

Creative
Industries
Report

Aspect

Beyond the Academy: Models and Dynamics of Sector-Engaged Research

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Social sciences researchers and organisations across the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) engage in various ways. Interested in best practice for business engagement in these sectors, this Aspect Creative Industries Deep Dive project includes a suite of distinct but interrelated reports that explore and evidence various aspects of researcher engagement with the CCIs.

This report engages with the notion of research engagement itself and defines different models of research engagement beyond the academy. Through gathering insights from social sciences researchers based at universities across Yorkshire and Humber and Greater Manchester, this report forwards Cultural and Creative Industries engagement insights inclusive of and sensitive to regional particularities.

1.2 Summary

This report is structured around four key areas. The first section collates insights from across the academic and industry informant interviews regarding the nature of engagement itself. In exploring various tensions between academic-style research and consultancy-style research, the section arrives at three definitions of research engagement. Namely, the distinctions between researching about, for, and with industry partners are detailed and clarified. Definitions are also included of the various types of engagement: business engagement (BE), knowledge exchange (KE), knowledge transfer partnerships (KTPs), collaboration labs, and collaborative PhDs.

The second section features discussion of funding issues, and explores the role of direct funding for research engagement as well as the role of in-kind support. The important role of BE teams as links to funding and funding intermediaries are detailed. In addition, some of the funding challenges related to precarious contracts and other university-wide concerns that directly or indirectly impact the growth and development of HEI-CCI partnerships are explored. Many of these issues,

even if reported upon in the context of universities in the Yorkshire and Humber and Greater Manchester regions, are of wider national interest.

The third section explores various regional and geographic issues which impact upon CCI-HEI research engagement related to wider geographic dynamics of the CCIs. The section reflects upon the role of proximity in establishing CCI-HEI research engagements, and considers the role of location in terms of relationship building between academics and CCI professionals. The section further explores the implications of a London- and South East-centric CCI sector on CCI-HEI research engagement, and considers the role of universities in the regionalisation of the CCIs.

The report includes anonymised quotations from both academic and industry informants, who are identified only by their institution and their CCI subsector respectively.

1.3 Method

A combined 45 interviews were completed with 46 academics and professionals from CCI organisations. Academic informants were identified through university faculty, department, and/or school websites, with staff profiles used to deduce relevant sector engagement experience. CCI organisations were contacted where their websites detailed evidence of engagement with academics and universities. Snowballing techniques were also used, with informants recommending further individuals or organisations with whom they had engaged. The interviews were conducted online or via telephone between February and March 2021.

In total, 26 academic informants contributed to this report. The academics were employed across the Yorkshire and Humber and Greater Manchester regions, specifically:

University	Region	Number
The University of Leeds	Yorkshire and Humber	1
The University of York	Yorkshire and Humber	3
The University of Sheffield	Yorkshire and Humber	3
Leeds Beckett University	Yorkshire and Humber	1
The University of Manchester	Greater Manchester	13
Man Metropolitan University	Greater Manchester	3
The University of Salford	Greater Manchester	2
Total		26

Combined, the academics interviewed have engaged or partnered with organisations across the breadth of the CCIs, including: Theatre & Performance; Gaming; Film & TV; Museums & Galleries; Architecture; Visual Arts; Publishing; and Heritage.

In addition, 20 CCI workers were interviewed. These include professionals employed across the breadth of CCI subsectors, specifically:

CCI Subsector	Frequency
Gaming	1
Theatre, Performance & Music	5
Visual Arts	2
Film, TV & Media Arts	3
Museums and Galleries	2
Literature Festivals & Community Arts	3
Government Agency & Arts Consultancies	4
Total	20

These industry informants represent a mix of large companies and National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), as well as micro-companies and SMEs. Geographically, these sector participants were working at organisations based in Yorkshire and North East (n=5), North West (n=10), the South East (n=4), and the Midlands (n=1).

