KITE: THE CENTRE FOR KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY AND ENTERPRISE

PROFESSOR ROB WILSON

In 2006, under the leadership of David Charles, Newcastle University established the Centre for Knowledge, Innovation, Technology and Enterprise (KITE) - bringing together Newcastle University Business School’s emerging academic research groups in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Since then KITE has gone on to:
• Generate over £6 million of research income
• Engage in over 100 research projects
• Establish long-term relationships in the worlds of policy and practice
• Lead to the development of 3 Master’s programmes – seeing over 1000 students graduate from the collective programmes

Over the past decade KITE’s membership has included many alumni including over 20 PhD students – a number of whom have gone on to have successful careers in academia across the world. Many of the Centre’s previous members remain visiting academics of the School and KITE, notably: Ian McGoughin (Monash University, Australia); Simon Down and Chris Ivory (Anglia Ruskin University); Sue Baines (Manchester Metropolitan University), David Charles (University of Lincoln), Feng Li (CASS Business School) and James Comford (University of East Anglia).

Today, the Centre comprises of members from within the Business School, together with associates from across Newcastle University and visiting staff from a range of national and international organisations.

The Innovation Research group led by Neil Alderman - including the e-business area led by Savvas Papagarinis hotels together academics from within the Business School with an interest in innovation, seeking to enhance collaboration and promote innovation findings to a wide audience, both regionally and beyond.

The Public and Social Innovation group led by Rob Wilson brings together people in the Business School, across Newcastle University and beyond with an interest in the development of thinking and practice in community and public service contexts.

KITE’s objectives are to:
• Drive Knowledge Exchange and collaboration between practitioners and academia in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship
• Understand and shape innovation and entrepreneurship through high quality, impactful research and action
• Support the development of more effective socio-technical systems in response to complex business and societal challenges
• Facilitate critical debate and theory development within Newcastle University in the areas of innovation and enterprise

Looking to the future – KITE will continue to lead the way in research of innovation, entrepreneurship, information systems management and collaboration/partnership. Working with regional, national and international businesses and policy makers we will facilitate and support organisations in the modern world through creative academic thinking.

Newcastle University, along with others in the North East and around the UK, is making significant investment in the innovation agenda. Such initiatives can only succeed if we work in partnership.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR IMPACT

Academics from KITE have been involved in over 100 research projects over the past decade, and have helped to influence thinking in business, government and third sector bodies on a regional, national and global scale.

KITE members contributed three Impact Case Studies for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

The University offers a range of funding vehicles for collaboration with industry and civic society including ESRC Impact Fund and Innovate UK funded Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs). KITE has a strong track record in programmes of engaged research and development.

The following gives an overview of just a handful of projects that have been led by members of the KITE Research Centre:

SITUATING SMALL BUSINESS REGULATION: HOW SMALL FIRMS UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO REGULATION (REBEL)

From members of the KITE team, in collaboration with a team from De Montfort University, explored how small firms understand and respond to different forms of regulation in a range of industries and contrasting regional contexts. The research, which was funded by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC), analysed the temporal and spatial dynamics of small firm regulatory behaviour.

The team worked intensively with twelve high-growth firms from the North East region and Midlands in the environmental services, bio-pharma, media and security sectors, investigating how firms actually deal with regulation on a daily basis.

The project findings continue to attract interest, particularly from policy makers such as the BREO, HSE and the Environment Agency who are seeking to respond to the government’s Red Tape Challenge by creating better regulation.

Project led by Dr Paul Richter, Professor Simon Down, Professor Jane Pollard

PROJECT MANAGEMENT NETWORKING: THE NORTHERN BUSINESS DISTRICT (PROMINC)

As part the Innovative Manufacturing Initiative, Learning across Business Sectors programme, the ‘Complex’ project aimed to understand the new requirements long-term service-led projects posed for large businesses and how best they could obtain the necessary capabilities to deliver and manage complex, long-term projects. The research project ran for 18 months and was jointly funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and Economic, and Social Research Council (ESRC). It involved an interdisciplinary team of management, engineering and regional development scholars and was established through a collaboration with three major organisations: Clarke Chapman, then part of the Materials Handling Division of Rolls Royce, Alstom Transport, and Northumbrian Water.

