

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Hull		
Unit of Assessment: 33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
Title of case study: Delivering Cultural Innovation and Regeneration through Hull, UK City of Culture 2017		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2003 - 2018		
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:
Professor Alastair Borthwick	Professor of Music	1995 - 2020
Dr Rob Mackay	Reader in Music	2001 - 2020
Dr Campbell Edinborough	Lecturer in Drama	2009 - 2020
Dr Lee Tsang	Lecturer in Music	2001 - 2018
Dr Amy Skinner	Senior Lecturer in Drama	2010 - present
Dr Louise Peacock	Senior Lecturer in Drama	2002 - 2015
Dr Sarah Jane Dickenson	Reader in Creative Writing	1991 - present
Dr Colette Conroy	Senior Lecturer in Drama	2012 - 2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 - present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Through <i>Hull UK City of Culture 2017</i>, the University's School of the Arts played a pivotal role in the artistic and cultural regeneration of the City and its wider region. Using research on engaging audiences, cultural intervention, place, and co-produced and collaborative performance, researchers curated and led a programme of events that developed new partnerships with external stakeholders and artists. The impact was new cultural works, increased cultural engagement from the communities of the Humber region, and cultural regeneration through increased tourism and investment in the arts.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Since the 1970s Hull has suffered an economic decline, in part compounded by its geographical isolation, and by 2015 it was the 3rd most deprived local authority in England. It also has low levels of cultural engagement. Arts researchers at the University of Hull have accordingly worked over the last twenty years to champion culture as a transformational activity. Our Practice as Research, and curatorial and commissioning activity have successfully developed interventions that enhance educational achievement and participation in the arts, fostering a deepened awareness of the city's heritage. Our central impact claim is that cultural engagement with local audiences through research-led arts practice delivers a range of transformative social and economic benefits. We outline four key examples of this underpinning research-led practice here.</p>		
1. Engaging Disadvantaged Young People through Collaborative Playwriting		
<p>The <i>Not Knowns</i> project (2014-15), funded by the Wellcome Trust, was led by Dickenson and Conroy with psychologist Professor Giuliana Mazzoni. It revolved around a group of young people not in education or employment and often with no fixed address (the 'not-knowns'). Working in collaboration with ParkBench theatre company and a freelance community arts practitioner, this research enabled participants to interrogate social identities through playwriting. Participants worked alongside a professional theatre company to produce a 45-minute play, performed in 15 venues across the city [1].</p>		
2. Supporting Education through Collaborative Composition		
<p><i>Lear Settings</i> (2003), funded by Arts Council England and the Performing Right Society was led by Tsang and Borthwick. The project explored collaborative musical authorship by engaging school pupils in constructing a soundtrack for an animated film, based on Borthwick's composition <i>The Jumblies</i>. It developed a set of practices that engage audiences from disadvantaged backgrounds with contemporary music, while resulting in positive changes in behavioural patterns and pupil attitudes to creative arts [2].</p>		

3. Using Participatory Approaches to Theatre to Explore Place and Heritage

By developing and theorising modes of participation in performance, researchers have engaged theatre makers and audiences with cultural heritage and memory. Skinner's work on Soviet-era political theatre has argued for the ability of contemporary theatre productions to create 'hinterlands' in which audiences and actors 'clasp hands in fraternity' [3]. Peacock's work on comic performance has theorised alternative ways for audiences to engage with previously denigrated comic forms and traditions (such as slapstick) through modes of self-identification [4].

Edinburgh's work as practitioner and theorist has explored interactive and participatory modes of performance. His monograph *Theatrical Reality* (2016) discusses participatory practices used in an earlier project *The History of Water* (2013), set in Hull swimming pools and funded by the City Council and Arts Council England [5]. The piece encouraged audiences to reflect on the City's swimming facilities as sites of cultural heritage as well as places for exercise and leisure, thereby making connections between culture, community, and physical activity.