2. Defining Research Engagement

Research engagement is complex and happens in a variety of different ways, and academic informants were keen to draw distinctions between different models of research engagement. This section defines the various forms of engagement between HEIs and CCIs: Business Engagement (BE), Knowledge Exchange (KE), Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), collaboration labs, and collaborative PhDs.

To develop an engagement project, informants suggested using the seven Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) perspectives to help determine the type of collaboration:

"Is it a research partnership? Is it a KTP? Is it a set of CPD work? Is it commercialisation? Is it public engagement? So I use those KEF perspectives as a way of understanding and trying to map what the outcomes of a project might be. Or when we're designing it, what it might look like."

(HEI/BE informant, MMU)

'Business engagement' and 'knowledge exchange' as terms are often used interchangeably, yet the meanings remain quite different. Business Engagement (BE) involves any value-added activities linked to a partnership with non-academic organisations, including business as well as public- and third-sector organisations. Knowledge Exchange (KE) features a two-way flow of information and incorporates activity such as Impact Acceleration Accounts. These enable partnerships whose key component is the exchange of information (e.g. delivery of workshops).

Knowledge exchange, then, recognises that value-adding opportunities exist on both sides in such a partnership. Business engagement informants recognise knowledge exchange as the reciprocal transfers of value between HEI and non-HEI partners:

"Knowledge exchange is a much better term, because we're talking about [how] we're learning from the world outside of academia, as well as them learning from us. It's not a one-way flow..."

(BE Informant, University of Manchester)

One example of KE, and a key mechanism for engagement beyond the academy, are Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs). As a government funding scheme, a KTP seeks to enhance business performance

and productivity. This is a knowledge-based partnership involving graduate or post-doctoral researchers to work full-time within a business, and featuring regular academic supervision from one or more established academics. The aim is to apply and embed knowledge, technology, or techniques.

"KTPs are a very specific thing where the knowledge exists, but not in this particular business, and we [help] them apply it within their business."

So that is knowledge transfer."

(BE Informant, University of Manchester)

Research Councils fund KTPs for specific and impactful projects that leverage and commercialise academic expertise:

"I said we should do a Knowledge Transfer Partnership, and we applied and we got the KTP through the AHRC. The major output of that KTP was basically getting the product off the ground by leveraging the expertise that we gave."

(Academic Informant, University of York)

Some academic informants struggled with the question of how business engagement differed from consultancy. Defining research engagement in this space involved reflecting upon various relational dynamics, such as funding, impact, and knowledge transfer:

"Business engagement for me is a bit of an unknown entity. Is it research that's more obviously monetized? Is it more of a consultancy style thing? Is it impact? Is it all of those things?"

(Academic Informant, University of Sheffield)

Similar comparisons between academic 'research' as opposed to 'consultancy' were often highlighted, with distinctions being drawn between the structure and tempo of each:

"The project was basically to offer a kind of consultancy, but the kind of consultancy that the university might be able to offer. So rather than parachuting in and having an immediate effect, universities are very good at longer-term relationships and longer-term activities."

(Academic Informant, University of Leeds)

Further reflecting upon the temporal differences between what university-based researchers offer as compared to

consultancy firms, an industry participant agreed that:

“Who we commission really depends on what we’re commissioning. Sometimes we have quite short turnaround times, and that can prohibit universities from bidding because of the processes they need to go through internally.”

(Industry Informant, Film & TV Sector)

The incapacity of academics to be responsive to research opportunities with short turnaround times was positioned as being particularly detrimental to research regarding emergent issues. The impacts of COVID-19 on the CCIs and the need for more responsive insights was used as an exemplar of an issue requiring research engagement with more urgency than universities are often able to facilitate. According to both academic and industry informants, university research engagement is defined as better suited to longer-term and more sustained partnerships, although smaller-scale engagement with individual academics is less constrained.

