat:

'Coventry's model has been driven by Co-creation and activism including channels with current city organisations involved with those who are unheard or deemed not to engage in certain forms of culture. This has driven a local model and ongoing evaluation of participation in all the wards of the city, not just city centre spectacle.'

So, Coventry UKCC21 is a co-created programme, embedding with organisations and charities across the city, and with Coventry's many communities. Delegates discussed how these central features of the programme - transparency, accountability, citizens' involvement, participation and co-creation - are increasingly important for all forms of cultural leadership and activity.

This goes well beyond the simple and growing acceptance that we all need to change the way culture is created, presented, accessed and experienced. It can't be just about making 'it' (the cultural offer) bigger. It has to be about emphatically addressing inequality and systematic barriers to access.

In this vein *Martin Sutherland*, Executive Director, Coventry City of Culture Trust, talked about how central to Coventry's approach has been ensuring that its citizens are making

the change and influencing the shaping of their city. An approach that ensures that economic and social impacts are valued equally.

As *Julia Goldsworthy*, Director of Strategy, West Midlands Combined Authority observed:

'It's about creating opportunities for people, to give people a role in shaping their future and the places they live... Coventry has done this really well with its focus on longer term, non-cultural outcomes.'

So, if we agree UKCC21 is a new distinctive approach, why might the novelty of the Coventry approach matter? Why is it important to track its progress and widely discuss the lessons it is generating right now?

Firstly, because UKCC21 is actively seeking to be part of a bigger conversation about the changing nature of Britain and how to facilitate long term changes. To resist any notion that UKCC21 should

be regarded as a parochial Coventry based project.

But secondly, because there was a keen sense amongst delegates, picked up in the Chat, that Coventry is trying to author a process of enduring structural change.

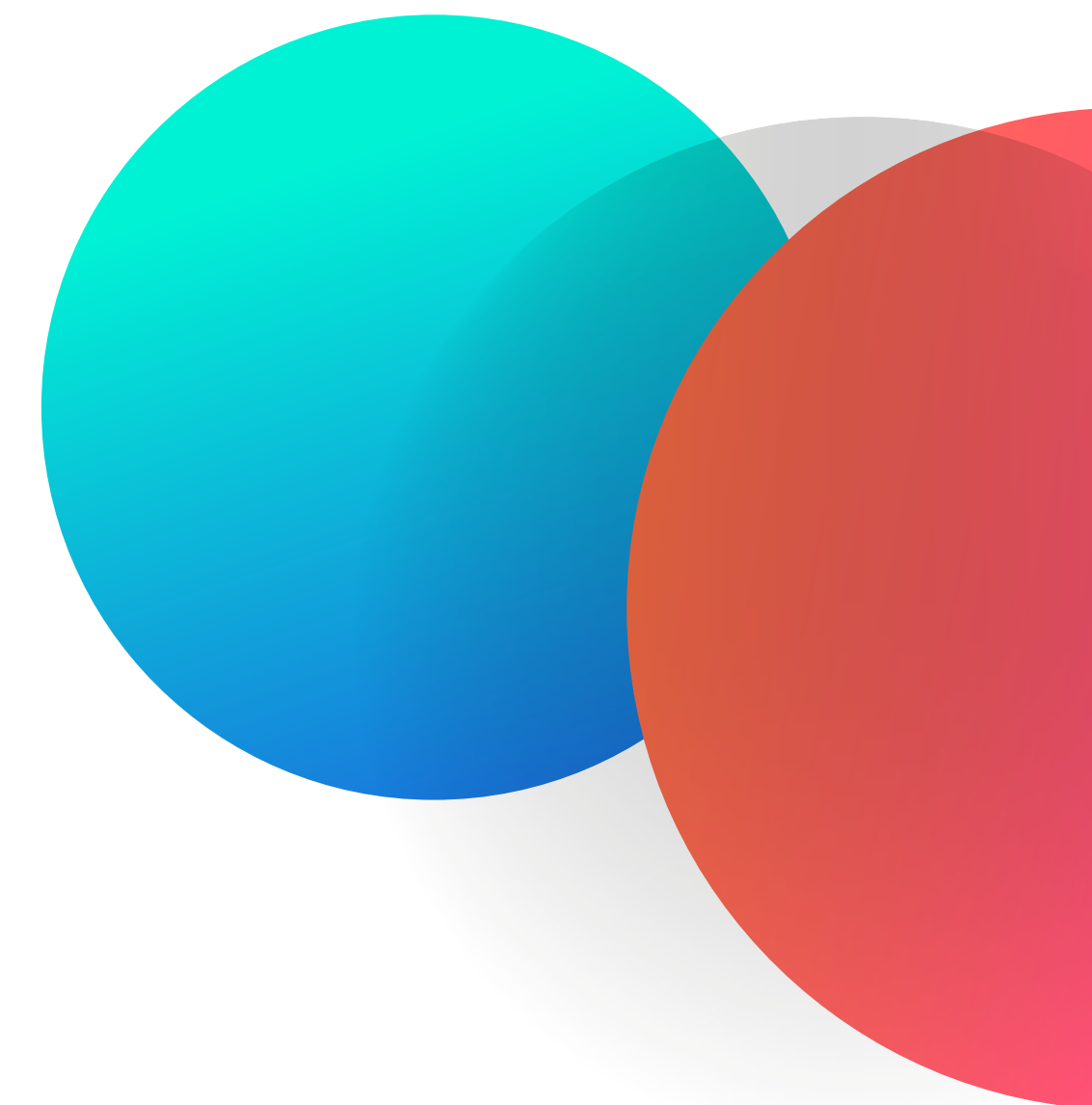
That this is at the heart of Coventry's bigger story and hoped for legacy.

Delegates posted comments in the Chat which talked enthusiastically about the need to create urgent, irreversible change that can really stick to the wall. That this should be the ambition of a cultural mega event, and of wider cultural leadership and innovation.

Which takes us back to our earlier summary diagram (Figure 1) of the Road Ahead.

So, through ambition and method, Coventry 21 really is a break from the past. I'll leave the final word to *Martin Reeves*, Chief Executive, Coventry City Council.

'With the power of activism, and with an asset based mindset, we have an opportunity to lead the UK over the next few years as we think about landing these changes, hardwiring them into our organisations, into our infrastructure and to remind ourselves this is not about shiny new buildings... this is about building the social power the social infrastructure of our people.'