4. Ecoacoustic Compositional Methods as Drivers of Audience Engagement with Place

Resounding Mulgrave (2014), led by Mackay, explored post-industrial landscapes, combining field recording with poetry and offering a meditation on place, history, and the geological past [6]. The work draws on ecoacoustic principles stretching back to R. Murray Schafer and explores the sound of environments as part of a compositional discourse that highlights inter-relationship. Audiences are invited to engage reflectively both with the actual spaces around them and those evoked by the composition.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Colette Conroy, Sarah Jane Dickenson and Giuliana Mazzoni, "The 'Not Knowns': memory, narrative and applied theatre", *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 23:1 (2018): 56-72.
2. Lee Tsang, *Lear Settings*. <https://tsan3.wixsite.com/lear-settings/about>
3. Amy Skinner, "Exploring the Hinterlands: Avant-Garde Temporality, Socialist Realism and Pogodin's *Aristocrats*". *Studies in Theatre and Performance (Special Issue: The Russian Avant-Garde)* 36 (3), 257-268.
4. Louise Peacock, *Slapstick and Comic Performance* (Macmillan, 2014).
5. Campbell Edinburgh, *Theatrical Reality: Space, Embodiment and Empathy in Performance* (Intellect, 2016).
6. Rob Mackay, *Resounding Mulgrave*. [Digital media, available on request]

Research Grants

1. Edinburgh, "The History of Water", 2013, Arts Council, £2,700.
2. Mackay, "Rivers of Sound", 2017, Arts Council, £14,500.
3. Dickenson, Conroy, and Mazzoni, "The Not Knowns", 2014 – 2015, Wellcome Trust, £30,000.
4. Tsang, "Lear Settings", 2006, Arts Council, £24,786.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Hull's relative remoteness from other key urban centres combined with high levels of economic deprivation have often resulted in residents having limited access to cultural opportunities, as Rosie Millard, Chair of Hull, City of Culture (HCoC) states [A]. The University's involvement in the bid for City of Culture represented an opportunity to use over a decade of research into the transformative potential of the arts to **make a major contribution to the HCoC programme** and thereby to **drive cultural regeneration in the City and region**. Drawing on research in the School of the Arts on engaging audiences and exploring place, Borthwick led the University's contribution to the bid and worked closely with Andrew Dixon, a specialist arts consultant employed by Hull City Council [A]. Through the School of the Arts, the University **commissioned** new cultural work, **collaborated** with external partners, and **contributed** to major strands in the HCoC programme.

Hull's bid made explicit mention of the curatorial contribution University researchers would make in planning and delivering the mega event: "Hull University will build on its highly regarded cultural programmes in drama, music, creative writing, digital media, and creative music technology, towards an ambitious calendar of performances and events in its anniversary year" [B]. Feedback from the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) on the bid highlighted this as a Key Feature: "Education Partners are heavily involved with the University playing a key role as cultural commissioner." [C, p.12]. Millard also views the University's contribution as "crucially important" to the bid's success [A]. During the first 'season' of the 2017 programme, the University curated and hosted over 20% of the cultural events of the entire programme [D]. The University campus became a major cultural centre, with Middleton Hall and the Gulbenkian Centre among the key venues. Researchers contributed to the *No Limits* education programme, the *Women of the World Festival*, the *North Atlantic Flux* event, and the *Amy Johnson Festival*; initiated the *Hull Independent Producer Initiative*; curated the *Once Contemporary, Always Contemporary* concert series; and hosted the *National Student Drama Festival*. The HCoC evaluation suggested that **68%** of Hull residents were aware of what the University's programme offered [E].

Overall evaluation of the HCoC programme suggests that it has had a transformative effect on the region. **Over half** of the audiences were from Hull, with over **95%** of residents attending at least one cultural activity [E, pp.8-9]. Over **a quarter** of the total audience were from areas among the **10% most deprived** in the country [E, p.78]. **60%** of ticket-buying audiences were first-time bookers. **2 in 3 residents** felt they had an increased sense of the city's heritage. **75%** of those who visited in 2017 stated that it **changed their perception of the city for the better** [E, pp.8-9]. A UK-wide survey suggested **46%** of people felt the events of the year had positively **changed their perception of the city** [E, p.109]. In 2017 there was a **346%** increase in funding for cultural activities in Hull [E, p.131]. Estimates suggest that visitors to Hull exceeded **6m** for the first time in 2017, a rise of 1.3m since 2013, and tourism is estimated to have contributed at least **£300m** to the local economy [E, p.131]. As Rosie Millard says, "I believe that the year as a whole had a transformational effect for the city in revitalising the cultural industries in the area, and providing residents with the confidence to seek out new kinds of cultural experience", a view also articulated by Culture Minister Matt Hancock during 2017 [A, C]. The success of HCoC was also mentioned by DCMS in a press release launching a £20 million fund for culture and heritage, which cited £3 billion of new investment and 800 new jobs in the Hull and East Yorkshire region [C].

