

<b>Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: C23 Education</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Voices from the margins: co-producing living knowledge for educational and social change.</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2008-2020</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Janet Batsleer	Reader	1986-2020
Geoff Bright	Research Fellow	2011-2019
Gabrielle Ivinson	Professor	2015-present
James Duggan	Research Fellow	2012-present
Harriet Rowley	Lecturer	2013-present
Sarah McNicol	Research Associate	2013-present
Alexandre Pais	Reader	2013-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 – 31 December 2020</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Participatory and arts-based methods have been used to amplify marginal voices. The research has changed the way knowledge is produced, shared and used. <i>Partispace</i> led to a Greater Manchester-wide Youth Charter. <i>Loneliness Connects Us</i> influenced the focus of the Co-op Foundation and helped it to attract over GBP6,500,000 of funding, distributed to 343 organisations, engaging 18,734 young people across the UK in projects that counter loneliness. Post-industrial communities in England and South Wales have shaped regeneration schemes and support services through our 'Ghost Lab' model. Our evidence has strengthened relationships between arts organisations and local communities, and informed Arts Council England's approach to diversity. It has also informed national guidance on relationship education in Wales.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Our innovative participatory research programme has developed through long-standing relationships with communities and organisations in specific post-industrial places where issues of social justice are acute. Batsleer, Rowley and Duggan's work derives from youth-work praxis, while Bright, Ivinson and McNicol develop arts-informed methods to work in ex-mining and socially-marginal communities. Forging creative and ethical ways of working with a deep commitment to co-production, the research investigates informal and inter-generational learning to challenge dominant ways, in which knowledge is recognised, produced and valued, supporting people's potential to become agentive.</p> <p>Batsleer's participatory action research project (2008-2010) evaluated a combined arts and social work pedagogic space (<b>The Blue Room</b> - now the Men's Room) using methods that underpin many of the projects in this case study. It informed further investigations into how arts-based strategies might open up advocacy, recognition and compassionate witnessing, rather than the tokenistic 'giving voice', so common in formal education and youth-based projects [1]. The research fed into the EU-funded <b>Partispace</b> project (2015-18, EUR2,575,965): a study of young people's social and political participation across eight major European cities (G1). Batsleer co-ordinated the Manchester team and led the comparative ethnographic work with 15 to 30 years-olds, alongside Pais, Bright, Rowley and The Men's Room's Chris Charles. Rowley and Charles also conducted research with homeless men, using a garden design project with Grow Wild and Hulme Community Garden Centre as a vehicle. Project findings highlighted the ideological and discursive limitations of what is recognised as 'participation'. They concluded that public policies and pedagogical practice should learn from young people's activist practices and their role in building local democracy [2]. The research informed a further Erasmus+ project - <b>Partibridges</b> to develop cooperation between higher education, youth workers and young people in the UK, France, Turkey and Portugal (G2).</p> <p><b>Loneliness Connects Us</b> (2016-18) responded to Co-op/Red Cross research, which found young people feel loneliness more than any other age group. The Co-op Foundation wanted to support work in this area, but they also wanted to include the knowledge and experience of young people in discussions to ensure that their perspectives informed the decision-making process. The</p>		

Co-op funded Batsleer, Duggan, McNicol and the charity, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, to deliver a peer research project on youth loneliness (G3). Together, the team trained a group of young co-researchers to investigate how loneliness affects young people using arts-informed methods. Engaging 133 young people UK-wide in conversations about loneliness through innovative approaches including scenario-building and storytelling, it drew out new insights, which revealed that medicalised discourses of loneliness do not capture young people's lived experiences [3]