‘THIS HAS TO BE ABOUT DEEP, EMBEDDED, STRUCTURAL CHANGE. SURFACE CHANGE WILL PRODUCE SOME PRETTY BLOSSOM ON THE TREES, BUT UNLESS THE ROOTS ARE STRONG, WE WON’T SEE THE SAME BLOSSOM IN FUTURE YEARS.’

Martin Sutherland, Chief Executive,
Coventry City Council

ACT TWO

IRREVERSIBLE EQUITABLE CHANGE



Image: Doug Peters



Credit: FiveSix Photography

ACT TWO IRREVERSIBLE EQUITABLE CHANGE

ACT TWO was a rich, disruptive, but ultimately very coherent discussion about what it means to deliver a mega cultural event in changed times – in a moment of great disruption – when questions of equality, diversity, and inclusion have become paramount, rather than just urgent.

When slow progress on these issues, and insufficient changes to existing structures and practices, now feel unacceptable, rather than a reluctantly accepted indicator of the scale of the challenges faced.

And that collectively we need to focus more on what we agree about, and make positive change stick to the wall, rather than hide behind privilege, and expertise, to throw sand in the moving wheels of change.

2.1. RADICAL HOPE REQUIRES RADICAL CHANGE

We heard how we need radical change to fuel radical hope.

Please do make time to watch on YouTube the session on *how cultural mega-events can actively challenge racial inequalities*.

Cultural Producer Elizabeth Lawal, Doreen Foster, and Shanaz Gulzar all talked about the layers of racism and lack of equity across the sector, and about the rapid leadership shift required to ensure that cultural institutions become safe spaces for all. That we must all co-design a better, fairer, and more socially conscious cultural sector. We must all harness a spirit of collaboration.

I can't summarise all their insightful contributions here, but I want to highlight how Elizabeth addressed the question of how will the BLM imperatives challenge policy and funding for culture, in her wonderful and passionate presentation entitled *'Radical Hope.'*

Her message was that the best is yet to come, that we can build forward more openly and equitably, but only if the sector and cultural leadership changes utterly and quickly, becoming less deaf and blind to inequalities.

Elizabeth detailed the ways in which the cultural sector stills feel beset by a lack of cultural understanding and awareness; in which ongoing micro-aggressions and racism are frequent, which all too often makes cultural organisations feel like hostile environments for her and her peers.

And in turn Elizabeth detailed her response, and spoke about the work her and colleagues have done to address these challenges, by developing a five step process that will ensure no one will be left behind, and which led to the launch of Culture Central's 'More Than A Moment' pledge in October 2020, designed to implement meaningful, long-term change

with and for the region's Black creatives. The Pledge outlines four key steps toward change:

- Take radical action now
- Create opportunities across the sector at all levels
- Create an anti-racist culture where Black people can thrive and fulfil their potential
- Be accountable for the change

Credit: FiveSix Photography





Some 80 organisations have signed up to the pledge, to stand in solidarity with the black creative workforce (including the Royal Shakespeare Company; Coventry's Belgrade Theatre, and Birmingham Hippodrome).

Elizabeth's speech hardwired into our collective discussions the need for everyone to be accountable for these changes. Her emphasis on building trust; on leading with care, compassion and kindness; on the will to do better than what once was; on the need to consult, co-design and co-create; and then reframe, revisit and do not stop, all resonated strongly with delegates.

Fostering these changes requires generosity, and the recognition that we have to escape the idea that we are playing a zero sum game in the cultural sector. 'We can all win together'.

As Doreen Foster from Warwick Arts Centre commented:

'It feels almost criminal to have reached this point. We have to change our behaviour and change it fast. [We need] ... generosity to create space for other voices – there is a shift that needs to take place – maybe the big change is we all need to recognise that in inviting other people to the table, it doesn't mean there is going to be less food for you. That's the kind of spirit we need to move forward with. There is enough food for all of us.'

And as many commented in the Chat, this isn't an act of benevolence, but a necessary act – without which we diminish ourselves and our collective capacity for creative relevance. The seldom heard are already building things for themselves, and we're missing out on their voice and energy. Public culture must benefit us all and it cannot do that without radical support

to combat racial injustice in the cultural sector and in society. To quote Doreen Foster:

'A word of warning, misquoting Jay-Z – if we're not careful, all of these people we've been ignoring or don't know we know how to reach, will create and find their own spaces, which they are already doing. They don't need us, we need them. In the same way Jay-Z doesn't need us, we need him. There's a real lesson there for all of us, and we need to pay attention to it.'

So in the final instance this has to be about sharing power and voice. About challenging who gets to decide and shape resourcing and funding decisions. About giving time and money to processes of engagement. To make the issue of 'who decides, who participates, and who is visible and valued' a mainstream consideration in all we do.

2.2. SUCCESS HAS TO BE NEGOTIATED, NEVER ASSERTED

What else will help drive urgent, irreversible change?

Louise Yates, Director at 'Back to Ours', talked wonderfully about how cultural producers, working in the spirit of creating change, have to negotiate with communities what a project needs to look like, and what success looks like.

You need to ask – what's needed, by whom, and where?

Which takes cultural leaders and producers well beyond thinking about narrow, traditional, audience focused outcomes, and much more into the territory of social impacts in place, and expanding cultural democracy.

This insight felt a major, recurrent theme of the whole event.

As we heard from all the brilliant case studies featured at the event – so a big shout out to *Homeless Monopoly*, *Cooking Connections*, *Life Futures*, *Roma Allotment*, and *Call the Midwife* –

I started writing down the common themes in these projects. Phrases included the following:

- Activism, co-design and co-production
- Multiple partners, voices and perspectives
- Negotiated outcomes
- Humane and participant centred
- Deep collaborations
- Asset based approaches
- The space for people's stories to emerge

There was real appetite in the Chat to make sure that these types of projects can act as 'evaluation pioneers', testing out the ways in which the impact and value of cultural activities can be defined and captured in a collaborative and participative way.



A mindset and approach that links directly to another important challenge raised at the event, namely how we might re-imagine culture as a public service – ‘A National Arts Service.’

Delegates’ strong support and interest in Tarek Iskander’s – AD and CEO, Battersea Arts Centre idea of a ‘National Arts Service’, builds very clearly on this type of cultural needs analysis approach, and the idea that public culture is a service that should be everywhere, more responsive to local priorities, with inclusion and representation at the core of all cultural activity.