Impact Summary: The University delivered social, economic, and cultural regeneration in the region by helping to secure the bid and deliver the City of Culture programme.

1. Using Ecoacoustics to Explore Sound and Place

Drawing on Mackay's research in ecoacoustics, researchers initiated a range of new collaborations that centred on place and delivered distinctive education and performance projects.

Ecoacoustic approaches were deployed in several different projects to focus attention on place and Hull's own geographical location. As part of the *No Limits* education and outreach programme, Mackay worked with poet John Wedgwood Clark to develop the *2778 Nautical Miles* project. *2778 Nautical Miles* involved **19 schools** across the city, with Mackay and Clark helping children to record sounds and images that represented Hull. The resulting exhibition played in Hull and its twinned city of Freetown, Sierra Leone. The teachers involved in the project reported a range of benefits for pupils: "Pride in what they were doing, and their ability, the conversations." [F, p.530].

The *Bowhead* project explored the city's whaling heritage and was created in collaboration with Hull Maritime Museum and Hull School of Art and Design. Mackay was involved in creating a soundtrack for the project, which also involved students as co-investigators, as part of an agenda to involve students in the research underpinning our contribution to HCoC. More than **100,000 people** attended the museum during the time of its run [H]. Mackay also used field recordings from Mexico of the endangered Monarch butterfly to create the installation

Flight of the Monarchs for the *Amy Johnson Festival*. During the piece's run an estimated audience of more than **6,000 people** attended the festival [H]. The piece has subsequently been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and internationally, and has toured festivals and venues in the UK, including the Eden Project in Cornwall.

Focussing on the broader geographical location of Hull, Mackay and Dr Matthew Barnard worked with renowned sound artist Chris Watson to realise his piece *Trent Falls to Spurn Point*. The piece focussed on the Humber estuary, and used source material from field recordings to create an immersive auditory experience. Barnard helped support the ambisonic coding used to realise the piece in the University's Donald Roy Theatre. The piece was seen by **373 people** during its run [I, p.166] and for Watson it helped to cement future opportunities and provided the raw material for a BBC Radio 3 *Between the Ears* piece [G, H].

2. Exploring Cultural Regeneration, Place and Heritage in a Major Concert Series

Drawing on Borthwick and Tsang's research into engaging audiences with contemporary music, researchers convened a major concert series that explored aspects of Hull's heritage, developed new opportunities for the artists involved, and created international connections.

Borthwick initiated a research-led call for proposals from artists to reframe ideas of contemporary music, including the idea of remaking the past. The resulting *Once Contemporary, Always Contemporary* concert series was articulated in the bid document as a "curated programme of contemporary music." [B, p.10] and was awarded **£50,000** by HCoC, with support from a range of other sources (BBC Radio 3, Performing Right Society, Arts Council England). Across **30 public concerts**, the series engaged a broad regional and national audience; over **4,300 people** attended the concerts, supplemented by BBC Radio 3 broadcasts [H]. Concerts included work that would not otherwise have been seen in the region, such as a performance by the London Sinfonietta with composer Mica Levi, and new work by researchers including Borthwick, Slater and Mackay.

Tsang engaged new audiences by curating an exhibition and recital on the Hull-born conductor and composer Ethel Leginska as part of the *Women of the World Festival*. The project drew media attention, including an interview on BBC Radio 3 [H]. The response indicated a renewed interest in Leginska e.g. one audience member stated "I had attended a *revolutionary makers* workshop and wanted to do more as I'd really enjoyed being creative and the idea of craftism. I'd never heard of Ethel Leginska which is why I attended the piano concert and exhibition about her life." [I, p.12].

Building on the University's research on place, and co-produced and collaborative performance, Dr Simon Desbruslais from the School of the Arts collaborated with composer Deborah Pritchard on a piece which explored audience engagement through performing contemporary music in unconventional settings. Pritchard's piece *Voyage* (commissioned by Desbruslais) explored the connections between Hull and Iceland, and took inspiration from a sculpture by Steinunn Thórarinsdóttir, whilst exploring the connections between Hull and Iceland. The first part of the piece was performed live at the *North Atlantic Flux* event (curated by rock musician John Grant), and streamed live on Facebook, whilst the second part took place on Vik beach in Iceland, in the presence of the British Ambassador and the major of Reykjavik. As Pritchard acknowledges, working on the piece with Desbruslais allowed her to develop her creative practice by working in a site-specific medium for the first time. The piece resulted in a commission from Thórarinsdóttir, premiered in Iceland in 2020 [J]. The *North Atlantic Flux* event of which the piece was part attracted a total audience of **1131 people** and was later named Cultural Event of the Year at the UK Events Awards 2017 [E, p.122].