Beyond issues and challenges related to time and responsiveness, industry often recognised academic research as being robust and evidentially sound. For those CCI organisations who commission research often, the reputation of academic research as being comprehensive and considered underpins the knowledge created:

“The research might have gone to a consultancy, but I don’t think it would have been anywhere near as robust or as water-tight. And I don’t think it would have had the same response from some of the bigger companies in the industry who require that level of certainty.” (Industry Informant, Games Sector)

2.1 Three Models of Research Engagement

Three distinct models of research engagement emerge, each one having particular dynamics, as suggested by an academic informant:

“I’ve been involved in various projects which have included research ‘about’ the creative industries. There were other projects which were researching ‘with’ or ‘for’ creative companies which involved a lot more interaction and engagement, because they would partner throughout, rather than just allowing access.” (Academic Informant, University of York)

The three models of research engagement, then, are

driven essentially by their function or purpose, broadly characterised as being either academic, applied, or collaborative. In larger and more multifaceted partnerships, engagement might feature one or more of these functions over time, for example, an applied project might also include an academic study.

Research Engagement about:

An academic-led model of research engagement wherein a researcher explores a topic of interest concerning but not involving a non-academic partner or partners. Although industrial partners may provide access (e.g. to staff for interviews), they do not shape the underlying research project. Outputs tend to be publications for academic audiences.

Research Engagement for:

A model of applied academic research, usually in response to a company-led brief or commission. Often focussed on understanding a specific problem or area of interest, outputs and deliverables are tailored to the needs of the partner organisation(s) and its audience(s) first and foremost.

Research Engagement with:

Collaborative throughout, academic and industry partners are mutually involved in some or all of the design, development, and delivery. The aims and objectives will be negotiated and co-produced, and close contact will be kept throughout by stakeholders who co-manage the engagement. Deliverables may be diverse, including outputs for both academic and non-academic audiences.

2.2 Collaboration Labs and Collaborative PhDs

‘Collaboration labs’ represent another form of engagement that features pairings of post-graduate researchers (PGRs) and early career researchers (ECRs) with industry. PGRs/ECRs take an active role on a mutually devised project; these represent more engaged forms of placement in which the collaboration lab brokers the arrangement and absorbs the challenges, more so than either the HEI institution or the CCI partner.

“REALab was really shifting the conversation and talking about PhD researchers as junior consultants.... And this is the reason why the programme is successful with partners, because [they absorb] all the burden.”

(Academic Informant, The University of Manchester)

Collaboration labs were seen as offering in-roads into potential employment outside of academia in an increasingly competitive job market, one in which graduating ECRs/PGRs may find little opportunity in their fields in a post-Austerity, post-Brexit, post-Covid environment.

"The need for me to think about a career outside academia was one of the reasons I decided to apply to the [Collaboration Labs] scheme actually! I felt that the scheme was an excellent avenue to develop the 'impact' and 'outreach' side of my research, while also developing skills and networks outside academia."

(ECR Informant, The University of Manchester)

Another value-adding partnership model took the form of collaborative PhDs. However, even for CCI organisations experienced at working with universities, collaborative PhDs can be time consuming and problematic to establish. Even where values align (e.g. both organisations are interested in generating significant new contributions to knowledge), structuring and financing collaborative engagement around a PhD remains complicated:

"One area I really wanted to push, and it did take me quite a long time, was collaborative PhDs. I wanted to really develop something that was actually creating quite significant new knowledge around the areas that my organisation is really concerned with."

(Industry Informant, Visual Arts)

Whilst time consuming, the process of establishing new collaborative PhDs does benefit from existing relationships of other kinds:

"Two collaborative PhDs came from a relationship we had with the university department already through some teaching work. We talked a lot about how it would be great if we could do some kind of collaborative project like a PhD together, and then we had to wait about three years before we found the right funding."