This is a vision of matched public need and impact data, with less reliance on privatised organisational insight data based on misconceptions and narrow definitions of cultural participation. Delegates commented on definitional issues around cultural

participation throughout the event, and the need for us to rethink our language, and actions, around purpose, equity, impact, and public culture.

In the Chat, there was a lively debate about what is gained, and lost, through this notion of a National Arts Service? Delegates felt what was gained was a tighter focus on providing equal access to cultural experience and opportunities, and sharper questions about how to use public cultural investment to benefit all. What was noticeable in the discussion is how this National Arts Service lens immediately, and helpfully, shifts the debate away from artforms, cultural institutions and associated traditional offers, and towards the question of how does culture live in your place.

The main fear was the danger of unsophisticated definitions of public service leading to centrally determined, top down approaches – the very antithesis

of what Tarek Iskander has in mind when talking about a National Arts Service.

The practical discussion on furthering this type of approach ranged across how to build the right local data coalitions with local authorities and public agencies, and the need for the sector to invest more in co-production skills across the sector to help speed up innovation in sector responsiveness.

The energy generated by this topic suggests that one important implication of this

whole event is that we should all be asking afresh, ‘what does a more systematic place based innovation agenda look like for the arts and cultural sector over the next ten years?’, drawing on the lessons of Coventry UKCC21, Creative People and Places, and the wide

array of place embedded activity taking place across the country.

‘We need new methods, and a new language for culture as a public service. So called ‘low’ engagement actually means benefiting the least and having less choices and opportunities.’

Jonothan Neelands WBS



2.3. RESPONDING TO PLACE AND NEED – IT’S ABOUT THE DATA STUPID

Rising to [Louise Yates’ challenge](#) to always ask – ‘*what’s needed, by whom, and where?*’ requires playing close attention to place and need, and we heard powerful insights about how this requires a big shift from the sector to a more data informed approach in developing their cultural and creative responses.

This shift was beautifully captured in [Katy Raines’ presentation](#) in the session on developing place-based needs assessments.

Figure 3 opposite details the data sources which should be considered when developing an

inclusive place-based approach to culture.

This data ‘triangle’ implies a very different grounding for how to think about planned cultural activity than is commonly the norm. Its foundation stone, and starting point, is ‘population profile’ data – not traditionally conceived audience data. People as co-creators and shapers of their local cultural offer, not as passive audiences to be tracked down for pre-determined products and services.

This approach lies at the heart of the Coventry model, and its laser like focus on placed based outcomes designed to meet the expectations that matter most to Coventry citizens.

This focus on data is exemplified in the Coventry Cultural Place Profiler. This uses cultural and non-cultural data down to a hyper local level – a unique approach of matching cultural participation neighbourhood level data in the city.

Which data sources should be considered when developing an inclusive place-based approach to culture?

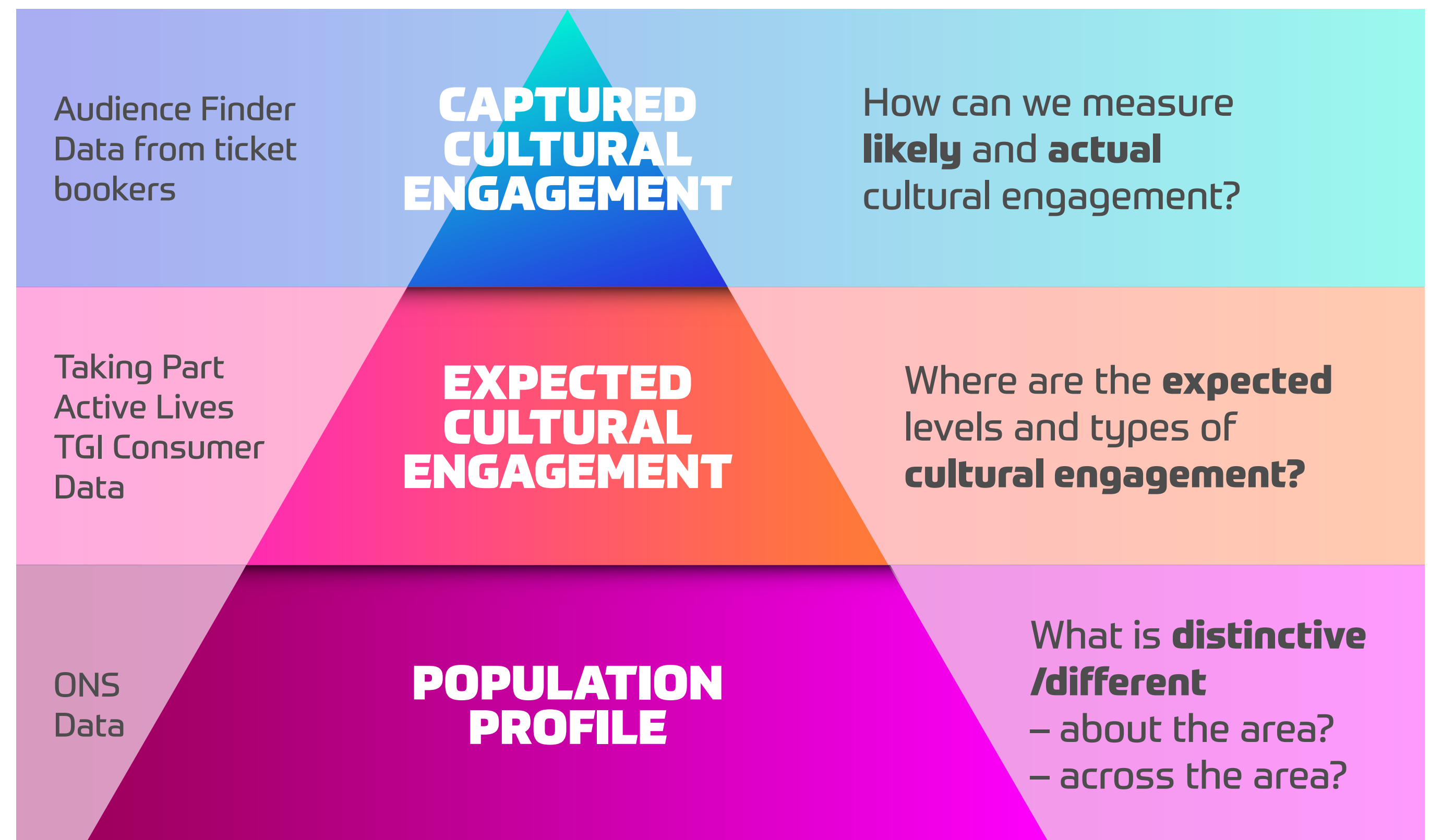


Figure 3: A data informed, inclusive, placed-based approach to culture

**‘THOSE OF US WHO
WORK IN THE
PUBLICLY FUNDED
CULTURAL SECTOR
NEED TO DO
BETTER BY OUR
ARTISTS AND OUR
COMMUNITIES.’**

Shanaz Gulzar: Chair, Bradford UK,
City of Culture 2025 Board



ACT THREE

CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD AHEAD

Image: Dylan Parrin



ACT THREE CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD AHEAD

ACT THREE was about what should the road ahead look like, if it is to be about irreversible equitable change. Once again, a number of clear and powerful themes emerged.

