



# **Local roots, lasting impact: exploring the opportunities and challenges of university- community research partnerships**

**Warwick Institute of Engagement Conference**

**March 26<sup>th</sup> 2026**

**Becky Morris, Briony Jones and Daeun Jung**



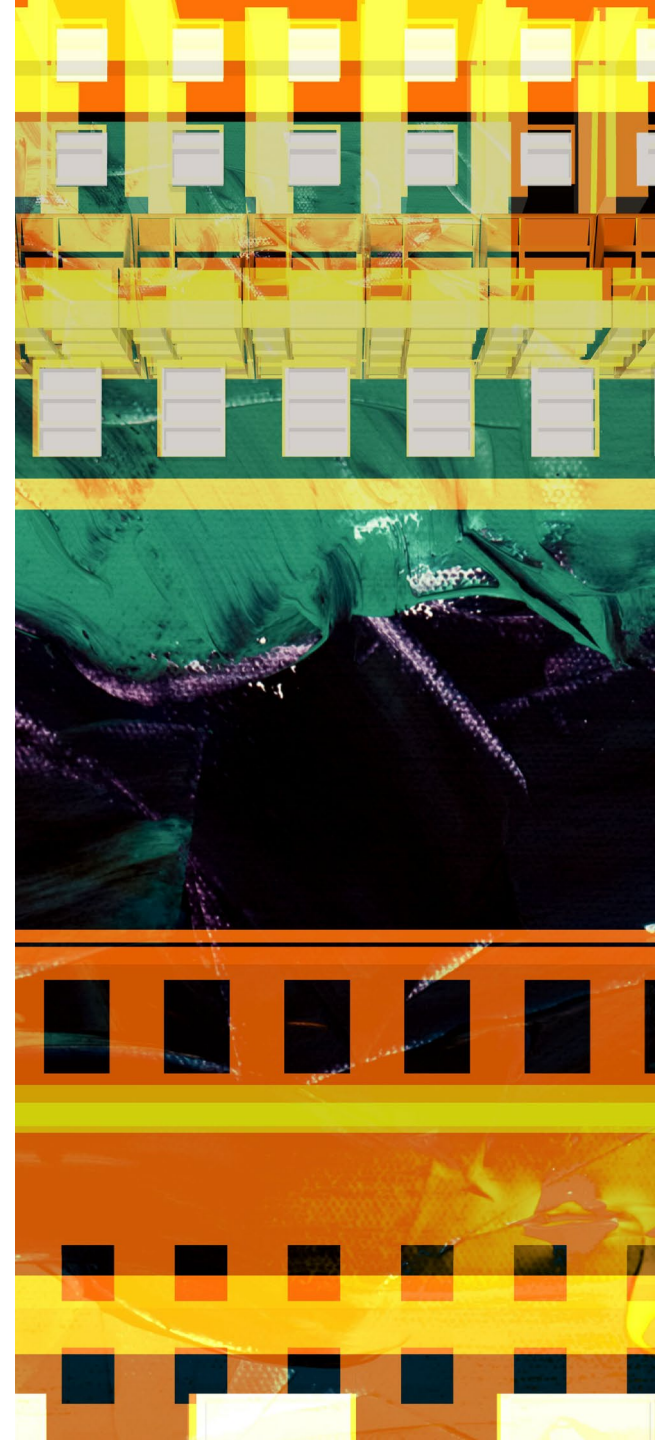
# Welcome!

- Introductions and today's session
- Intro to our ERCF/Spotlight-funded project
- Warwick – a civic university?
- Your experiences with community-university partnerships
- Challenges, tensions, opportunities...
- Next steps



# A work in progress...

- Society & Culture Spotlight – strand of work relating to the '**civic university**'
- Partnerships project encompassed within that. Supported by **Warwick ERCF and Spotlight** funding
- Working with colleagues across the university and beyond
- This is where your knowledge, experience and expertise comes in...
- This workshop as a **listening, learning and sense-making opportunity**. Insights will inform our work going forward and we'd love to stay in touch!