The research delivered a number of key themes for management:
• The importance of design for maintainability
• The issue of integration
• Project risk
• The importance of a shared ‘vision’ or understanding about a project.


The project also led to an invitation for the team to participate in the EPSRC Rethinking Project Management Network and the hosting of one the network meetings in Newcastle. The impact of the project continues to be seen today and was the topic of a series of workshops - ‘Making Projects Critical’ - held at Newcastle University Business School in early 2016.

Project led by Dr Neil Alderman and Professor Chris Ivory

REGULATION (REBEL)

Regulation shouldn’t be seen as only a burden; it can be a core competency of a professionally managed business that adds real value” Professor Simon Down, KITE Visiting Professor

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COMPLEX PROJECTS

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SUB-SEA AND OFFSHORE TECHNOLOGY

Dr Fiona Whitehurst, a member of KITE since its inception, has been involved in research over the last decade that has increased the understanding of the subsea cluster in North East England. Subsea technology is used in operations from seabed to surface, often at extreme depths and hostile environments, with applications across oil and gas; defence, wave, tidal and offshore wind energy; underwater mining; and ocean science.

Traditional approaches to mapping regional clusters tend to prove ineffective in identifying those based on emerging sets of technologies and markets. In the case of subsea and offshore technology, many regional firms were not conscious of the clusters they were part of, but subsequently formed a cluster organisation, Subsea North East.

ESRC Business Engagement funding supported a project with Subsea North East to identify ways for firms to collaborate in promoting the subsea sector to young people and shaping skills provision to their needs. This led to a further project, funded by the Regional Development Agency, which saw Newcastle College and the University develop two specialist subsea degrees with industry.

Research by KITE to inform the North East LEP’s smart specialisation strategy also means that they recognise subsea as East LEP’s smart specialisation strategy.

Project led by Dr Fiona Whitehurst

FRAMWORK FOR MULTI-AGENCY ENVIRONMENTS (FAME)

FAME is a Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) National e-Government project which was specifically aimed at supporting the transformation of multi-agency or partnership working in local government in order to provide better public services, with a particular emphasis on information sharing.

The project, which ran over four years, involved a set of English local authorities and systems suppliers developing and deploying multi-agency information systems across the areas of health, care and social welfare. Led by Professor Rob Wilson, Director of KITE, developed a Generic Framework for Multi-agency working and the learning and Evaluation work streams.

The framework adopted a whole systems approach to the problem of multi-agency and includes guidance on the legal duties and powers underpinning the services, information sharing, information system infrastructure, multi-agency governance and sustainability. Many of the concepts that were introduced in this seminal project have later been adopted in Digital Government circles. The toolkit has also been used by a number of local authority areas and major charities. Further information can be found at: www.fame-uk.org

Project led by Professor Rob Wilson

JOINING-UP INFORMATION IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The challenge of creating better information sharing between health and social care has been a long standing interest of the members of the KITE.

A number of projects have sought to improve the process of joining-up organisations and those working with people with a range of health and social care issues. Research in this area was kick-started by Mike Martin and Nick Booth’s involvement in the Durham and Darlington Electronic Health Record project in collaboration with then local Strategic Health Authority, which was part of the ERDF Programme at the turn of the Century.

One of the outcomes of this piece of research was the development and evaluation of a rapid prototype demonstration of a shared electronic patient record and the environment in which it operated. This was closely followed by Rob Wilson’s and Mike Martin’s involvement in the Social Care Record demonstration programme in collaboration with Newcastle City Council (2002-03) which led to system developments, which are still in use today in Newcastle and beyond.

The work has continued into KITE through a range of projects in information sharing hubs in health and the role of marketplaces and personalisation of social care. It has not only produced research which challenges the very concept of a shared care record and integration but also provides an approach which is clinically, managerially, socially and ethically appropriate and effective.

Our research has consistently found that the shared record is much more constructively seen as the outcome, and beneficial side effect, of the way other clinical messaging and transaction services were supported and delivered. This work continues through KITE members involvement in the Digital Economy Research Centre and Connected Health Cities programmes.