3.1. IF WE'RE SAYING SOMETHING NEW, LET'S REALLY MEAN IT

Language is frequently a precursor of change, with new concepts entering the language before concomitant shifts in purpose and practice become widely adopted.

Judging by this event, the cultural sector is already in motion, responding to the extraordinary events of the last 18 months.

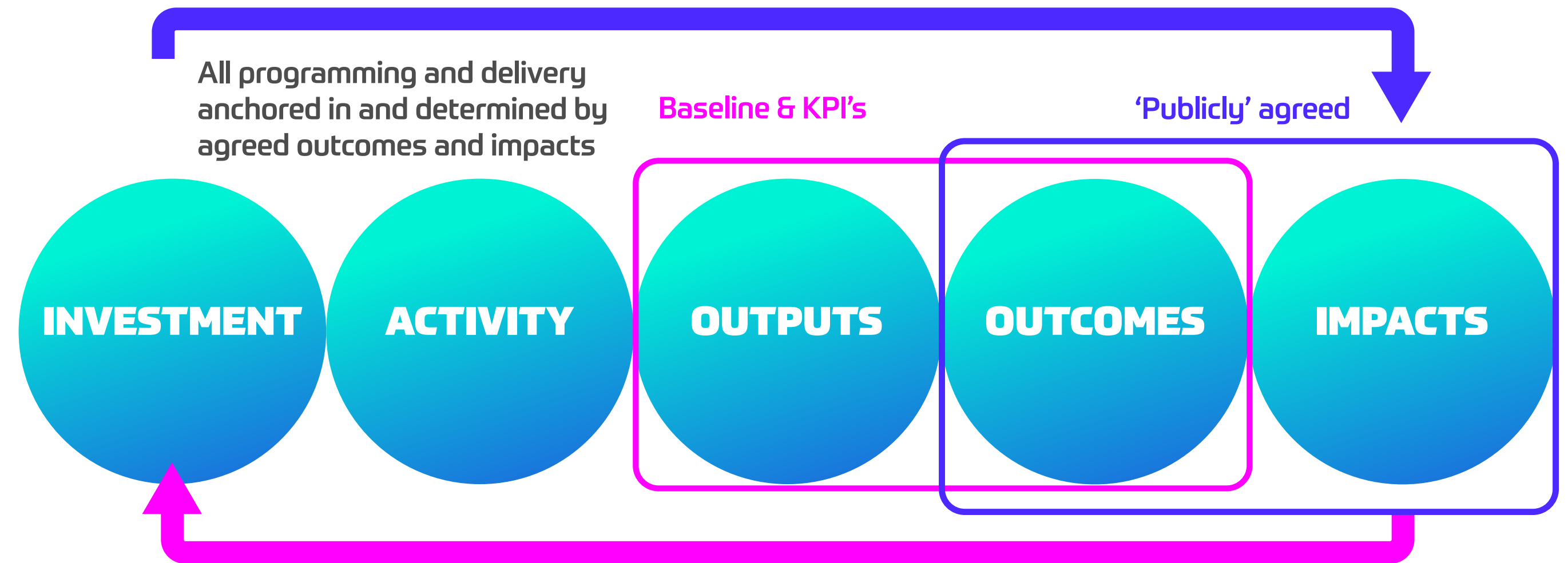
I reviewed all the presentations given at the event, and it's always interesting to keep track of the terms and concepts that begin to dominate in a particular sector's discourse.

The language of inclusive, placed-based, community, collaborative, co-authored, approaches was prominent. At the event itself delegates expressed a preference for the language of 'seldom-heard' rather than 'hard-to reach'. As Alexandra Oanca commented in the Chat:

'disadvantaged individuals and communities have always made a full contribution to ('our') cultural life. Who gets now to actually reach and hear these communities and include them into 'our' cultural life? How is that process undertaken?'

This comment from Alexandra is representative of many comments that were made, and of a clear direction of argument that emerged across the two days.

The deductive steps in that argument are that as we focus on the need for greater equity and equality, we must necessarily focus more on



How and to what extent were the investments used to develop activity that led to outputs that contributed to outcomes that delivered transformational impacts for the people of Coventry?

This schematic from the Coventry M&E strategy outlines the Coventry approach; moving from a **Theory of Change** to a **Story of Change**

measuring a wider variety of outcomes, and those outcomes are more than narrowly culture.

And given those outcomes are negotiated and co-produced, that means more of a focus on need, place, and multiple voices than hitherto.

Of course this shift poses significant challenges for how we use evaluation resources across the sector, and how to balance the use of nuanced, qualitative accounts of innovation and change, and standardised measurement instruments that for certain

outcomes are vital in aggregating a story about what works best.

In her presentation Ingrid Abreu-Scherer from the What Works For Wellbeing Centre outlined the challenges to convincingly evaluating health and wellbeing outcomes for instance.

3.2. PUTTING RIGOUR AND PLURALITY AT THE HEART OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR'S EVALUATION AGENDA

A number of sessions and presentations at the event eloquently addressed the key evaluation challenges facing cultural mega events and the wider sector, as they pivot to deliver irreversible change.

Mandy Barnett set out the core challenge very succinctly. How do we make top down standardised measures and frameworks (whether economic, social or cultural) work better alongside more bottom up, nuanced, multi-layered, and

multi method approaches – successfully combining rigour and plurality.

Mandy emphasised that we need to resist the rush to big data or a ‘one size fits all’ approach, and that small (data) is beautiful too, particularly in terms of ensuring that we hear from people themselves about what difference a particular piece of work has made to them. These stakeholder-guided evaluations can also facilitate greater insight about what works.