(Industry Informant, Visual Arts)

Collaborative PhDs feature sustained and prolonged engagement, which can be better suited to certain types of knowledge generation for CCIs. This reflects earlier findings regarding the value of HEIs vs consultancies, and further explores the differences between collaborative PhDs and shorter-term academic engagement. The depth and time of engagement is a real differentiator in terms of the dynamics and value of collaborative PhDs as a particular form of HEI-engagement models:

"A collaborative PhD is a more involved and partnered thing than just having an academic come and do a research project in three months, and then leaving again. That greater level of engagement is interesting."

(Industry Informant, Visual Arts)

3. Funding and Infrastructure

3.1 Direct Funding

Funding for research engagement is a key mitigating or enabling factor in support of engagement partnerships, yet it is often problematic. Issues range from a lack of funding overall and a lack of substantive funding in specific arenas. This was especially true for interdisciplinary collaborative work.

“I have had conversations with a bunch of interesting people working in a bunch of interesting organisations, but the opportunities for actually doing much work together are quite limited because no one’s got any money.”
(Academic Informant, University of Sheffield)

This represents a challenge, particularly for small CCI organisations, because universities charge a lot for academic contributions to externally funded research projects:

“If you look at how much universities charge for our time to work on projects... I notionally cost something like £700 a day. I do not get paid that, but that’s how much we notionally cost. And so if you’re working with a small organisation ... that’s going to be way beyond their budget.”
(Academic Informant, University of Sheffield)

Unlike many consultancies working into the CCIs, universities are large and complex institutions, and the associated bureaucracy is often implicated when it comes to costing engagement activity:

“A consultancy firm can parachute in and slot straight into doing what’s required. A university does require more meetings, more discussion, and so we’ll be more expensive for a small firm.”
(Academic Informant, University of Leeds)

The cost implications of working with universities often leads to the integral and controlling role of research councils as facilitators and crucial intermediaries of research engagement in this space:

“Travelling for meetings, coordinating events – that’s expensive. If you can get a Research Council (RC) to pay for it, then that makes your life a lot easier.”
(Academic Informant, University of Sheffield)

There is limited evidence of funding coming directly from CCI organisations, but rather from various Research Councils or other funding intermediaries:

“I don’t recall funding coming from the partner organisation. Cold hard cash coming in? No. It’s like Research Council funding? Maybe. National Lottery Heritage funding? Maybe. Arts Council funding? Maybe.” (Academic Informant, University of Sheffield)

Where CCIs are publicly funded national portfolio organisations (NPOs), the intermediary role of RCs in brokering and funding research engagement is potentially one of the factors that enable research engagement to take place. For example, the AHRC may simultaneously fund the CCI organisation and may also be looking to fund research that would benefit from the organisation’s participation, as described by an academic informant:

“I was funded by the AHRC. The Arts Council wanted me to do this research, and the organisations may have felt some pressure, even though I made it really clear that wasn’t the case, they may have felt like they were under some pressure to do it.”
(Academic Informant, University of Sheffield)

CCI organisations sometimes expect universities to be forthcoming with funding for engaged research, yet despite the efforts of social sciences researchers, there is often insufficient capital to draw upon:

“People approach us and they’re expecting us to put in cash, and I’ve really had to let people down because I just couldn’t leverage any financial support. When there’s no money on offer, nothing happens, and everything just fades away.”
(Academic Informant, University of Sheffield)

3.2 Business Engagement Funding Support

University BE divisions can facilitate funding opportunities for academics, whilst not developing funding bids directly. The range of funding mechanisms available through BE units may vary from institution to institution. BE teams often seek out funding from various sources, and trying to leverage funding directly from CCI businesses, which can

in turn lead to leveraging larger pots of funding from RCs.

"Most of what we're trying to do is to bring in either funding directly from businesses, or to work with businesses to improve our chances of getting other funding--Research Council funding pots--or access those funding pots that require these partnerships to get to."