Project led by Professor Mike Martin, Professor Rob Wilson and Dr Nick Booth

SYNOPSIS

Professor Sapsed identifies Newcastle as a city with the potential to develop as a creative-digital-IT cluster, a potential that was recognised in Newcastle’s participation in the recent European Union-funded, international Creative Cities Challenge. He is therefore keen to bring his experience of developing ways for businesses and organisations in the creative and digital sectors in Brighton to work more closely together to benefit Newcastle.

In his previous work, Professor Sapsed and the Brighton Fuse team mapped out the expansive Brighton and Hove creative digital network, which helped local digital clusters develop and work together to share experience. The project helped also changed the way the Government accounts for creative industries, by providing them with detailed insights into the skills and activities of technological or creative workers in Brighton and Hove.

In mapping these networks, Professor Sapsed was also able to identify barriers faced by the creative industries in Brighton and Hove. This included challenges such as a lack of office space, which was identified as a key issue, and the difficulty to easily access talent. Professor Sapsed hopes that by bringing these methods to the North East he will be able to map the creative sector in the same way, increasing connectivity and establishing a collective of organisations across the North East that is capable of raising the issues faced by the sector with policy makers and identifying ways to solve them.

Creative Fuse North East could go beyond the work already being done in Brighton and Hove by developing the varied skill sets present in the creative industries. Professor Sapsed comments: “Businesses are now becoming super-fused, meaning they are combining skill sets in order to provide a more complete service, and we need to ensure that our creative industry is equipped to deal with this.”

Professor Sapsed said it was the chance to work with other departments, including arts and computing, in order to find different ways to solve the problems faced by the creative industries that really drew him towards involvement in KITE. The opportunity to network internationally through Newcastle University Business School’s global links also attracted him, and he hopes that the Creative Fuse North East project will lead to a more coordinated international approach to technology with exchange programmes allowing students, researchers and the workforce to further share skills and experiences.

The North East has the opportunity to become a beacon for creative industries, and it is hoped that the better connectivity established by the Creative Fuse North East project will contribute to this positioning.

Research Projects and Partnerships

Super-fusing the North East

Dr Jonathan Sapsed
The way in which charities and public services have been funded and managed has recently come under harsh scrutiny. With high profile charity Kid’s Company coming under fire for alleged financial mismanagement and NHS trusts constantly being under scrutiny when it comes to spending, serious questions have been raised about the way in which charities and public services access and manage funding, so that they achieve maximum value for their beneficiaries. As a former chief executive of a charity, Dr Toby Lowe knows more than most about the challenges charities and public service managers the issue comes up with a new framework for social intervention, where service evaluation is focussed on improving practice rather than ‘demonstrating impact’. Dr Lowe’s model is based on establishing a ‘positive error culture’, where admitting to not knowing, or doing something wrong, is considered a positive, learning experience. Through KITE’s networks and his own personal connections, Dr Lowe has worked with social services, sections of the NHS and a variety of different charities in order to show how this attitude improves practice, rather than striving to produce good-looking data to help meet spurious ‘outcomes’ targets.

What attracted Dr Lowe to work with KITE is that he has been able to mix conceptual analysis with work from the ground up. He explains: “KITE has given me the freedom to do two things – to undertake new conceptual analysis which brings complexity theory into performance management and to experiment with building a new a model in conjunction with the organisations which hopefully will eventually adopt it.” Through KITE’s established international networks, Dr Lowe will be speaking about his research in Hong Kong this year. It is Dr Lowe’s hope that KITE will provide the launch pad for a 3-4 year project where he can develop his research even further so as to influence practice across the charity and social services sector as a whole, beyond the specific organisations he has already worked with.

Dr Lowe’s work has also been featured as a Little Henesy in Public Policy, part of a seminar series set up by KITE to provide a platform for those whose ideas run counter to current policy orthodoxies. This has been particularly relevant to Dr Lowe’s project as his current research suggests that the commonly accepted way in which funding is accessed by charities is fundamentally incorrect. In his seminar, entitled “Is payment by results doomed to fail?”, Dr Lowe was able to openly debate with other academics as well as charities and public service managers the issue of performance measurement in the form of targets and whether outcomes-based systems are inherently flawed.

The social challenges we are faced with are getting increasingly complex, and the resources to meet those challenges are becoming more scarce. Dr Lowe hopes that his work helps those interested in improving the performance of social interventions to respond more effectively to this complexity, improve the lives of those needing help, and get better value for money.