As Harman Sagger, from DCMS, commented supportively in the Chat:

‘Storytelling, narrative and qual approaches are really important, and I wouldn’t see it as a choice [between quantitative and qualitative evidence]. I think we should always use the full arsenal of putting the case forward and adapting to the audience that you were trying to make the case to.’

Finding the Evaluation Sweet Spot

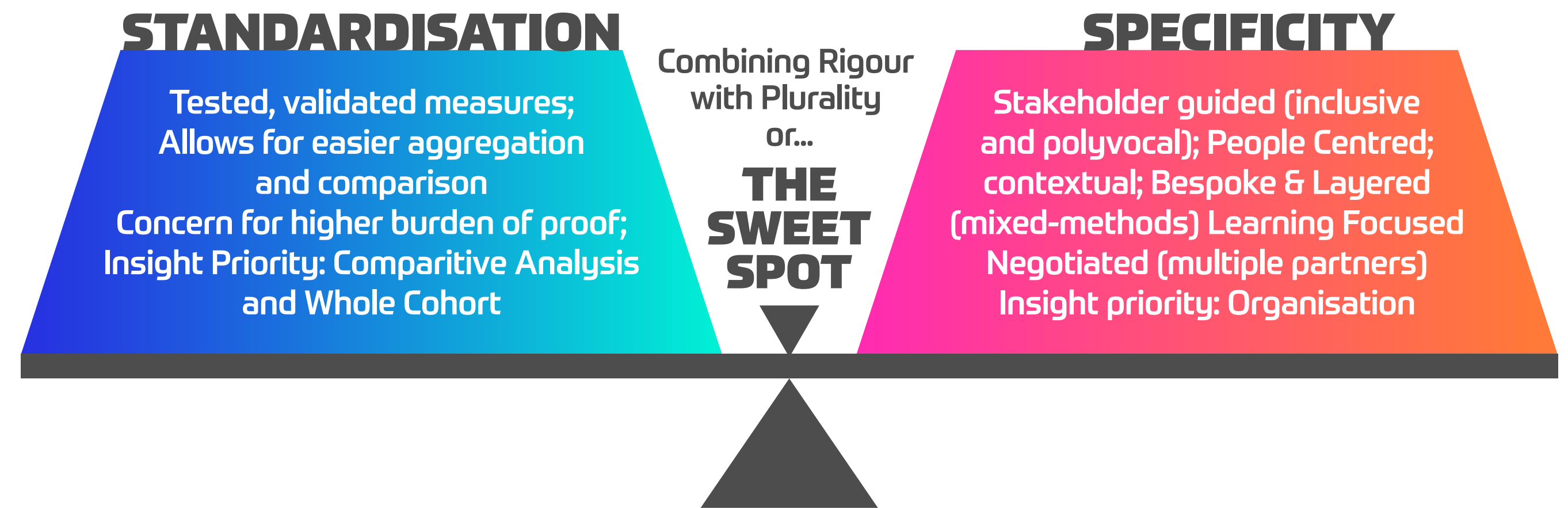


Figure 4: Combining Rigour and Plurality

I find that I always think visually. So taking on Mandy’s challenge, let’s imagine a balance swing (see Figure 4 above).

On one side of the balance swing are the standardised models used to value outcomes that Mandy talked about in her presentation.

These feature the tested, validated, comparable measures that Ingrid Abreu-Scherer talked about in her presentation on measuring wellbeing outcomes.

As Figure 4 above summaries, with standardised models and frameworks comes an emphasis on standardised, validated

measures; aggregation and comparison; a concern for a higher burden of causal proof; with the insight priority focused more on comparative insights across a whole cohort of organisations, or programmes of work.

On the other side of the balance swing are the more stakeholder guided approaches Mandy presented (proportionate, related to organisational purpose and a specified Theory of Change, leading to more bespoke & layered, people centred, negotiated evaluations, with the insight priority focused more on the individual organisation).

I have also included on this side of the balance swing some key concepts that Ben Walmsley talked about in his presentation (e.g. inclusive & polyvocal; learning focused; contextual; mixed methods etc), which are emerging from the Centre for Cultural Value's work to co-develop a set of cultural evaluation principles that can be adopted across the cultural sector.

This right hand side of the balance swing is more about emphasising context and complexity.

As Flo Swann noted, quoting Francois Matarasso, in the Chat:

'The value of community art, like life itself, is determined by progress in areas such as relationships, learning, communication, self-knowledge and possibility. It accepts the complexity of experience in its blurred lines, while knowing the difference between moving in a good direction and a bad one.'

One only has to reflect for a few moments to see that for a cultural mega event like Coventry UKCC2021, their evaluation model can only work effectively, given their aim is to capture the full range of public value being created by their work, if it seeks to sit in the middle of this balance swing.

So the question for all funders and investors, cultural organisations and creative producers, is how do we all move to the sweet spot in the centre of the balance swing, combining rigour and plurality?

Part of the answer is that we all have to keep building, and owning, a stronger shared 'why' about the totality of evaluation taking place across the sector. And let's declare an obvious truth here.

There has always been a massive tension between government, funder and investor needs for standardisation and aggregation. And individual cultural organisations' need for more bespoke, layered evaluations.

These tensions lie behind another important discussion theme at the event – the desire to escape the trap of 'data as advocacy', and to acknowledge the vital importance of evaluation that focuses more on learning, and reporting 'failures' and successes in a more nuanced way.

As Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Coventry City Council commented:

'Let's not cheerlead – do easy advocacy hits – that's not the job, we are sowing the seeds for things this city can lead.'

These unresolved tensions lie at the heart of what I would depict as the long running, more 'heat than light' debate about evaluation in the cultural sector, and the relative merits of different approaches.