Former steel and rail worker, Bright's research investigates how the fallout of large scale de-industrialisation 'haunts' the present. Bright created the innovative '**Ghost Labs**' model to surface 'unspeakable' intergenerational trauma. He expanded Avery Gordon's concept of '**social haunting**' through **four interconnected projects** (2015-18, AHRC GBP115,865) with community partners, including Unite the Community; The Co-operative College; AMARC (World Association of Community Broadcasters); New Vic Theatre Borderlines; Jubilee Project; East Durham Arts Network (EDAN); Sheffield Live! and Young Minds Rochdale (G4). The labs used 'mosaic' mixed methods approach to engage participants in memory work and storytelling, 'attuning' with artists to develop playful devices, such as 'community tarot readings'; 'instant playback theatre' and 'co-operative poetry.' These processes elicited the living knowledge rooted in post-industrial communities, helping communities to express painful issues, and to move on to imagine possible futures [4]. McNicol's use of participant-created comics, as a research method, played a key role, allowing members of Unite the Community in Barnsley to reflect upon their experiences. She combined this methodology with the Ghost Labs model to support British-Bangladeshi women in the **Graphic Lives** project (Feb 2017 – Jan 2018, HLF) to tell their life stories, expressing emotional truths that they had otherwise found difficult to convey [5](G5).

**Productive Margins** (ESRC/AHRC, 2013- 2018) comprised seven interlinked research projects, which asked young people to investigate important issues in their community (G6). Ivinson co-led two in ex-mining communities in South Wales with Renold (Cardiff) and artists Heloise Godfrey-Talbot, Seth Oliver and Rowan Talbot. They devised arts-based workshops to carefully attune to the lingering trouble induced by pathologising representations of community circulating in the media (e.g. Channel 4's SKINT). Creative events enabled young people and youth workers at Forsythia Youth to express their concerns through films, art-books, artefacts and dance, shared in community festivals, revitalising local traditions of activism [6].

Ivinson and Batsleer secured GBP24,203 (AHRC, Feb 2018 - June 2019) for a follow-on project, **Creative Margins: Building capacity to widen participation in arts spaces and practices** (G7), which responded to the Culture White Paper's (2016) expectation that 'all museums, theatres, galleries, opera houses or arts groups that receive government money should reach out to everyone, regardless of their background.' Manchester Metropolitan, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, Tate, National Museum Wales, Arts Council England and the Federation for Detached Youth Work organised five 'Barcamp'-style workshop spaces across England and Wales to develop new models for effective partnerships between hitherto siloed fields. The new models draw on the strengths and creative resources of marginalised groups. Outputs were curated in a '[scrapbook](#),' which offered insights and recommendations for the field.

### 3. References to the research

- [1] Batsleer, J. 2011 'Voices from an edge. Unsettling the practices of youth voice and participation: arts-based practice in The Blue Room, Manchester, Pedagogy, Culture and Society, 19:3, 419-434, DOI: [10.1080/14681366.2011.607842](https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2011.607842)
- [2] Walther, Batsleer, Loncle and Pohl (eds.) 2020 Contested Practices, Power and Pedagogies of Young People in *Public Spaces: The Struggle for Participation*. London: Routledge. Inc. chapters by Rowley and Pais.
- [3] Batsleer, J and Duggan, J. (2020) Young and Lonely. The Social Conditions of Loneliness. Bristol: Policy Press. ISBN: 978-1447355359
- [4] Bright, N. G. and Ivinson, G. (2019) '[Washing lines, whinberries and \(reworking\) waste ground: Women's affective practices in the socially haunted UK coalfields](#)' Special Issue 'Social Haunting, Classed Affect, and the Afterlives of Deindustrialization' Journal of Working Class Studies, 4 (2). pp. 125-139.
- [5] McNicol, S. (2017), 'We can do it imaginatively first! : Creating a magic circle in a radical community education setting. Studies in the Education of Adults, 49 (1). pp. 45-61. DOI: [10.1080/02660830.2017.1283783](https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2017.1283783)

[6] Renold, E., Ivinson, G., Thomas, G., Elliott, E. (2020) 'The Making, Mapping and Mobilising in Merthyr Project; young people, research and arts activism in a post-industrial place.' in M. McDermont, T. Cole, J. Newman and A. Piccini (eds.) *Imagining Regulation Differently*, Bristol: Policy Press.

