



Practice as Research and Knowledge Exchange Café's (PARKE): Methodologies to connect beyond academia

By David Hockham, Ghislaine Boddington, Jorge Lopes Ramos and Carlos Eduardo Pires (University of Greenwich)

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The Co-Creating Liveness in Embodied Immersion Research Group (CLEI), within the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences (FLAS) at the University of Greenwich, looked to opening up ways in which multiple types of stakeholders might come together to identify new practice-based research and Knowledge Exchange projects. This built on research *Becoming civic centred – A case study of the University of Greenwich's Bathway Theatre based in Woolwich* (Ellis, Hockham, Rolle and Zigomo: 2020) which identified the interconnected framework of resources, relationships, and results in Higher Education Community Partnerships as well as other long-term research by CLEI Founders [Ghislaine Boddington](#), [Dave Hockham](#) and [Jorge Lopes Ramos](#).

The aims of the Practice as Research and Knowledge Exchange (PARKE) café were to:

- Be supported by wider university administrative infrastructures.
- Look to ensure freelancers, community experts and those not paid a full-time academic salary would be remunerated for their time in both the creation of new project ideas and the development and implementation of them.
- Be open and transparent in the way money was spent
- Ensure equity in terms of the ways in which projects were created, managed and facilitated.
- Create pilots which might then be developed as part of larger funding bids and projects

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As such the 3-part PARKE Café initiative was born, co-created by [David Hockham](#) with fellow co-directors [Ghislaine Boddington](#) and [Jorge Lopes Ramos](#).

The 3 parts were:

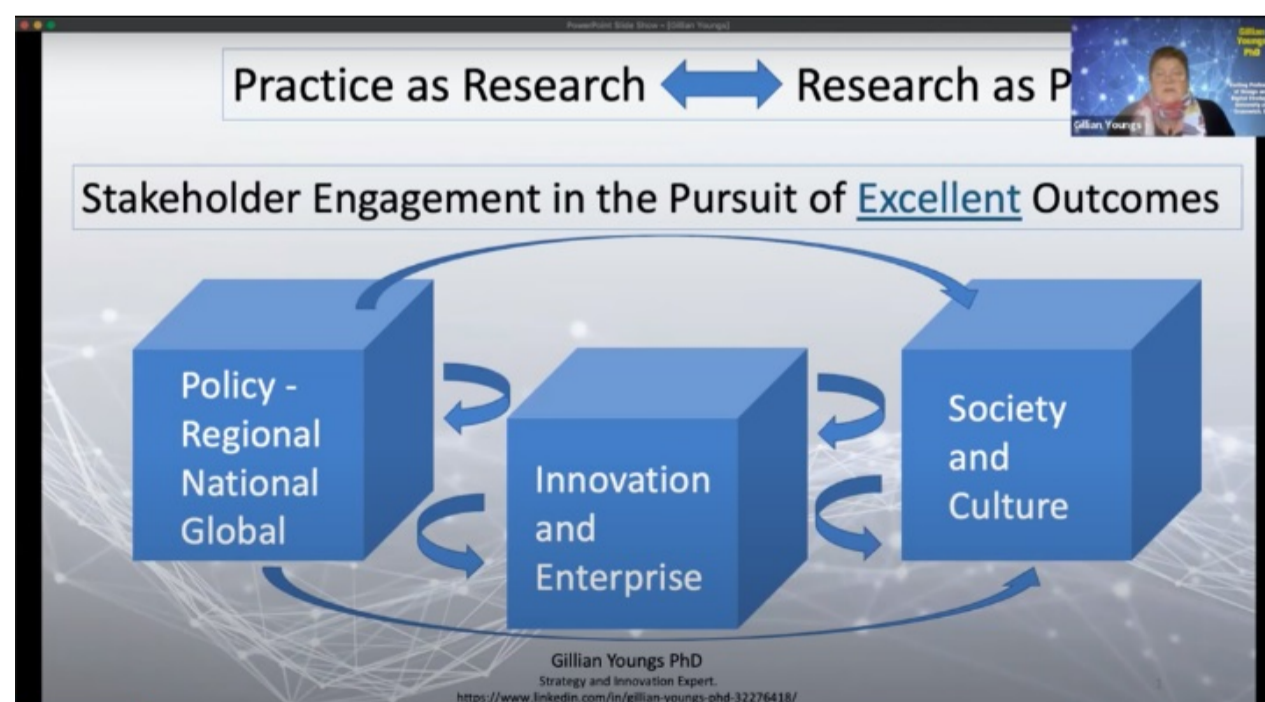
1. Curated seminar 9th February 2022
2. ZAP LAB W/C 21st February
3. Workshop 2nd March 2022

Curated Seminar: Introducing a critical language to discuss Impactful research and Knowledge Exchange beyond the university

Curated, prepared and moderated by [Ghislaine Boddington](#) (Reader in Digital immersion, School of Design, University of Greenwich) this first event invited [Professor Pam Burnard](#) (Professor of Arts, Creativities and Educations, University of Cambridge) and [Professor Gillian Youngs](#) (Visiting Professor of Design & Digital Strategy, School of Design, University of Greenwich) to take participants on a deep dive into enhancing the links between the research professional within the university and impact with external partners: from grassroots organisations, the creative industries to policymakers and international business.

