

Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University		
Unit of Assessment: D32 Art & Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Artist-Led Strategies: Pioneering artists' development and infrastructure from the ground up		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Amanda Ravetz	Professor	2004–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p><u>Ravetz</u>'s research into non-hierarchical infrastructures for artist development and the validation of social-practice art and artists has informed arts policy; and contributed to the organisational security, sector positioning and income capture of national artists' membership charity, Axisweb, Manchester's Castlefield Gallery and Salford's Islington Mill, and benefited individual artists, both professionally and economically. The research with Castlefield Gallery is quoted in the report underpinning the Arts Council England (ACE) policy strategy 2020-2030, has informed the ACE strategy on artists working beyond gallery contexts, and contributed to the gallery regaining ACE funding of GBP210,000. A Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) led by <u>Ravetz</u> with Axisweb has helped to improve their business model and organisational culture, changed external perceptions of the organisation and increased its volume of artist members. This activity has generated GBP60,786 for Axis beyond the original research funding, and an estimated GBP170,000 for artist beneficiaries, leading to a wide range of positive developmental outcomes for social-practice artists.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Professor Amanda <u>Ravetz</u> is an award-winning visual anthropologist with expertise in the interdisciplinary connections between anthropology, ethnography, and art and design. An enduring theme of her research is the way in which participatory methods can be used for social justice and artist development. The underpinning research has three interlinked phases. The first, in partnership with Castlefield Gallery, mapped the provision of talent development in the visual arts in Greater Manchester. The second, with Castlefield Gallery and an interdisciplinary research team, investigated the legacies and methodologies of artists employed on the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) multi-million-pound Connected Communities programme. The third, a partnership with national artists' charity Axisweb, investigated the problems faced by social-practice artists in acquiring recognition and validation for their practice when working beyond mainstream art world and gallery infrastructure.</p> <p>In 2011, Castlefield Gallery approached Manchester Metropolitan for guidance after the loss of their core ACE funding. Due to her expertise in arts and social sciences, <u>Ravetz</u> was perfectly placed to be Principal Investigator on the project, which revealed the overlaps, gaps and quality of artists' talent-development provision in Greater Manchester. <u>Ravetz</u> orchestrated the funding application and research design, and co-authored the final report. Recommendations from the final report were twofold, relating to: (a) new ways to measure the deferred value of arts organisations' CPD provision to ensure smaller providers are appropriately acknowledged, and (b) a non-overlapping networked approach to artists' development provision improving artists' access to a range of opportunities appropriate to different career stages. [1].</p> <p><u>Ravetz</u>'s research into artist development led to her role as Co-Investigator (Co-I) on the AHRC-funded Connected Communities project 'Co-producing legacy: What is the role of artists within</p>		

Connected Communities projects?'. Ravetz used practice-as-research methodologies to interrogate how artists employed on Connected Communities-funded projects had contributed their specific type of knowledge and research insights to the programme. To grasp the methods and knowledge contributed by the artists, Ravetz worked with artist-researcher, Douglas, who had been Co-I on a Connected Communities project involving several artists, and artist-consultant, Genever. Together they developed a collaborative and reflexive drawing process, mobilised in partnership with Castlefield Gallery, and resulting in a public engagement activity for 40 participants. The day-long event, which produced an expansive set of drawing activities, led to new insights about visual art processes as 'inoperative' rather than community-forming, and shed light on the specific contributions by artists to the Connected Communities programme [2].

Ravetz further examined artists working in social settings, in a co-authored book chapter (2017), which considered the legacy and impact of artists co-producing ideas in interdisciplinary collaborative projects with universities and communities. This research demonstrates how artists' participation in these funded projects had proactively and beneficially unsettled research leads' assumptions about the forms that knowledge can take, creating an important and valued space for non-arts researchers to discover different ways of seeing and knowing, and leading to new types of engaged research partnership [3].

Following the Connected Communities project and its focus on social arts practice, in 2015 Axisweb, commissioned Ravetz to research how artists operating outside the gallery system gain traction and visibility. Through 22 interviews with successful producers, commissioners and artists, the research examined current routes to validation, and questioned whether existing structures enable, or impede, artists' externally-affirmed successes. The results highlighted gaps in validation for social-practice artists, including: a lack of critical writing, art reviews, mentoring and website exposure; a lack of commitment by organizations to artists rather than fixed-term projects; and a lack of funding streams for those working outside galleries. The research report concluded that the different value systems of social artists demanded an alternative model of validation [4].