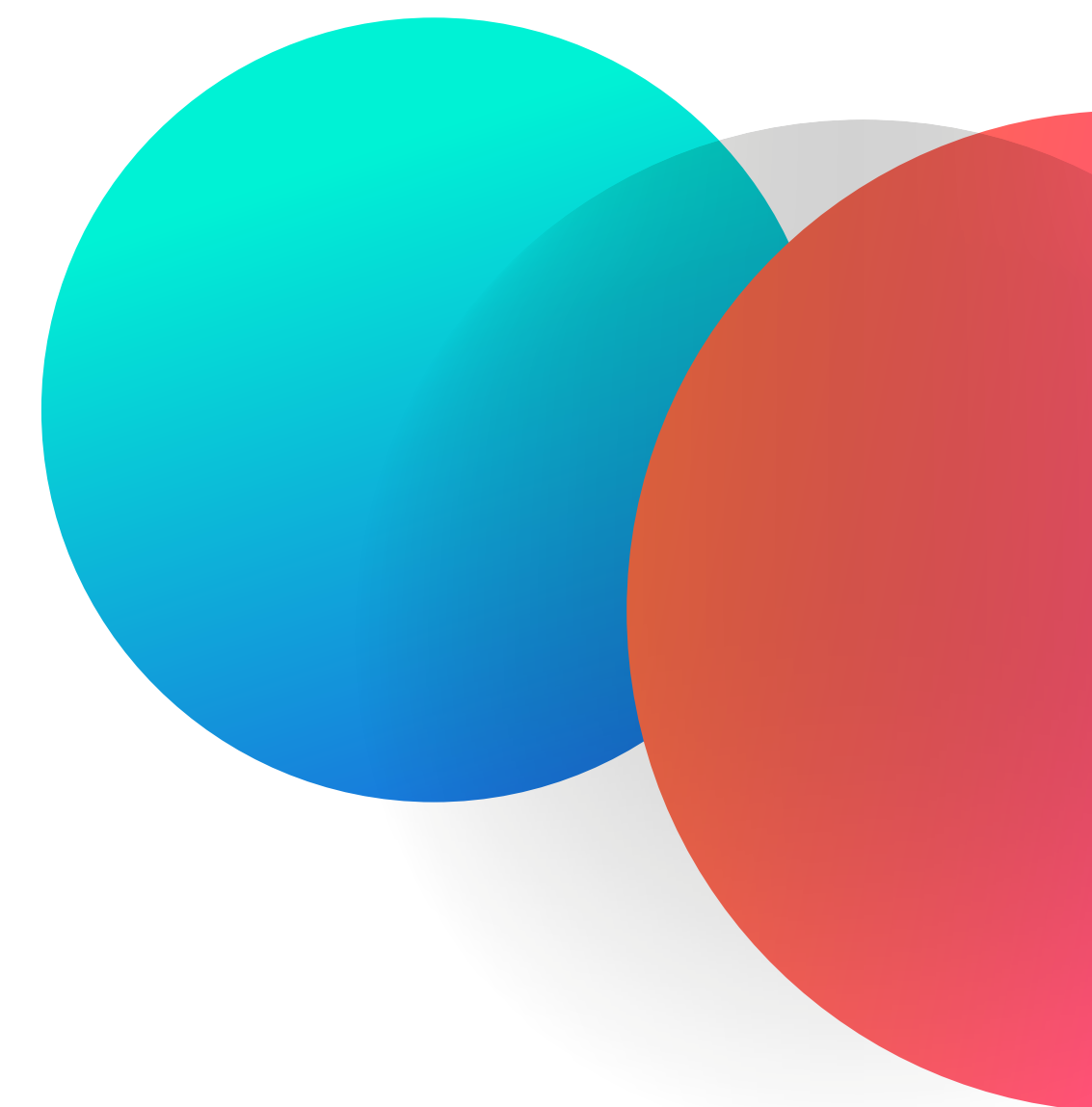
So, let's hope this event helps kick off one big shift.

A shift which echoes some of Ben Warmesley's comments about the current disconnect between sector, academy & policy.

Namely that we all need to do much more to surface the challenges on both sides of the balance swing (funder and cultural organisation) in terms of moving towards the sweet spot – thereby successfully balancing Mandy's depiction of standardised (big data) and bespoke (small data) approaches, enabling us to

find the most judicious and appropriate combination of mixed methods evaluation approaches for any given evaluation challenge.

This will require all of us to discuss with a little more edge and honesty the accountabilities of key actors, and the roles they will have to play to make positive change happen around impact measurement – a public conversation the cultural sector has barely begun to have.



What do both funders, and cultural organisations have to collaborate on, and compromise on, to find a happier accommodation? Both [Moira Sinclair](#), CEO of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and [Laura Dyer](#), Deputy CEO of Arts Council England, invited challenge from the sector on these issues, with [Laura Dyer](#) noting that:

'We really want people to challenge impact models – we all have to face different audiences, many of whom are sceptical, and we need hard evidence.'

It's only by finding the evaluation sweet spot that successfully combines rigour and plurality, that we can all collectively generate the data we need, and effectively engage with the broad 'waterfront' of 'interests' and expected insights that cultural evaluation has to inevitably engage with.

Those that only want to stand on the right hand side of the balance swing, won't help place the cultural sector more convincingly at the Treasury 'Green Book' table, allowing us to make powerful business cases for cultural investment in a wide variety of ways.

In any case, pleas for financial support from the Treasury and other funding streams will become increasingly dependent on evidence that public culture is benefiting the 'many not the few'. Public culture must recognise that investment is needed to ensure that all have more choices and inclusive access: cultural levelling up.

Those that only want us to stand on the left hand side of the balance swing, won't help us capture vital qualitative evidence about the enormous public value the cultural sector creates; shining a stronger light on our collective creativity; and the ways in which cultural participation allows us all to find a sense of self, a sense of identity, our creative tribes, and our place in the world.

And as Professor Jonathan Neelands commented in the Chat:

'we do not yet have the methods to capture total cultural engagement – we just need to stop stigmatising people and neighbourhoods not served well by publicly invested culture.'

'Whose culture?', as this event made clear, is a question that needs vigilant, democratising attention, as we continually seek to understand different types of cultural engagement.



‘MANY ARTS ORGANISATIONS HAVEN’T EMBRACED THE SPIRIT OF CO-CREATION AND STILL THINK THEIR OUTREACH TEAM WILL WORK WITH/ENGAGE COMMUNITIES.’

Chenine Bhatena, Creative Director,
Coventry City of Culture Trust



3.3. IT'S GOING TO GET MESSY: CULTURAL COMMOTION AS A NECESSARY DRIVER OF CHANGE

'I'm not sure all artists and arts organisations agree with changing the rules of engagement and the ways in which culture is created with communities – many arts organisations haven't embraced the spirit of co-creation and still think their outreach team will work with/engage communities.

They will struggle to represent all their communities. They still bring traditional attitudes to their gallery's stages, spaces, and creation ... they are less engaged with local policy and are slow to adopt responses to data.' Chenine Bhatena: Coventry City of Culture Trust.

Chenine Bhatena posted this comment in the Chat during the final plenary session. A session in which the Chat really took flight with lots of focused comments on questions of power, resourcing and necessary change.