Youngs spoke of the ways Practice as Research requires us to think about research as a practice. Within the developing research agenda Youngs argues the need for us to reconsider what excellence is within research. She tied in Stakeholder Engagement with the pursuit of excellent outcomes with the ideas of partnership, real-world outcomes and the relationship of research to different aspects of real-world operations. Within the presentation Youngs makes the case for a Learning Knowledge Exchange Community, a full cycle approach which enables key stakeholders to develop ideas and questions from the inception of a project, designing methodologies which takes all stakeholders on a journey through question creation, methods and dissemination. A connected approach.

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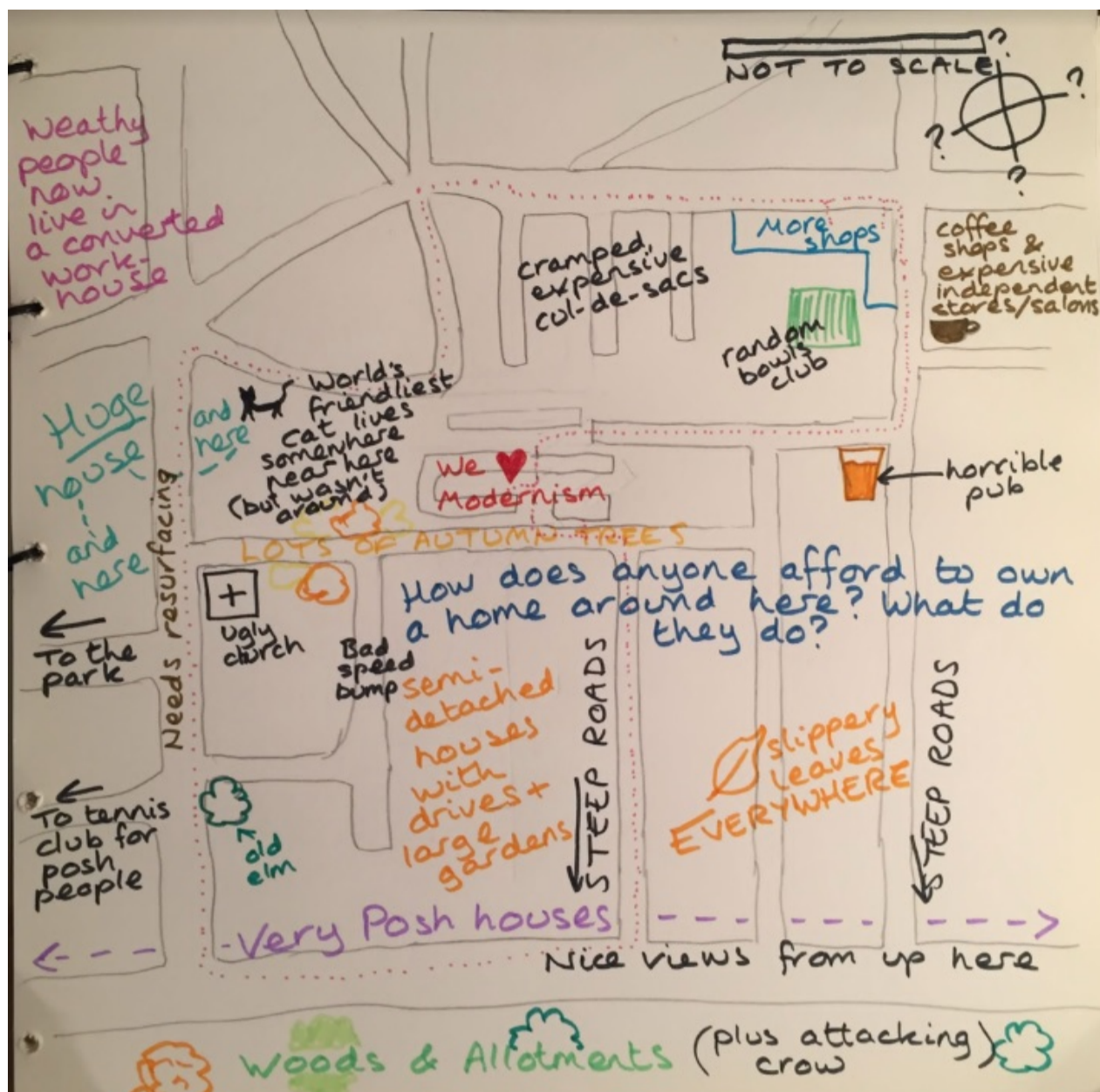
Burnard's position, argues for us to generate change in sustainable ways, we are required to think and do differently, where Practice as Research might be framed as a way for co-authoring change. Burnard moves to describe the ways in which, at project inception, the speed of change can be written into projects, a slow ripple which moves out from the centre of an impact site, such as a drop hitting a pool of water, through to an impact splash creating quick transformations. Offering a model which brings together Practice, Research, Theory and Policy Burnard makes explicit the interconnectedness between the university, policy and the workplace. Burnard concludes their presentation by arguing for the need for rebellious research, where voices are written and crafted in different registers, tones and rhythms in order to connect our outputs with new audiences.