In 2017, Ravetz was Principal Investigator (PI) on a ground-breaking KTP with Axisweb, one of a very small number of visual arts projects funded via the programme over the last 40 years. The partnership explores issues facing social-practice artists in achieving proper understanding and recognition beyond a gallery context. Ravetz worked in a non-hierarchical way with artists and other sector professionals to test out new approaches to validation. This included: organisational and research development for the partners; advisory consultation with arts sector peers; stakeholder consultation with a large group of artist advocates; a series of artist commissions inviting the commissioned artists to lead workshops; and critical writing for a new journal. The research report 'From network to meshwork: validation for social-practice art and artists' analysed the findings of 40 interviews, follow-up surveys of a 160-strong stakeholder group, and an action-research commissioning programme. Four linked issues facing social-practice artists were identified: (a) difficulties articulating social practice (including creating definitions, and negotiating roles and values); (b) unrealistic expectations from project partners; (c) a lack of support and infrastructure for social projects; and (d) a perceived second-class status of social-art practice in the art world. The report made eight recommendations to address these deficits further and to establish additional pathways to change [5].

3. References to the research

1. Slater, A., **Ravetz, A.** and Lee, K. 'Analysing Artists' Continual Professional Development (CPD) in Greater Manchester: Towards an Integrated Approach for Talent Development', ISBN: 9780955955747, 2013.
2. Douglas, A., **Ravetz, A.**, Genever, K. and Siebers, J. 'Why drawing, now?' *Journal of Arts and Communities*, 6 (2-3): pp. 119-31, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1386/jaac.6.2-3.119> 1
3. Pahl, K., Escott, H., Graham, H., Marwood K., Pool, S. and **Ravetz, A.** 'What is the role of artists in interdisciplinary collaborative projects with universities and communities?', *Valuing interdisciplinary collaborative research: Beyond impact*, pp. 131-52, 2017. DOI:10.1332/policypress/9781447331605.003.0007

4. **Ravetz, A.** and Wright, L. *Validation Beyond the Gallery: How do artists working outside of the gallery system receive validation of their practice?* Report commissioned by Axisweb, 2015. <https://www.socialartlibrary.org/library/validation-beyond-the-gallery>
5. **Ravetz, A.** and Wright, L. *From network to meshwork: validation for social practice art and artists*, April 2020. <https://www.axisweb.org/models-of-validation/content/from-network-to-meshwork/>

Funding:

G1. Innovate UK, KTP010535, GBP140,242

4. Details of the impact**Impact on national policy**

The research has enabled sector and artist conversations, and the creation of a non-hierarchical model of infrastructure support for artists that is unique in being artist-led on a national basis. Ravetz's work has also had a direct impact on strategy change for Arts Council England. The 2013 report 'Analysing Artists' Continual Professional Development (CPD)' and the 2015 report 'Validation Beyond the Gallery' are both cited in ACE's 'Next ten-year strategy: Evidence Review' by Britain Thinks (2018), which underpinned ACE's revised ten-year strategy (2020-2030). The Britain Thinks review refers directly to Ravetz's research in its section on how to evaluate quality: 'There is also a difficulty for visual artists with regards to the influence of commercialism on ideas of quality. Ravetz and Wright (2015) explore systems of validation for visual artists working outside of the gallery system, arguing that many artists do not accept the traditional routes to validation of the quality of their work – specifically gallery commissions'. The Britain Thinks authors end this section of their review with a direct quotation from 'Validation Beyond the Gallery': "the difference in values and ways of working between this field and gallery culture demands a new and different structure of validation, one based on in-depth consultation with artists, participants, producers and commissioners". ACE Director of Research, Andrew Mowlah, testifies that: "Professor Ravetz research '*Analysing Artists' Continual Development in Greater Manchester: towards an integrated approach for talent development*', played a significant role in helping ACE think about what the most significant opportunities for talent development among artists are from their perspective [...] The future success of the cultural sector depends on being able to draw on a talent pool that reflects society as a whole and is much wider and deeper than it is now. Professor Ravetz's research 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" **[A]**.