# Your thoughts...

- What makes a university 'civic'?
- What does community-university partnership mean to you?



menti.com  
1174 2057



# Through the lens of the 'civic university'



...universities as **part of the social milieu**, drawing from the notion of civitas, or the **balance of rights and responsibilities** that come with citizenship (Gawthrop, 1984)

...universities are ideally **suited to serve as bridges** connecting local people with national debates and international developments (Chatterton, 2000)

...universities as **public goods that can support liberal principles** (Harkavy, 2006)

...**anchor institutions that have an important impact** on their local economies and community life, engaging **through intelligence sharing, community work and widening participation** schemes for local students (Goddard, 2016, 2018)

...the notion of the **university as an urban anchor institution** tying down the global in the local as a key principle (Goddard, 2018)

Universities can function as **public spaces, hosting events for their communities, and encourage participation** in knowledge production (Hambleton, 2018)

The [civic] university as a **space for visibility** - the issues of seeing or being seen at the university, and who the university is for... (O'Farrell et al., 2022)

# And in policy...?

*“Whichever way you look at it, Higher Education has a huge role in driving local growth and opportunity.*

*You [universities] need to be part of this conversation.”*

(Jacqui Smith, Skills Minister, [2025](#))



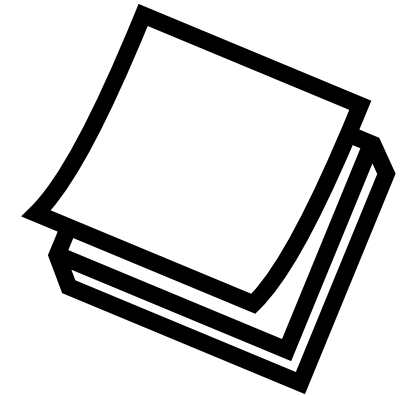
# Mapping our work



Individually, think about you, your team's or your centre/department's experience with community partnerships

On your post-it, note down:

- **types of partners** (e.g. charities, councils, arts organisations, businesses, schools/colleges)
- **types of activities** (research, engagement, co-production, outreach/WP)
- **stage** (early relationship, established, one-off)



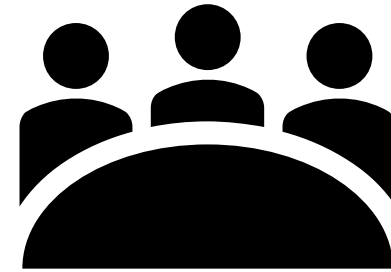
# Mapping our work



As a small group, share what you've noted down.

## Consider these questions:

- Are you able to group these examples into themes or clusters of related activity?
- What patterns are we seeing?



# Challenges and tensions

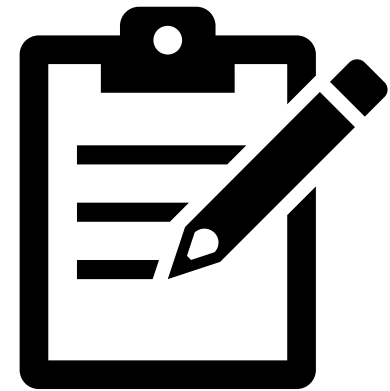


What are the biggest challenges or tensions in doing this work well?

Please note your thoughts onto the flip-chart paper.

Some possible areas to consider:

- **Institutional barriers** (funding, time, incentives, competing priorities, context/environment)
- **Relationship challenges** (trust, communication, access)
- **Structural issues** (power, equity, reciprocation)
- **Sustainability** (short-termism, staff turnover)
- **Others?**





# Challenges and tensions

**As a group, what do you think are the ‘top 3’ challenges or tensions here?**

- Discuss and circle the three that your group think are most significant.
- What would be your priorities or areas for development, and why?

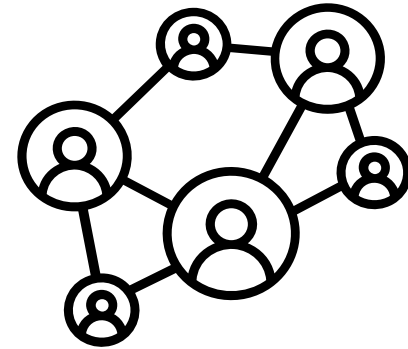


# Opportunities and solutions



Using the different colour pens, add your thoughts to your group's sheet

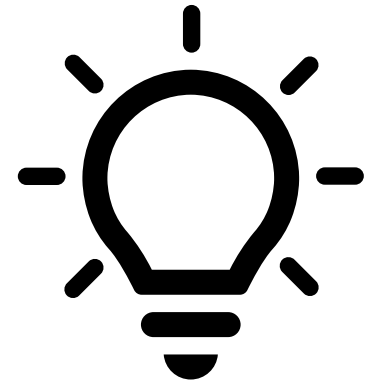
- In your experience, what has worked well?
- If we wanted to further develop and improve community-university partnerships at Warwick, what would make the biggest difference? Why?