#### Evidence of quality: research grants

G1 Batsleer, J. (Co-I) Partispace, Horizon 2020, 1 May 2015 – 30 April, 2018, EUR2,575,965, GBP156,009 to Manchester Metropolitan.

G2 Partibridges, Grant Agreement n°2018- 1-FR01-KA203-048041, GBP45,000.

G3 Batsleer J. (PI), Duggan J.R. (Co-I), Peer Research (Loneliness Connects Us), Co-op Foundation (Belong), 2016-2018, GBP59,500.

G4 Bright, N.G (PI), AHRC Connected Communities grants totalling GBP115,865: a) AH/M009262/1, Feb 2015 – Feb 2016, GBP33,496 (b) AH/P009506/1, Feb 2017- Dec 2017, GBP64,379 (c) Connected Communities Festival, 2016, GBP15,000 (d) Connected Community Catalyst, Nov 2017-July 2018, GBP2,990.

G5 McNicol, S. Graphic Lives: Telling Bangladeshi migrant women's stories through graphic narratives, Feb 2017 – Jan 2018, Heritage Lottery Fund, GBP23,027.

G6 Ivinson, G. (Co-I) Productive Margins, ESRC/AHRC, Apr 2013-March 2018, GBP1,856,108, 1 Dec 2015 to Manchester Metropolitan, GBP 17,132.00.

G7 Ivinson, G (PI), Batsleer, J (Co-I), Creative Margins: Building capacity to widen participation in arts spaces and practices, AHRC, Feb 2018-June 2019, GBP24,203.

#### 4. Details of the impact

Our research has brokered active communication between grassroots and powerful institutional players, bringing marginalised voices and different types of knowledge to the fore in decision-making processes. This has led to more representative **policymaking**, shaping the distribution of funding and making **public services** more responsive. It has benefitted those directly involved and generated wider **societal gain**.

**Partispace** participants represented Manchester, the UK and Europe as delegates to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. In 2018, Batsleer was seconded to Youth Focus North West (YFNW) to develop a European Living Charter of Human Rights with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). They worked with European and regional networks to create a Greater Manchester-wide Youth Charter. Working in partnership with Sick! Festival, 30 young people also produced a two-day 'takeover' at NIAMOS arts centre (2019), which confronted a YouGov statistic that 18% of young people in the UK believe 'life is not really worth living'. They delivered their response to the question: 'For the lives of young people to be valued what needs to change?' to 150 key stakeholders through commissioned artworks and live events. Supporting a 2018 report on cohesion that GMCA produced in response to the Manchester Arena bombing, the projects created "*opportunities for young people to discuss difficult topics and have safe places to go and socialise with peers*". The researchers were "*absolutely vital*" in "*ensuring that the process was rooted in meaningful and sensitive engagement with young people*" and the project "*continues to inform [Sick! Festival's] commitment to working with young people across Greater Manchester, and the approaches that [they] take to doing this*".

#### [A]

YFNW also co-created a [Masters level unit in Youth Participation and Youth Work](#) at Manchester Metropolitan through **Partibridges**, embedding workplace knowledge to resolve a gap between student skills and sector needs. The CEO stated: "*I felt disempowered in an academic setting but this project has helped break those barriers down*". **[B]**. Project partners are now developing a transnational module for European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) certification. Similarly, **Lost and Found** led to "*collaboration - a shift in relational power dynamics towards a collective of artists rather than a project and creative lead and those being supported*". Participants used it as an expressive vehicle, creating a series of art installations and four walking tours, which foregrounded their voices and experiences, and engaged over 100 people with their lived experiences of homelessness **[C]**.

**Loneliness Connects Us** shaped the Co-op Foundation brand, which re-launched in 2016 and "*has been woven through everything [it] has done since*". The Head of the Foundation states, "*In the beginning we didn't fully appreciate the complexity of youth loneliness or have a precise end goal we wanted to achieve. It was only through our further qualitative and quantitative research that we were able to define the problems we want to address*". The research identified core themes

and the reasons young people might be lonely. The researchers' focus on societal context also re-connected the Foundation with its co-operative values. Combined with quantitative research conducted by ICM, the findings underpinned the Foundation's report [\*All Our Emotions are Important – Breaking the Silence about Youth Loneliness\*](#), allowing it to communicate the full scale of the problem to the government and funders, including its parent company [D].