Some delegates noted that this period of forthcoming change is going to be messy, but that we need to confidently 'bring on the mess' as artists are brilliantly placed to deliver these necessary shifts.

Transgressive leadership was mentioned as a necessary handmaiden to the scale of change required. That may indeed be so. In this vein, Maureen O'Hara and Graham Leicester have written wonderfully about 'cultural leadership' and what it takes to bring about change at a cultural level. Their answer is to not place your hopes in one 'big heave,' but rather focus relentlessly on coordinated nudges and prompts – on multiple small acts of creative transgression. As they comment so eloquently:

'Cultures evolve as examples of new practice are nurtured, in the soil of the old culture but not in support of it.'

The beginning of successful cultural leadership is therefore always a small act of creative transgression. It is small because transgression on a larger scale amounts to revolution and will be vigorously resisted. And because the smaller – and cheaper – it is, the easier it is for others to follow the lead.

It must also be transgressive because in order to shift the culture we must challenge it: we must do something counter-cultural. And it is creative, rather than merely disruptive, because it appeals to the culture's deeper values, its 'better self'.

This event was about culture's deeper values, and about our better selves.

About how we must make words like equity, engagement, community, and co-authorship truly meaningful, rather than limited experiments that are never integrated into a genuine attempt to change the way we all relate to arts and culture.

As such this event was inevitably full of big ideas. As importantly, it also generated a litany of suggestions and examples that can form the strong foundations for our multiple acts of creative transgression.

For example, by collectively defining culture differently through who gets heard, and who gets to make work.

By facing our many communities more than our funders.

By exploring what Public Culture as a universal service might mean, and how each organisation could begin small acts that start from that premise of arts by everyone for everyone.



Encore

If we are to deliver on this event's powerful call to action – namely how can we capitalise on our strong shared determination to deliver equitable irreversible change through culture – we need to disrupt and change things through multiple acts of creative transgression.

Coventry has done just that by the compelling way it has re-imagined what a UK City of Culture can be.

On Day 1 of the event Laura Nyahuye called for a wind of change, for hope in the arts.

The wind of change has to be all of us of course. We know that.

But do you own the responsibility that flows from this insight? It's a gift with responsibility.

If you felt inspired, or learnt something at this event, what's going to be your first act of creative transgression?

You could do worse than keep asking yourself Louise Yates' mantra – *'what's needed, by whom, and where?'*

If we all act; if we keep measuring up to this question and others; soon enough we will all be able to feel, and see the irreversible change that will result

Let's make the road ahead resplendent in radical hope.

And in the meantime, let's enjoy the incandescent spirit of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, so beautifully captured in the following poem, written by one of our Event Chairs, Emilie Lauren Jones.

And thanks to everyone who contributed so much to make this event a success.

'I feel excited by the calls for genuine public accountability and for how this can enable systematic change.

It's happening already: young people are calling into question the world that they'll inherit and they will rightly ask how their taxes are spent.

I feel excited for the artists and arts organisations who can look in the eyes of these young people. And I won't miss the cultural organisations who fail to do so and who disappear because they simply become irrelevant.' Adam Jay Coleman.



Credit: FiveSix Photography

EMILIE
LAUREN

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JAY-Z COMES TO COVENTRY

by Emilie Lauren Jones

Jay-Z slips out of a Coventry window,
swaggers down Earlsdon High Street,
nose twitching hungrily at the scent of chip fat.

Smiles are spray-painted on walls
and children sing to puddles -
every language has a word for happiness.

There's a craft market at The Canal Basin,
transactions happen at floating windows,
coins swapped for flavoured cheese and stained-glass keyrings.

The nail technician left early for work,
she wanted to practice new patterns.
If her designs were in the Tate they'd be called 'art'.

Fifty cars pull up in Mantilla Drive,
lollipop men wave stop signs and Irish dancers
twirl their ribbons to Bhangra beats.

Screens beam, tea is poured, we talk:
Community means holding hands because we are the same.
Community means holding hands because we are different.

There's always a speaker set
in the corner of the skatepark,
wheels spin like disco balls and Jay-Z emerges from between the ramps.

EVENT TEAM

Event Organisers

**Jonathan Neelands,
Jo Truslove, Warwick Business School
& James Brown, Warwick Institute of Engagement**

Event Production

Jamie Gallagher

Event Rapporteur

John Knell, Counting What Counts

Design

Craig Spivey Creative

Event Chairs

**Cory Barrett, Priya Gondalia
and Emily Lauren Jones**

Artist

Frances Yeung

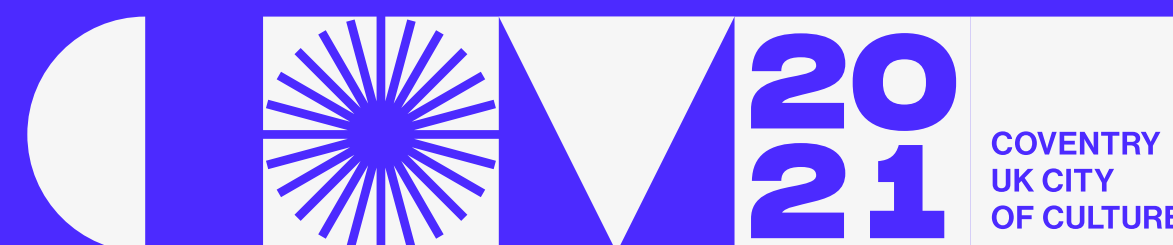
Additional support

**Jackie Hodgson, Helen Wheatley and India Foster –
University of Warwick, Neil Forbes, Nick Henry
and Samima Hussain, Coventry University**

Thank you to all of our presenters and contributors for your energy and enthusiasm

Please do visit Coventry, UK City of Culture 2021 -
Find out about all our events here...

What's On



CULTURAL POLICY & EVALUATION SUMMIT PROGRAMME

Image: Jamie Gray



**THURSDAY
24TH JUNE 2021**

DAY ONE

**POLICY
PERSPECTIVES**



8.45 – 9.00

Introduction



Creative Director & Coventry City of Culture
Leadership Programme

9.00 – 10.00

Introductions: The road ahead

SESSION THEME

What is distinctive about Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 and what difference will it make to the people, economy, landscape and future of the city?



Creative Director,
Maokwo Arts



Chief Executive,
Coventry City Council



Executive Director,
Coventry City of Culture Trust



AHRC Centre for
Cultural Value,
University of Leeds

10.00 – 11.00

What are the opportunities for culture-led growth?