# Possible (broad) ideas?



- New/developed support structures
  - Policy changes
  - Training/resources
  - Partnership models
- 
- Can you be specific? What would these developments 'look like' in practice?



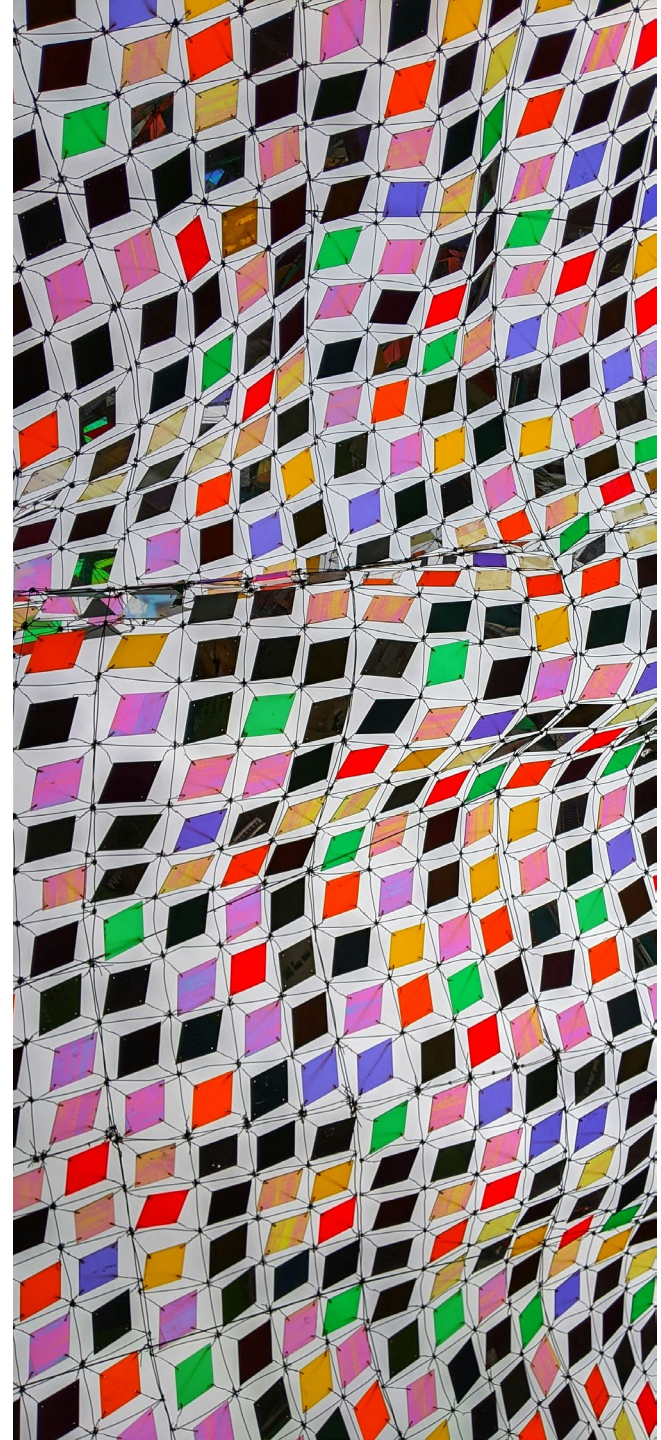
# Speedy feedback



- One challenge/tension from each group
- One success story/opportunity
- Where do we agree/disagree?

# Your contributions to this workshop and our project...

- Thank you!
- How will your inputs be used?
- What happens next?
- We'd love to hear more from you...
- Opportunities for further involvement and ongoing collaboration in this area.



# Our Project Website



Society & Culture Research ▶ Community-University Partnerships Project

## Community-University Partnerships Project

Home | Project Details | Our Team | What's On | Outputs

### Connect with us

Sign up to our mailing list to receive **monthly updates** about the project.

[Sign up to our mailing list](#)

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for more regular project updates.

[Connect with us on LinkedIn](#)

For any enquires, please contact **Dr Rebecca Morris (PI)**:  
rebecca.e.morris@warwick.ac.uk

Scan the **QR code** to access our website!



**UNIVERSITY  
OF WARWICK**

# Want to know more or get involved? We'd love to hear from you...



- **Becky Morris:**  
[rebecca.e.morris@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:rebecca.e.morris@warwick.ac.uk)
- **Daeun Jung:**  
[da-eun.jung@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:da-eun.jung@warwick.ac.uk)
- **LinkedIn:**
  - @BeckyMorris
  - @Community-University Partnerships Project