When Loneliness Connects Us started, the Foundation had 2.5 full-time staff and five projects; it now has nine staff and hundreds of projects. Loneliness Connects Us was 'a huge part of that growth'. It underpinned successful bids to the DCMS/National Lottery Community Fund's #iwill scheme for youth social action (GBP1,000,000) and helped the Foundation to ring-fence GBP2,400,000 of the government's Building Connections Fund (set up in response to the Jo Cox commission) for young people. The findings also supported applications to the Co-op for match-funding, bringing the total to GBP5,400,000. The research shaped the focus of Co-op Foundation's overarching *Belong* programme, which distributed the funding, and guidance referred all applicants to the research. In total, *Belong* awarded GBP6,500,000 to 343 organisations across the UK, engaging 18,734 young people. It is on target to deliver measurable outcomes for 7,500 young people by 2021. In the assessment period, 5,033 young people have gained skills, 5,327 have improved confidence, 2,648 feel more valued and 3,130 have more trusting relationships. The young co-researchers also highlighted the plight of under-served towns, helping the Foundation to define the places it wants to benefit from its community-focused Spaces to Connect funding (GBP1,600,000) [D].

42nd Street made isolation and loneliness a key theme in its business plan due to the research. It also helped it to secure Arts Council funding (GBP49,101) for a year's worth of work on isolation and loneliness with young people. The CEO explained: "*The creative approach to the peer research enabled the real experiences of young people to be voiced and complexity of the issues and emotions surrounding youth loneliness to be captured. ...we have made [these insights] the basis of discussions, social actions and change*". [E]

**Social Haunting:** Judges awarded Bright the Working-Class Studies Association's Russo & Linkon Award in 2015. They reported that his research "*breaks new paths... for comprehending the impact of the horrors and suffering caused by class society over generations*" [F]. 350 people participated in the 14 Ghost Labs, which formed outlets to articulate this collective trauma. *The UnQuiet*, a piece of theatre produced by partner, New Vic Borderlines and members of Unite Community, was seen by over 100 people. A two-part radio documentary, '*Song Lines and Social Haunting*' was broadcast to an estimated 150,000 listeners via stations in the UK, Malawi, Hungary, Slovenia, the USA and Indonesia, where 'listening clubs,' and phone-ins served as catalysts to discuss local issues [F]. The British Council in Bangladesh also used the *Graphic Lives* comics in public programmes as, "*a powerful element to showcase our connection with UK and the Bangladeshi community living there*". The UN Women's Champion described them as "*a new way to empower migrant women from the UK*", whilst other attendees spoke of the hope the stories gave them. They also informed Hyde Community Action's successful proposal for a Healthy Minds group support service [G].

The Ghost Labs enabled Unite Community "*to reflect upon the difficulties that [they] face representing marginal, often very vulnerable members of society*". Bright also briefed the Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign on the projects, providing "*useful contextual material in support of the legal argument for a public inquiry into the policing of the 1984 mass picket presented to the Home Secretary in Autumn 2015*". The New Vic continues to use project tools in the UK and internationally. The Director states that Bright's work "*had a significant effect*" on the way it "*designs work in communities where loss and absence (in all its forms including loss of industry and identity) is very much present*". This has helped her to build '*authentic relationships*' with local partners, such as Unite, ACORN and Women Against Pit Closures, "*all who are in their own words continuing the fight for their communities which was started decades ago*". [H].