(BE Informant, The University of Manchester)

Where academic time and resources are limited, Impact Acceleration Accounts (IAAs) can prove valuable for researchers as they enable access to smaller pots of funding already held by the BE team:

"Because they give us the money in a lump sum from the Research Council and we administer it, it doesn't need a bid directly.... The whole process of going directly to the Research Council for 20,000 pounds--no one could be bothered."

(BE Informant, The University of Manchester)

Even where funding is available through IAAs/RCs, issues of academic time and availability remain challenging.

This can result in potential barriers to responding affirmatively to engagement opportunities arising through university BE teams.

"Sometimes it's the timescale. I can have an academic that says, 'This is really interesting, and I'd like to do it, but I don't have any capacity for the next six months'. And to the partner organisation that's too long to wait.... So for those reasons, it often doesn't go anywhere."

(BE Informant, The University of Manchester)

3.3 In-Kind Support

Whilst there is limited evidence of CCI organisations directly funding research engagement by paying for academic time, for instance, informants often reflected upon the important role of in-kind support in HEI-CCI partnerships:

"There's a lot of in-kind support. So with one project we gave the creative industries partners some money, but they also matched that with their own time. So we didn't get cash from them, but we got access, and resources, and so on."

(Academic Informant, University of York)

In particular for smaller CCI organisations who are likely to have greater budgetary restrictions, offering staff time or access to their facilities represents a significant

contribution:

"Although organisations don't directly fund the research, I would say that they fund it through staff time and through their involvement."

(Academic Informant, University of Leeds)

However, in-kind support is not always a positive thing, but can be exploitative on the part of the universities, as an industry informant reflects:

"Universities are very happy to talk to me about doing a workshop for free and spending the afternoon talking to their students about our experience. They're not as good at saying that the funding they have can also include some of our time or our organisation's time. I think that's my biggest problem with trying to work with universities."

(Industry Informant, Visual Arts)

3.4 Funding Challenges and Academic Employment

Academic informants reflected on various challenges related to funding as part of wider structural issues in HEIs. Precarious contracts meant that academic teams sometimes struggled to locate sufficient numbers of research staff to undertake the work even after funding was in place.

"If we want to be able to respond quickly to research projects, we've got to have people in place who are actually able to work for them... There have been many instances in universities of them simply not being able to do the work because ... there's no researcher to work on it.... We know that there's an issue with the culture around how we hire."

(Academic informant, The University of Manchester)

To address this issue, the academic worked with IT Services on the creation of a team of researchers on permanent contracts, who move from externally funded grant project to grant project, recovering the costs against the research proposals. This simultaneously provided academics with more secure employment and a more consistent research team, retained talent within the HEI, and enabled responsive staffing for future research grants when they are awarded.

In addition to structural issues in terms of employment practices, academic informants also highlighted issues regarding external funding schemes that may be biased towards Russell Group universities. However, there is some

evidence that this culture may be changing:

“UKRI are starting to try lighter-touch applications ..., starting to look at things like masking names. At the moment, you [talk] about your fabulous track record and the institution where you work and how brilliant that institution is... [For researchers] not at well-funded, high-profile institutions, it’s so much harder for them.

(Academic informant, The University of Manchester)

Academics shared concerns regarding bureaucracy inherent in current funding schemes which require excessive staff time and resources for grant applications that frequently will not be funded. The newly launched Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA), led by scientists, will support the funding of transformational science and technology at speed. This in part seeks to address the issue:

“Basically, [ARIA is] high risk, high return, start quickly, fail fast... If it looks as if it’s not working, then you pull those resources out. This causes so many problems for the university model in terms of funding. But it does have the potential to be really useful.”

(Academic informant, The University of Manchester)

4. Regionality

4.1 Working in and/or Beyond the Region

Both academic and industry informants have identified that personal relationships are often crucial for establishing impactful research partnerships. In addition, the role of networking, both at industry events and also more socially, has been reflected upon as a key part of developing trust between researchers and CCI organisations. As a result, it is important to consider the role of geography in both establishing and sustaining HEI-CCI research engagements. Indeed, for some academics, forging new research partnerships with, for, or about the CCIs was in part contingent upon geographic proximity:

“So I’ve worked a lot in the North East, because I lived there. But also because it wasn’t as easy to build contacts outside of the local or regional area.”
(Academic Informant, University of York)

Much has been published about the spatial dynamics of the CCIs, how they are embedded and clustered in cities, and the relational bonds between individuals and firms within a region. Both academic and industry informants suggested that HEI-CCI engagement required sensitivity to these social, cultural, and spatial dynamics, and that efforts to build relationships with potential partners often included traversal into the spatial milieu of the CCIs:

“A lot has been down to proximity... This is the whole ‘Creative City’ rhetoric in action really isn’t it ... somewhere that you can meet somebody for a coffee, that is five minutes away from their office, and from that builds a relationship.”
(Academic Informant, University of York)

However, whilst the role of networking and personal relationships remained constant, it wasn’t always the case that social sciences researchers were able to engage with CCI organisations in the locality of their university. Academic informants reported that CCI engagement tended to skew either towards London and the South East, or towards other major urban centres:

“I feel quite bad about this, but I don’t really work locally. Most of the organisation’s I’ve talked about are in London. And the ones that aren’t in London are in Edinburgh.”
(Academic Informant, University of Sheffield)

Owing to the uneven geography of the CCIs, with more than 40% of the UK’s CCI employment and business activity being in London, it is perhaps not surprising that CCI-HEI engagement appears to be similarly skewed. However, academic informants recognised that universities might themselves be important stakeholders in the regionalisation of the CCIs:

“There have been lots of institutional mechanisms that try to allow universities across the north to collaborate more. You could make an argument that universities might be part of the infrastructural conditions that allow the Creative Industries to grow more in the North.”
(Academic Informant, University of York)

As key providers of CCI-related training and therefore crucial stakeholders in talent pipelines for the sectors, the clustering of CCI employment and activity in university cities across the regions is noteworthy. In addition, universities are crucial partners in ongoing CCI-related R&D (e.g. the UKRI Creative Industries Clusters Programme) that is catalysing CCI sector growth through innovation in regional clusters across the UK. Through such programmes, CCI-HEI research engagement in the regions is also growing, and increased partnerships between social sciences researchers and CCI organisations outside of London and South East seems likely.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Overview and Key Findings

This report explores the models and dynamics of research engagement between CCI organisations and social sciences academics based in universities across the Yorkshire and Humber and Greater Manchester regions. Drawing on qualitative data captured through interviews with researchers and CCI sector professionals, it evidences the following:

Firstly, the report arrives at three definitions of CCI-HEI research engagement. Namely, the distinctions between researching about, for, and with industry partners are detailed and clarified. Research engagement about the CCIs is a model of academic-led research, in which a researcher explores a topic of interest concerning but not involving a non-academic partner. Research engagement for the CCIs is more applied, and usually responds to a company-led brief to understand a specific issue. And finally research engagement with defines partnerships which are more collaborative throughout, wherein academic and industry partners co-design and co-develop research aims and objectives.

Both academic and industry informants found that CCI-HEI collaborative PhDs and collaboration labs fostered reciprocally valuable processes and outcomes. Collaborative PhDs enable long-term and sustained relationships based upon high-level knowledge exchange, which is useful for CCI and HEI partners both within and beyond the remit of the PhD itself. Collaboration labs allow ECRs/PGRs to enhance their capacity for impactful industry engagement. This often enables ECRs/PGRs to more fully exploit knowledge-based research and commercialisation for and with industry, with potential gains for both individuals and institutions. Experience of working closely with industry through either collaborative PhDs or collaboration labs may also prepare ECRs/PGRs for employment opportunities beyond academia.