Impact on organisational practice and resilience

Ravetz's 2013 report equipped Castlefield Gallery with a new typology of development activities that supported their developing a USP for artist development, and provided ways to communicate the value of this work to cultural partners and funders. In 2015, the gallery regained core ACE funding of GBP210,000, which had been lost in 2011. Both Castlefield Gallery and ACE have testified that the reinstatement of funding was a direct result of Ravetz's research. The reinstatement of ACE funding allowed Castlefield Gallery to grow its associate programme, as reflected in its increased membership and income. The funding also gave it greater visibility and credibility as a leader in talent development in Manchester and across the UK. The research directly underpins Castlefield Gallery's and Bluecoat Gallery's 2020 artist development programme PIVOT: an 18-month development programme for mid-career artists living and working in North West England **[B]**.

The research enabled the gallery to share its new approach to artists' development with other small organisations in Manchester, such as the disability-focussed Venture Arts. Venture Arts have credited Ravetz's research with helping them to build networks and gain resilience and funding: "Amanda's research on artists' development has informed our relationship with Castlefield Gallery and the way it thinks and works with artists, regardless of disability. Amanda's work shaped our partnership with CG and facilitated connections with similar organisations across Manchester, such as Islington Mill, Manifest Arts and Rogue Artists' Studio [...] the

partnership with Castlefield Gallery and Amanda's research along with the PhD has also been a factor in Venture Arts becoming a National Portfolio Organisation." [C].

Ravetz's work with visual art charity, Portraits of Recovery (PORe), has been credited by their executive as having "helped us to develop a credible, acclaimed portfolio of work. Amanda's academic reputation, research and future working is referenced in our successful funding bid to Arts Council England's *Elevate* programme." [D]. PORE collaborated with Ravetz on the *Wonderland* project (2016) and *My Recoverist Family* (2017). *My Recoverist Family* screened at REEL Recovery Film Festival, Los Angeles and New York; at Whitworth Art Gallery, with the panel including writer, Will Self; at Islington Mill Art Academy; at the ESRC Social Science Festival, Manchester and at the Niamos Centre in Hulme, Manchester. Between 2016 and 2020 *Wonderland* was viewed over 5,682 times. PORE have attested that the partnership has helped them to gain new networks and organisational resilience, which has directly contributed to their ongoing sustainability [D].

Ravetz's creation of a collaborative PhD with grassroots arts organisation, Islington Mill, in Salford is credited by Director, Maurice Carlin, as directly contributing to the organisation's resilience by allowing the development of their public programme: "The GBP80,000 that Amanda's work has helped us to raise is employing our new full time General Manager and a part-time Projects Coordinator. They're the first two members of the new charity that we've formed called Islington Mill Foundation. They're going to help us to restart our public programme [...] We will expand our residency programme. The funding is going to be used to build a large new residency space up in the top 2 floors which will be big enough for 24 artists to stay in. All these impacts can be traced back to the PhD that Amanda initiated." Ravetz's ongoing consultative work with Islington Mill is further credited by Carlin as contributing directly to their securing of GBP800,000 of Heritage Lottery Funding, an essential part of a £2.5 million bid to save Islington Mill's future existence: "In terms of tangible outputs from Amanda's contributions, we received GBP800,000 worth of National Lottery Heritage funding in part as a result of her work with us and her contribution to that process. I would say she's one of the key people in this city whose voice is very much in our minds when we're thinking about our future." Importantly for Carlin, it was Ravetz's research expertise in artist-led validation that allowed the Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) bid to be, not only successful, but successful on the organisation's own terms: "Amanda has a really good sense of why there's something special here. Why there's something artist-led about this place that means it can hold ambiguities, uncertainties and question marks and insist on the value of those things. When you're in a position like we were, where we were desperate to get this funding, you'll almost do anything. It was really useful to have people like Amanda there saying 'No, you know what, this is what I think the value of this is and this is what you can insist on', this is the value that artist-led brings" [E].