East Durham Artists' Network (EDAN) produced an exhibition based on their Ghost Labs experience (September 2018) and, when Community Development Officers at The Auckland Project saw it, they realised they could adapt the methodology, "*to tentatively build trust with participants respectfully, over time, affording them dignity and acknowledgement of their experiences and memories*". They used social haunting as a 'conversation tool, for a pilot project that gave them "*an emotional understanding of how everyone was feeling [and] how best to use funds to fill the gap left by government cuts in areas such as youth centres*". The methodology has

informed spending and led to new community-driven projects, including a long-term partnership to secure the future of the Woodhouse Close Community Centre and ‘Ghost Lines’ – a project to transform disused railway lines into ‘future-facing spaces’ through art trails and geocached ‘haunted objects’.[I]

**Productive Margins:** In 2017, the Welsh Government’s Cabinet Secretary for Education formed a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Expert Panel. The panel invited Ivinson to present research evidence, and included her insights and examples from the Life Support project in the report it submitted to government. The resultant national guidance *Relationships and Sexuality Education in Schools* (2019), advocates for ‘relevant, engaging and coproduced’ approaches and creative design, drawing heavily on the models foregrounded in Ivinson’s presentation. The guidance advocates youth-led arts-based pedagogies that focus on the concerns of young people instead of imposing topics drawn up by adults [J].

The films ‘Light Moves’, ‘Graphic Moves’ and ‘Life Support’ were shown in festivals in Cardiff, Newport and Merthyr Tydfil, each attracting over 200 people and speaking back to pathologising media images of the place where the participant-producers live. They also used ‘Life Support’ to lobby against the threatened closure of Forsythia Youth, voicing their objections. Collaborator CEO of Artis Community argues that: “because [Gabrielle] doesn’t present as ‘other’, her curiosity encourages curiosity and her research becomes embedded in the creative process, enabling creativity to reveal the very best in people”. She contends that her subsequent projects, including a Big Dance film that brought together over 400 children and young people, would not have achieved its ‘transformational outcomes’ without Ivinson’s research methods. Addressing the ‘persistent and widespread lack of diversity’, Arts Council England highlighted in its ten-year strategy (2020-2030), **Creative Margins** “influenced the way in which ACE will encourage the organisations we invest in to support and adopt new and emerging talent, to drive artist collaboration and to encourage learning at all levels”. It also informed a developing partnership between Tate and Brighton Youth Centre, and has “already impacted on some of [BYC’s] own work in broadening participation in our Arts Festival”. [K]

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] i: [Greater Manchester Youth Charter](#); ii: Sick! Festival, Takeover evaluation data; iii Sick! Festival report; iv Testimonial, Creative Director, Sick! Festival.

[B] Testimonial, Chief Executive, Youth Focus North West (2003-2019).

[C] Testimonial, Head of Creative Development, The Men’s Room.

[D] i Testimonial, Programmes and Partnerships Advisor, The Co-op Foundation;

ii Head of Co-op Foundation, [How much can data tell us – Co-op Foundation](#).

iii Co-op Foundation, [All our emotions are important – breaking the silence about youth loneliness](#)

iv Co-op Foundation, [Impact and Learning Review 2017-19](#).

[E] [Interview with CEO, 42nd Street](#). [transcripts of full-length recording available].

[F] i Working Class Studies Association, [press release](#), 2016; ii, Max Munday, Report - Ghost Labs projects.

[G] i British Council correspondence; ii Comment cards from British Council events in Dhaka; iii Sarah McNicol, [Graphic Lives: Telling Bangladeshi women’s stories through graphic narratives](#), final report to HLF.

[H] i Working with Social Haunting, [‘What Unite Community thought about the project](#); ii Testimonial, Secretary of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign; iii Testimonial, Director, New Vic Borderlines.

[I] i Testimonial, Community Development Officer, The Auckland Project; ii The Auckland Project, Project proposals.

[J] Welsh Government, [Relationships and Sexuality Education in Schools](#), February 2019.

[K] i Life Support <https://vimeo.com/222938822> from 5:17; ii Testimonial, CEO Artis Community; iii Testimonial, CEO, Brighton Youth Centre; iv Testimonial, Director, Research, Arts Council England.