SESSION THEME

What role can culture play in place based cultural and social regeneration and what are the implications for policy, planning and funding?



Director of Strategy,
West Midlands
Combined Authority



Deputy Chief Executive
Places and Engagement,
Arts Council England



CEO,
Paul Hamlyn Foundation

11.30-12.30

What difference can a year make?

SESSION THEME

How can cultural mega-events be planned and delivered to secure lasting change and impact; what are the potential social and economic returns in investment?



Head of Ceremonies,
Culture and Queen's Baton Relay
Commonwealth Games 2022,
Executive Director Festival*UK 2022



Deputy Director, Festival,
City of Culture and Major Events,
Department for Digital,
Culture, Media and Sport



Leader,
Waltham Forest
Borough Council

1.15-2.15

How can cultural mega-events actively challenge racial inequalities?

SESSION THEME

How can the scale of investment in cultural mega-events directly address racial inequalities through leadership, programming and talent development?



Cultural Producer



CEO, Warwick Arts Centre



Chair, Bradford UK
City of Culture 2025 Board

2.15-3.15

Levelling up; how can 'seldom heard' communities & individuals impact on policy?

SESSION THEME

How can those individuals, communities and neighbourhoods that have historically benefited the least from public investment in the arts and culture be represented, heard and make a full contribution to our cultural life?



Creative Director,
Coventry City of Culture Trust



Director at Back to Ours, Hull



Hull City of Culture 2017 &
Coventry City of Culture 2021
Learning consultant,
64 Million Artists

3.30-4.15

Research as cultural practice; supporting communities

SESSION THEME

Understanding how research and art can bring new insights and hope based on the lived experience of vulnerable populations.



CHAIR

Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research,
University of Warwick

WITH

**Emma Meehan, Elaine O'Sullivan,
Nese Ceren Tosun & James Hoare**

Cooking Connections (Coventry University, University of Warwick & Groundwork)

Nadine Holdsworth

(University of Warwick)

**Daniele Lorenzini, Carolina Rito
& Federico Testa**

Life Futures (Coventry University & University of Warwick)

4.15-5.00

Research as cultural practice; giving space and voice to the seldom-heard

SESSION THEME

How can researchers working with artists and local communities give voice, strengthen identities and promote new understandings of under-represented lives and experiences?



CHAIR

Director,
Institute for Creative Cultures,
Coventry University

WITH

Rosa Cisneros

Roma Allotment (Coventry University)

Saba Hussain, Kindy Sandhu and Shahnaz Akhter

Call the Midwives (Joint Coventry /Warwick University)

**FRIDAY
25TH JUNE 2021**

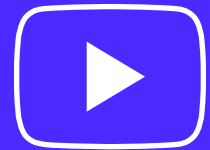
DAY TWO

**EVALUATION
IN PRACTICE**



8.45 – 9.00

Day One Recap & reflections



Summit Rapporteur

9.00-9.10

Cultural priorities for UKRI research

SESSION THEME

How can research support social change through culture? What difference can cultural research make to better understanding and improving people's lives and aspirations?



Executive Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and International Champion for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

9.15-10.15

The social value turn in cultural policy-making and funding requirements

SESSION THEME

What are the implications for planning, delivery and the evaluation of cultural mega-events and other place based cultural interventions that embrace a wide range of local social, health and environmental needs through co-creation and devolved leadership?



Academic Lead for
Research and Evaluation for
the Coventry City of Culture Trust,
(University of Warwick)



AD and CEO,
Battersea Arts Centre



Head Economist for Arts,
Heritage & Tourism,
Department of Culture, Media & Sport,
Chair Coventry City of Culture
Technical Reference Group

10.30-11.30

Re-balancing the social and economic value of culture

SESSION THEME

What innovations are needed in both economic and social values assessment methods to accurately capture the holistic value of cultural mega-events?



Amion Consultants,
Economic Impact Assessment
for Coventry City of Culture



Director of MBA Associates,
Social Value Assessment of
Coventry City of Culture



Civil Society Lead,
What Works Centre For Wellbeing,
Technical Reference Group,
Coventry City of Culture

11.30-12.15

Research as cultural practice; supporting public health policy

SESSION THEME

How can researchers support and engage with the public health agendas and objectives for cultural mega-events through work that engages with the challenges of age and mental wellbeing?



CHAIR

University Hospitals of
Leicester NHS Trust and
Culture Growth Coventry

WITH

Deborah Biggerstaff & Michael Loizou

Digital Participative Visual Arts Intervention for People with Dementia
(University of Warwick/Warwick Medical School and Coventry University)(University of Warwick)

Kerry Wykes & Sally Pezaro

Humans not Heroes (Coventry University)

Oliver Scott

Route 10, Mercurial Dance

1.00-2.00

Developing place-based needs assessments to shape social and cultural policy and funding

SESSION THEME

How can needs-led cultural investment and programming be planned and tracked by incorporating a wider range of data sources than traditional audience strategy data?



Insight Development Manager
Coventry City Council



Monitoring and Data Manager,
Coventry City of Culture Trust



Director,
Indigo Consultants

2.00-2.45

Making sense of evaluation – capturing the full impact of cultural activity

SESSION THEME

Is every place and cultural project different or are there emerging trends in evaluation that suggest a common framework that can shape policy and funding? Are there points of consensus widely shared by key stakeholders? How far do emerging points of consensus create fertile ground for the use of more common evaluation frameworks?



CHAIR

Academic Lead for
Research and Evaluation for
Coventry City of Culture Trust,
University of Warwick



Monitoring and Data Manager,
Coventry City of Culture Trust



Head of Policy,
Unit AHRC Creative Industries Policy
and Evidence Centre, Nesta,
Coventry City of Culture
Technical Reference Group

3.00 – 4.30

The Road Ahead – plenary discussions

SESSION THEME

Based on the Summit presentations, what are the emergent directions and aspirations for future cultural mega-events and other place based cultural projects? As we emerge from the pandemic what will the priorities be for future cultural policy, evaluation and funding?



CHAIR

Associate Director,
Centre for Cultural Value
(University of Liverpool)



Creative Director,
Coventry City of Culture Trust



Summit Rapporteur



Creative Director, & City of Culture
Leadership Programme



Principal Investigator,
AHRC Cities of Culture Network,
University of Hull



Creative Director, Maokwo Arts