Ravetz's research insights into the separation of the mainstream arts sector and those working outside the paradigm of the art market have also impacted on the funding, visibility and success of Axisweb. The KTP with Axisweb is credited with helping them to increase their membership threefold and move from a 10% to a 100% self-generated business income model. The partnership is known to have led to a minimum of 51 artist commissions; 45,343 engagements (audiences, participants, attendees, etc.); 2,087 tangible outputs (zines, events, artworks etc.) and GBP60,786 in income generated. 15K of this funding has been used by Axis to establish the Social Art Library, the idea for which derived directly from Ravetz's 2015 research and the KTP partnership. The report on the KTP (*From Network to Meshwork*) has influenced crafts social practice, and is cited under the Useful Resources section of the AHRC-funded publication *Stitching Together Good Practice Guide*. Independent evaluation found that the KTP can be credited for 60% of Axisweb's organisational sustainability and everything that ensued from that, including increased membership from 1,500 to 5,000+; new and expanded non-funder-based income streams; new support for socially-engaged artists; and a more diverse range of activity for members [F].

Impact on artists

In terms of the significance and reach of this impact for Axis' members, those involved in the research experienced an increased range of benefits from their membership, including raised profile, quality assurance for grant applications, and facilitated access to exhibition and studio

space. They formed new networks with other artists, practitioners and commissioners; gained fresh perspectives through sharing information; and became less isolated, which caused them to feel validated, visible, recognised and credible. Artists commissioned as part of the action research have experienced further impacts, including: 12 additional artist commissions; 9,500 additional artist engagements; and 1,978 outputs, including zines, events, networks, films and fora. These activities generated a minimum GBP32,500 in further commissions, grants and crowdfunding. In surveys, Axisweb members remark that, whereas previously, Axisweb functioned mainly as an online platform, in the past five years (since the organisation's change of direction and Ravetz's consultancy work with them) more support is available to socially-engaged artists and a more diverse programme is on offer, including events and commissions. The KTP contributed to an average 87% of the successful outcomes and longer-term impacts that artists identified from their involvement in the research as commissioned artists or attendees/participants of the commissioned activities. This percentage calculates as GBP170,000 of income across all the commissioned artists. [F].

The research team's publication, *Social Work? Open*, a new journal for socially-engaged artists and the first of its kind in the UK, commissioned 16 artists (including long and short form) plus one artist commission. 400 hard copies were distributed (including 350 sold); 1,400+ were read online and 450 were downloaded. [G]. Artists recognised and welcomed the unique place that the experiences and conversations arising from the research held in the sector, commenting on the non-hierarchical approach to the research as its unique characteristic, with one participant commenting: "I feel strongly socially engaged art is the end of the radar, it's not been high profile. This programme was about validation and it's been a hard journey to achieve any validation – we're very invisible in many ways. I think it [the KTP] is unique in that the core values are quite different from anything else that's happening. The non-hierarchical, non-judgemental, non-led. People can come up with an idea and make it happen. The artists are the heart of everything rather than the administration" [F].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. *Britain Thinks* review, Arts Council England, p.16, 2018; Andrew Mowlah, Arts Council England, testimonial. Corroborating impact on national policy.
- B. Helen Wewiora/Castlefield Gallery statistics; Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation assessment form. Corroborating organisational benefits to Castlefield Gallery.
- C. Amanda Sutton, Venture Arts, testimonial. Corroborating organisational benefits to Venture Arts.
- D. Mark Prest, Portraits of Recovery, testimonial. Corroborating organisational benefits to PoRE.
- E. Maurice Carlin, Islington Mill, testimonial. Corroborating organisational benefits to Islington Mill.
- F. Axisweb testimonial; Axisweb <https://www.socialartlibrary.org/>; KTP report; KTP evaluation; Independent Evaluation by Sally Fort; *Stitching Together*: <https://stitchingtogetherhome.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/stitching-together-good-practice-guidelines-digital.pdf> <https://twitter.com/stitchingtqthr/status/1327213861838131202?s=21>; Corroborating impacts of KTP on Axisweb capacity and resilience.
- G. *Social Work? Open* journal statistics provided by Axisweb. Corroborating use of the journal by practitioners.