Together, these practice-based research approaches centre collaborations at their core and champion the expertise of community partners as co-authors. This one-hour seminar was held online in February 2022 and can be found [here](#).

ZAP LAB: Instruction-based remote creative residency, focusing on personal reflections, skills, interests, and resources which might be offered to collaborative group projects

During the five days leading up to the third component, the live workshop, participants were first invited to respond to provocations sent out over WhatsApp broadcast, as daily prompts. This was called the ZAP LAB, a creative digital journey written and coordinated by ZU-UK, a multi-awarded theatre, games and digital company. The lab instructions, provocations and prompts were written by Persis Jadé Maravala and Dr. Jorge Lopes Ramos, building on ZAP LAB - an earlier prototype of the project which coordinated a remote creative residency between 300 artists in Brazil, Colombia and UK culminating in a multi-location live broadcast in 3 languages (Viva the Live!, 2021). This instruction-led process aimed to create reflexive moments for the attendees ahead of the in-person workshop, encouraging participants to be open to new possibilities, re-orientate themselves to their relationship with their work and explore different ways of working. For academics, this might mean exploring creative responses to place and context, whilst artists might be shifted to reconsider new types of approaches to audience engagement and impact.

Responses to the daily prompts, in the form of images, videos, audio, maps and texts were messaged back to the ZAP LAB facilitator and the data gathered informed what happened on the workshop itself, such as the map below from one of the participants, after returning from a guided walk.



Some of the video responses, such as the manifestos for the future, were shared to all of the participants one day before the event as a way of introducing everyone to each other before their first face to face encounter in the live workshop. As well as providing starting points for knowledge exchange between participants, and forging collaborative relationships ahead of the in-person event, the outputs created by the participants themselves also served as a way to create a welcoming, familiar and accessible environment conducive to co-creation.

Forging partnerships

In March 2022, David Hockham led the in-person workshop and networking event, held at Bathway Theatre, Woolwich, University of Greenwich. This three-hour event aimed to facilitate collaborations between university researchers and external partners and used the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) as a way of focussing the workshop. The workshop began with a presentation by Suzie Leighton, of NCACE, talking about the possibilities, impacts, enablers and barriers to collaboration.

The practical workshop asked participants to: Actively listen, Co-design through creative methods and Create possible futures together.

Dividing the participants into groups, facilitators helped each group to match their interests and practices using a deck of cards which listed each of the 17 SDGs. The group were asked which SDG they were most interested in exploring with each participant only allowed to choose one, and which no one in the group could share. The remaining SDG cards were then put aside. A second deck,

framed as what do you bring to the party, asked participants to write down resources and expertise, one idea per card. Each participant then had their own personal deck. The final deck asked participants to write down the stakeholders, audience groups or participants they have access to or could likely get access to. This deck was written by the group and as such a group deck was formed. Shuffling the decks and turning cards, and whilst following an iterative process, groups had to create as many projects as possible addressing each card (practice + SDG + stakeholder). A variety of combinations culminate in several potential projects in collaboration with researchers and practitioners.



These ideas were then shared back with the group. A full workshop plan is shared at the end of this blog post which can be used and adapted by others. Please do however cite the authors.

Participants who attended the workshop who were not on full time contracts were paid £100 for their time and offered lunch.

Beyond the Café's

For these ideas to grow, groups were asked to bid for £3000. Two amounts of 3k were available for 2 projects. Project partners were paid £150 each for their time in supporting the development of a 2 page proposal. To access this fund, groups should have been made up of ideally at least two staff members from the University of Greenwich, preferably cross-disciplinary and with at least one external partner to come together and write a project proposal. The CLEI research group are looking forward to seeing the results of the two projects awarded by the PARKE Café initiative:

The First, titled "How to learn to love being with less". Is a 1-day dance-based workshop with 20 participants followed up with a short film in which we explore cross-generational collective meaning-making and co-creation in response to the question,

“How can we learn to love being with less?” The workshop approach incorporates the Chormmunity method in an adapted form. *Chormmunity* (from *choreography* and *community*) involves workshops where the participants collectively choreograph group dances and “movement text”.

The second Sustainable stories: A city walk to connect the generations and create lasting community impact seeks to tackle aspects of UN Sustainability Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Both projects are supported by the central university research and enterprise teams with meetings booked in to think about where future funding might come from in developing these ideas.

Envisioning the future

PARKE Café provided a framework to practically enable different types of partnerships across and beyond a university. We recognise that partnerships take time and money to build and we wanted to find a way to support new and emerging ideas.

We hope the two projects awarded will be an example of successfully nurtured partnerships although only time will tell. We hope this is the first iteration of the PARKE Café and are looking at ways in which it might be integrated into the methodologies of the university. We look forward to reporting back in the future about these developments.

[Access the Workshop Leaders Guide](#)

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Image(s) credit: Jorge Lopes Ramos

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