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**HOW KITE BECAME A VALUABLE PARTNER IN THE EVOLUTION OF INFORMATION SHARING IN PUBLIC SERVICES**

**STEPHEN CURTIS, DIRECTOR FOR THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR INFORMATION SHARING**

Collaborations between academic and non-academic bodies are increasingly important, especially in the development of public policy. Academic institutions can provide a depth of knowledge to enhance the everyday know-how that a public servant might bring. This combination of deep thinking and practical experience is central to the valuable relationship that exists between the Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing and the Centre for Knowledge, Innovation, Technology and Enterprise at Newcastle University Business School.

It was while the now Director for the Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing, Stephen Curtis, was working as part of the Improving Information and Management (IISaM) initiative that he began to develop the connection with KITE, as he and his team sought out academic and non-academic partners to provide experience beyond theory to the world of policy implementation, and exposure to the barriers that exist when putting ideas into practice.

Stephen believes that developing a strong relationship between institutions inside and outside academia is an iterative process, noting that as the KITE academics gain more insight into the world of public services, the contribution they make to Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing is growing. But he is clear that a core contributing factor to the success of the partnership is the willingness of the team from KITE to engage with the world of public policy.

He comments: “Within public services, the nature of information sharing means that while you can have an idea, for example use of a particular database, understanding how the people who will implement that idea work is critical to making its application successful. Having a background in both academic research and the third sector means the KITE team have that understanding, and appreciate that relationship building is key to removing some of the main barriers we face when encouraging information sharing.”

The true value of information sharing is only just starting to be appreciated within public services, but it is vitally important to bring about better outcomes for people and could allow local authorities to save vast sums of money.

Stephen concludes: “There will always be several factors that influence whether two organisations share information or not. The partnership the Centre has with KITE allows the thinking behind our work to come from multiple disciplines within the academic community: law, psychology, data-recording, policy and so on. Together we can create more structured and informed thinking, which helps the process of information sharing to evolve with greater credibility. A focus on this aspect of public service delivery has already led to more transparency and the creation of more efficient, effective, and in some cases safer services. KITE has been vital to the success story so far.”

The work I did at KITE looked at universities and disadvantaged communities, and sought to examine the ways in which universities could have a positive effect on those that are often seen as not benefiting from higher education. Moving beyond the usual debates on widening participation for disadvantaged students, this study focused instead on the communities those students came from and considered how universities situated in areas with significant deprivation can help to improve the conditions in those places.”

The research project found that although examples of community engagement were present in most universities, they tended to be driven by individuals and institutions struggling to engage disadvantaged communities. Professor Charles demonstrated that engagement worked well where it was developed through small learning communities.

Professor Charles says: “We showed that the most effective projects moved beyond the idea of a city for scientists, to a city in which science – including social science – is used to solve local problems, with universities and academics working in partnership with the community. Care to this is for effective governance of the Newcastle Science City initiative, and for the project to be viewed as an opportunity for partners to work together to co-produce useful knowledge.”

Since its inception, KITE has focused on the nature of the relationship between universities and their local and regional communities, something which is central to Newcastle University’s principle of being a ‘civic university’. Increasingly, governments expect universities to add value to local businesses and other organisations across a range of different areas. Professor David Charles was instrumental in establishing this principle at the heart of KITE.

Professor Charles has been researching universities and their links with businesses since the 1980s and while at Newcastle University he particularly focused on the links established at a regional level. This was the start of a series of related projects on the economic, social and cultural interactions of universities which Professor Charles conducted alongside broader work on regional innovation policy and urban and regional development as David Goldman Professor of Business Innovation in the Business School.

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As Newcastle University moves to the next phase of the Newcastle Science City project with the building of Science Central, Professor Charles’ research has once again come to the fore. While at KITE, he supervised a NESTA Fellowship held by Felicity Wray which examined the experiences of third phase science city projects around the world. Professor Charles says: “We showed that the most effective projects moved beyond the idea of a city for scientists, to a city in which science – including social science – is used to solve local problems, with universities and academics working in partnership with the community. Care to this is for effective governance of the Newcastle Science City initiative, and for the project to be viewed as an opportunity for partners to work together to co-produce useful knowledge.”