This report considers various issues, challenges, and opportunities related to the funding of CCI-HEI research engagement. In exploring direct funding for research engagement, it was found that BE teams can offer funding support (through schemes such as Impact Acceleration Accounts), providing seed funding that may lead to larger funding opportunities and sector

engagements in future. Additionally, schemes like ARIA may prove to be effectual in minimising bureaucracies that currently hamper applications for research funding.

The role of in-kind support was also considered, where staff time or access to facilities serves as a key way in which CCI organisations are often able to support research partnerships. Importantly, however, and in particular for smaller CCI organisations, in-kind support as well as direct funding is often challenging to leverage. For CCI SMEs, universities often need to be more forthcoming with access to funding and resources in order to make engagement possible.

The important role of university BE teams as key links to funding and funding intermediaries are detailed, with further assistance and utilisation of BE teams evidenced as having potential to expand CCI-HEI research engagement. Various systemic issues relating to academic employment practices are also reflected upon, and evidenced as negatively affecting opportunity uptake, thereby limiting the growth and development of CCI-HEI partnerships.

And finally, the report reflects upon various geographic issues which impact upon CCI-HEI research engagement. In considering the wider geographic dynamics of the CCIs, and the importance of CCI-HEI relationship building for effective engagement, this report evidences the role of location and proximity for research partnerships. The section further evidences the implications of a London- and South East-centric CCI sector on CCI-HEI research engagement, and ultimately reflects upon the potential role of universities in the regionalisation of the CCIs and of CCI-related research.

5.2 Limitations and Further Study

Whilst this report draws on insights from engagement and partnership experiences from across the breadth of the CCIs and from multiple HEIs, it is important to resist conclusions which reduce the sectors to being homogenous. Both the CCIs and HEIs are diverse in type, range, and size, and although often spoken about here in more collective terms, it is important to note that more nuanced exploration regarding the differences between

different CCI subsectors and between universities is merited.

In addition, it is important to note that partnerships also exist beyond the CCI-HEI model explored here. Indeed, they might also include government agencies, local councils, and third-sector organisations. Informants suggested the notion of 'successful communities' to capture models of wider collaboration involving cross-sector partnerships:

"I learned when I was at the Arts Council that successful communities—with what I might call vibrant cultural scenes to the benefit of their citizens, and to the benefit of the local economy—were based on successful local partnerships... Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, it's been there for 20 years, is local business, higher education, arts and cultural organisations, local council..."
(CCI Informant, Film/TV Sector)

It is important to note also that whilst CCI-HEI engagement projects and funding have been considered here in general terms, there has been limited scope or opportunity to delve deeper into a more specific exploration of precisely what types of engagement are typically being funded and by whom. In respect of this, both academic and industry informants noted insufficient funding at university and RC levels to support collaborative CCI-HEI projects, and that RC funding instead is often directed at network building rather than the funding of collaboration itself:

"Often [RCs] will fund a network to encourage something, but it won't actually fund the thing itself... But you look at the website, and 'Well, where's the 2 million pounds? What's it for?' It's just to make a website talking about the idea of collaboration ... without actually doing any, and then people [still] have to find the money to do the collaboration."
(CCI Informant, Gallery Sector)

Lastly, this report draws on limited evidence of research commercialisation with regard to CCI-HEI engagements involving social sciences researchers. Where commercialisation represents the transformation of academic research and knowledge through application into tangible business opportunities, further exploration to fully expose and evidence such cases is warranted. For example, the role of innovation labs, which specialise in working with academics to identify research with the

potential to 'create value', falls beyond the scope of this project, but may be an important additional aspect of CCI-HEI engagement.

Ultimately, for all of its conclusions and findings relating to multiple dynamics of CCI-HEI research engagement, this report has also opened up various avenues worthy of wider and deeper consideration.

About Aspect

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research.

Supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund, Aspect members sit at the epicentre of discovery, imagination and progress in the social sciences. We draw together pioneering academics with innovative industry leaders to tackle the most complex societal challenges of our time.

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