The concert series also provided saxophonist Sam Corkin with the opportunity to work with the BBC Singers for the first time, presenting the first major UK performance of a set of Advent Antiphons, commissioned from 8 different composers. This provided the basis for some of Corkin's future work, including an Arts Council-funded project with Canterbury Cathedral [J].

3. **Building the Regional Arts Base by Supporting Emerging Theatre Companies**

Drawing on work in collaborative theatre practices (Conroy, Dickenson, Edinborough, Skinner, Peacock), researchers explored approaches to theatre that celebrated place and regional voices, and mentored local artists.

In a unique partnership with Hull Truck Theatre and Hull City Council Arts, researchers initiated the Hull Independent Producer Initiative (HIPI), bringing an experienced producer to work with young Hull companies and providing resource in kind through access to University rehearsal facilities. Companies involved included The Roaring Girls, Middle Child, Bellow Theatre and Silent Uproar. The scheme had a clear impact on the careers of the companies involved. The Roaring Girls state: “We believe that HIPI helped put The Roaring Girls on the map as a company, allowing us to establish a reputation outside of the region.” [K]. They cite recently secured funding of **£15k**, as a direct result of participating in HIPI. Silent Uproar cite funding of **£73k** (including from the Arts Council), while Bellow Theatre raised over **£14k** from the Arts Council and Hull City Arts [K]. The scheme supported companies in taking productions to the Edinburgh Fringe festival. Middle Child won three awards for their Edinburgh show, and played to a total audience of **3,187 people** [E, p. 89]. The scheme also organised a week of performances in collaboration with New Diorama in London. 90% of performances were sold out, with a total audience of **630 people**. The performances also brought the work of these companies to the attention of the national press, with strong reviews in The Guardian and The Stage [K].

Using her work on the rehearsal practices of Soviet-era theatre directors, Dr Amy Skinner collaborated with The Roaring Girls and playwright Zodwa Nyoni to produce *Weathered Estates*, a re-writing of Euripides’ *Women of Troy*, based in and using the history of the city of Hull. As The Roaring Girls acknowledge, the piece drew on research by Skinner on Soviet-era political theatre, and Peacock in comedy and slapstick: “The work of Louise Peacock was particularly significant, and can be seen in how the humorous elements of *Weathered Estates* were managed... [T]he process of rehearsing... allowed us to identify new ideas and practices which we could take and incorporate into our own ‘tool box’, for example, from Amy Skinner’s practice, which draws heavily on her expertise in Russian and early Soviet theatre methodologies”. [K]. All performances of the show were sold out, playing to a total audience of approximately **300 people**, and the show garnered national TV and “Pick of the Week” (The Guardian) newspaper attention [H].

By contributing a major programme of events to HCoC, we engaged audiences in thinking about place and heritage, drove transformative cultural regeneration in the region, and benefitted the artists with whom we collaborated.

5. **Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

All available as pdfs on request.

[A] Testimonials from Rosie Millard and Andrew Dixon.

[B] Hull’s bid for UK City of Culture 2017.

[C] DCMS feedback, press release, and guidance for bidding cities.

[D] Evidence of ‘Season 1’ events curated and hosted by the University of Hull.

[E] *Cultural Transformations: The Impacts of Hull UK City of Culture 2017, Preliminary Outcomes Evaluation*. https://hubs.formstack.com/forms/cultural_transformations_report

[F] *Learning and Participation Evaluation Report* Hull City of Culture 2017.

[G] Testimonial from Chris Watson.

[H] Data on audiences and media coverage of events.

[I] *Evaluation Report: Overview of Heritage Lottery Fund Outcomes* Hull City of Culture 2017.

[J] Testimonials from Deborah Pritchard and Sam Corkin.

[K] Testimonials from The Roaring Girls, & other companies involved in the Hull Independent Producers Initiative; and media reviews of the Emerging Companies Showcase.