Professor Charles now holds the position of Deputy Head and Professor of Innovation and Strategic Management at Lincoln Business School, but he continues to shape KITE’s thinking on the civic purpose of universities through a visiting fellowship. This ongoing connection is important to Professor Charles. He comments: “KITE was established to undertake practical but theoretically informed research on innovation in its broadest sense. I strongly believe that it is this interaction of the technical and social which is central to the ways in which universities can address societal challenges.”

**PUTTING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF KITE**

**PROFESSOR DAVID CHARLES**

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**FIND OUT MORE:**

[ncl.ac.uk/kite](ncl.ac.uk/kite)  |  @kiteresearch
ARTS, BUSINESS & CREATIVITY (ABC) MA
The ABC MA programme was created by members of KITE in collaboration with colleagues from the School of Arts and Cultures and key stakeholders from the creative industries. It examines the theoretical aspects of creativity and the creative industries within their social, cultural, economic, political and, increasingly, international contexts. ABC was developed in response to the increasing demand for creativity in practice from strategists, managers, entrepreneurs, and government policy makers worldwide. Key decision-makers within business and government recognise the vital importance of the creative industries and the creative business sector in regeneration and the economic growth of regions and whole nations. There is a significant practical element to the course and the programme is delivered by members/associates of KITE, providing students with the experience of starting up an enterprise, acting as a consultant in a creative business and working with practitioners across the sector.

INNOVATION, CREATIVITY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP (ICE) MSC
The ICE MSC programme was developed by members of KITE to explore the strategies and business processes that promote innovation and creativity in today’s organisations, including the fundamentals of enterprise development and entrepreneurship. Employers are increasingly looking to recruit enterprising and creative individuals. This programme helps to produce a high calibre of graduates who aspire to strategic roles within the private and public sectors and who can lead these organisations through innovative change. ICE is delivered by KITE members and its associates and draws on the Centre’s expertise and creativity, including the fundamentals of enterprise development and entrepreneurship. Employers are increasingly looking to recruit enterprising and creative individuals. This programme helps to produce a high calibre of graduates who aspire to strategic roles within the private and public sectors and who can lead these organisations through innovative change. ICE is delivered by KITE members and its associates and draws on the Centre’s expertise and creativity, including the fundamentals of enterprise development and entrepreneurship.

KITE TIMELINE

2006
KITE Launch with Professor David Charles as Director
2006
Masters in Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise established

2007
FAME (Framework for Multi-agency environments) Project ends with launch of Readiness Assessment tool for supporting organisations practices in multi-agency working

2008
ABC established
2008
Masters in Arts Business and Creativity (ABC) established

2011
Innovate UK/NHR/ESRC funded SALT research Project (Sustainable Assistive Living Technologies led by Feng Li) to develop new business models for more joined-up services and products for older people

2013
Innovation Research Group and Public and Social Innovation group founded

2014
The Little Heresies in Public Policy seminar series established by KITE. The seminars provide an open forum which allows a public arena for previously unheard ideas to be debated and discussed. To find out more visit: ncl.ac.uk/kite/socialrenewal

2015
EPSRC Digital Economy Research Centre project begins with Rob Wilson as co-lead of the Digital Social Care strand working with NE local authorities and other partners including the NHS to bring digital civic innovations to health and social care

2016
AHRC NE FUSE for Creative Industry project begins with Fiona Whitehurst with the aim of accelerating and studying the development of the creative and ICT industries in the NE

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE COURSES:
NCL.AC.UK/KITE/POSTGRAD

KITE provides a stimulating and supportive environment for PhD students and welcomes applications from prospective doctoral students to join the Centre. You can not only complete your doctorate but also have the opportunity to develop a career as a researcher and academic.

Research from the Centre has also led to the development of 3 Master’s Programmes:

E-BUSINESS MSC
Our E-Business MSc was developed by members of KITE to combine leading technology with business strategies, entrepreneurship and organisational behaviour.

The programme produces graduates who then progress into careers as consultants, managers or business leaders. It is also relevant to industry analysts and product development managers in the e-business sector and has seen graduates secure roles in international organisations such as Google, Dell and KPMG.

POSTGRADUATE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES