Welcome

How can people, communities and societies thrive when faced with rapid, transformational change? Universities have a responsibility to help address the big societal challenges of our time, and many people feel uncertain, anxious or powerless about how to cope with the 21st Century’s relentless pace of change. The Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal is exploring new ways in which a research intensive university - its staff and students - can connect with society in order to help address this challenge and so make a difference to people’s lives, locally, nationally and internationally.

In last year’s Annual Review we presented some examples of our approach, including our work on City Futures, on Digital Civics and on the impact of the ‘bedroom tax’. This year we highlight our work on Self-Organised Learning Environments, on Living Legacies of the Great War, on universities as Anchor Institutions for cities, and on how we seek to inspire the next generation - as well as many of the other activities and initiatives through which colleagues strive for excellence with a purpose.

The idea of the ‘world-class civic university’ - achieving excellence while also serving a wider social purpose - is at the heart of Newcastle University’s vision of what a university should be. This noble ideal resonates with many colleagues and external partners who share these values. I hope this Annual Review shows that we are making good progress towards this vision and helping to make a difference to people’s lives in many ways, even though we still have much more to do.

Professor Mark Shucksmith OBE, Director of Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal

Newcastle University’s Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is a wonderfully diverse and vibrant academic community which makes a strong and sustained contribution towards the vision of a world-class civic university, not least through engagement with the topic of Social Renewal. Our shared values motivate and guide our efforts, underpinning the impressive range of activities reported in this Annual Review. We seek to foster creativity, ambition and excellence by valuing the passion and purpose in all that we do, and engaging with wider society and social issues by working with partners beyond the academy. The Faculty aims through its people, culture and activities to encourage participation, to advocate for social justice, and to create new possibilities for the future. The Institute for Social Renewal makes a vital contribution to these efforts and I am delighted to support them in their work.

Professor Julie Sanders, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal
Social Renewal as a Societal Challenge

In a rapidly changing world, what helps people thrive?

Newcastle University is a world-class civic university – concerned not only with what it is good at, but what it is good for. The Institute for Social Renewal is a focus for one of our three Societal Challenge Themes, bringing this vision to life. NISR applies the university’s global reputation for academic excellence to make a real difference to society. Working across the university, it focuses on the following themes:

- Arts and Culture in Social Renewal
- Children and Young People
- Digital Innovation
- Enterprise in Society
- Health, Inequality and Wellbeing
- Knowledge, Evidence and Policy
- Learning for Change
- Martin Luther King Legacy
- People, Place and Community
- The Past in the Present

Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal

Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal has three guiding approaches:

1) To be a thought leader in social renewal.

2) To engage in the production and dissemination of high-quality research and scholarship that informs policy and practice at all levels, governmental and non-governmental.

3) To work on selected projects on a co-production basis with partners to improve the practices and effectiveness of social renewal. Our intention is to explore new ways, such as ‘Demonstrator Projects’ and Open Chairs, in which a research-intensive university – its staff and students – can connect with society in order to make a difference.

Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal values the following in its work:

- Academic Freedom
- Collegiality
- Respect for, and tolerance of, diversity of views
- Knowledge and understanding based on evidence
- Debate as a formative process
- Transparency in the positionality of the researcher
- A concern for social justice, kindness, and social responsibility

Newcastle University Institute for Ageing

The Newcastle University Institute for Ageing is our response to the societal challenge of Ageing. We are seeking new ways to make the most of the extensive opportunities associated with increasing human longevity, while at the same time solving some of the problems. Our mission is to be a global leader in ageing research and innovation. We translate internationally renowned research into the biological, medical and psychosocial determinants of healthy ageing across the life course into interventions that extend healthy lifespan and support active ageing. The focus for our research and innovation activity is on how we can live better for longer and addresses the big question facing society of: “How can we live better for longer in our communities and maintain our quality of life?”

More information can be found at www.ncl.ac.uk/ageing

Newcastle University Institute for Sustainability

The Institute for Sustainability provides leadership and innovation in sustainability research and demonstration, with a focus on research excellence, interdisciplinarity and practical, engaged solutions to real-world sustainability issues. Sustainability can be summarised as ‘enough for all, forever’. Research focuses on five key areas of sustainability:

- Energy
- Food
- Transport
- Water
- Earth Systems Engineering

More information can be found at www.ncl.ac.uk/sustainability

Public Sphere
Deliberative Democracy, Citizenship

Processes of Social Renewal

Prosperity
Economy, Wellbeing, Quality of Life

Social Justice
Fairness, Social Inclusion, Equality, Compassion

Forces of change, deriving both from outside and within

Thriving in context of rapid change
Self Organised Learning Environments

Our concept of self organised learning is transforming lives around the world. In SOLEs, children work in groups using the Internet to find their own answers to questions they want to ask.

Developed by Newcastle University’s Professor Sugata Mitra and colleagues, SOLE has since reached six continents, with 1,900 registered SOLE users and many more trying it on an informal basis. The SOLE online community is a vibrant one, and includes an active Granny Cloud of 130 volunteers who Skype into remote locations around the world to help children with their learning.

One of its many strengths is SOLE’s ability to adapt to many different circumstances and needs: for example, in Cleveland, Ohio, USA it is being used on a large-scale basis with the whole school district, where 1,000 SOLEs took place in just six months, right down to an individual in Myanmar, South East Asia, who uses SOLE in his Sunday school club.

SOLE Central, the global hub at Newcastle University for researchers and practitioners working with self-organised learning environments, is a catalyst for several imaginative projects aimed at a new future for learning. This research brings together a number of different disciplines, such as education and digital technology, where Dr Anne Preston has been using SOLE to teach coding to children. SOLE is one of the main strands of the £4m Digital Economy Research Centre led by Prof Patrick Olivier and digital technology researchers have been helping to investigate children’s behaviour within a SOLE as part of this work.

Strong links and projects have been formed with many organisations working towards positive change in the world. This includes Pencils of Promise in Ghana; the Cambodian Children’s Trust; and Projects for All, whose CEO was inspired to create its Hello Hubs in Africa based on Prof Mitra’s original Hole in the Wall experiments, paving the way for SOLEs.

As part of his TED Prize, Prof Mitra set up the School in the Cloud and eight SOLE research labs have been created: two in the UK, one in Harlem, New York, USA and five in India. Spanning from the hub near Calcutta to the remotest site five hours away in West Bengal, what these locations in India share is a lack of educational opportunities for the children living there coupled with a drive and determination from those communities to turn that around.

Prof Mitra’s work has already transformed lives in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the world and our aim is to build on these strong foundations in the future.

“There’s a space between order and chaos where something strange happens. If you create a chaotic learning environment for children with just the right amount of chaos, spontaneous order occurs” Professor Sugata Mitra

“This is such an inspiring project - it is a first for me and for this country and I’m excited to be part of bringing about a whole style of learning, not just for Cambodia, but for the whole world” Chantha Poeng, a teacher who runs School in the Cloud for the Cambodian Children’s Trust

“Sugata started a movement that is changing how we think about education, and we’re really proud to be a part of that” Katrin Macmillan, CEO and founder of Projects for All

Find out more stories about SOLE around the world at www.theschoolinthecloud.orgUpdates
Living Legacies 1914-1918

Social Renewal is at the heart of the Living Legacies 1914-1918 First World War Engagement Centre, which aims to bring together communities - particularly those in Northern Ireland and the North East of England - through connecting projects that concern the First World War and our continued shared memory.

During the First World War, 223 staff and students from Armstrong College (as Newcastle University was then known) fought and died in battle, and are commemorated on a memorial in the Armstrong Building. When Dr Jane Webster (History, Classics and Archaeology) led a NISR-funded project to make a digital memory book for these individuals, it led to the Universities at War project (in collaboration with Durham University), and was one of many projects in the University community that explored the significance of the First World War today.

The Living Legacies Centre funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (as part of their ‘World War One and its Legacies’ scheme) and the Heritage Lottery Fund for three years from January 2014 to December 2016 has a collection of interconnected projects, and builds upon Newcastle University’s research in historical and cultural understandings of conflict and how it is portrayed. To record the activities taking place at Newcastle University that play into these themes, and to support interdisciplinary research, NISR co-funded Research Associate Dr Emma Short, who is now working with several groups to add more and more to this endeavour.

‘Women and Leisure in the First World War’ is one of many projects that has been generated from the Living Legacies programme. It is a collaboration between School of English Literature, Language & Linguistics researchers and three community research partners: Tyneside Women’s Health, who provide mental health support to women in a women-only environment; the Search Project, a charity that provides services for older people and their carers in the west of Newcastle; and the Northumberland Federation of Women’s Institutes, whose members are largely from rural communities.

The participants have received training in working with archival material, in ethical research practices, in oral histories, and in digital storytelling, and are gathering archival materials into physical and digital exhibitions, thus capturing the diverse memories of the First World War.

The Living Legacies project also encourages further collaboration between researchers and the community, and develops the engagement of the public with the work taking place at Newcastle University. The event ‘Your Community in the First World War’, organised by Dr Short and taking place in September 2015 featured presentations from the ‘Tynemouth WW1 Commemoration Project, Durham at War, Wor Women on the Home Front, and Universities at War.

Such activities as these exemplify the difference Newcastle University research can make through knowledge exchange by working with community groups. By documenting the range of human stories, the Living Legacies scheme also demonstrates that, as well being part of our political and social history, the First World War is part of our shared heritage.
Anchor Institutions

Although higher education is engaged in society in a range of ways, there has often been a lack of joined up frameworks that embed universities in the cities in which they are based. In 2009, Professor John Goddard (Newcastle University Centre for Urban and Regional Developments) argued in a NESTA research provocation that it was time to re-invent the notion of the civic university, and re-insert the university into the city. He argued that all publicly funded universities in the UK have a powerful civic duty to engage with wider society on the local, national and global scales, and that in doing so they could generate productive links between social and economic spheres.

Professor John Goddard, Louise Kempton (Newcastle University) and Professor Ellen Hazlecorn (Dublin Institute of Technology) are working with eight universities from the UK and Europe to understand the benefits and the practical working methods involved in truly functioning as an engaged civic university, when policy frameworks and funding regimes can encourage silo working.

The key lessons have now been codified in a practical guide published by the European Commission – ‘Connecting Universities to Regional Growth’. This has been used widely by universities and regions across Europe and beyond, such that the university’s role in employment generation, shaping the built environment (‘making the place’), business innovation and local civil society, is a widely accepted priority by most university, city and regional leaders across the globe. This work has also been influential in shaping HEFCE’s emerging work on universities as anchor institutions.

“Universities have been reinventing themselves as institutions embedded in the city, but now in a globalised economy.” Emeritus Professor John Goddard, Newcastle University Centre for Urban and Regional Developments.
Inspiring a Generation

Social Renewal aims to make a difference in the world with world-class research. One of the most important ways to do this is by considering our legacy to the next generation. This year, several projects have had a specific focus on inspiring young people to get involved in learning, to be ambitious about their futures and to articulate social renewal themselves.

Inspirational Women

Historically, women’s achievements and contributions to public life have been under-represented, and this has an impact on young people and their aspirations. The Inspirational Women of the North East exhibition (conceived by Professor Helen Berry, School of History, Classics and Archaeology) offered alternative iconic images of women from various socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, ages and religions, to redress this balance and inspire local young people.

The exhibition tour continued to local venues in 2014, including Northumberland College, Ashington. In 2015, Professor Kathryn Hollingsworth and Dr Nikki Godden (Newcastle Law School) launched a sister exhibition that celebrates the achievements of women in social justice, legal practice and public life.

‘Inspirational Women of the Law’ involved local organisations and Newcastle University fine arts students, and it demonstrates a wide range of women’s contributions to law making, justice and the protection of rights. After the Inspirational Women of the Law exhibition closed in the Hatton Gallery, it made its permanent home in the Law School.

Both exhibitions continue to provide a powerful set of role models for young people, and to contribute to discussions about equality in the North East.

Digital Storytelling

Although the young people in our society might not be limited in their aspirations, they might be restricted circumstantially by an education system that can only take them so far. Compounding this problem are neglected social issues, and the difficulty excluded groups can have in voicing their opinions. Dr Tina Gharavi (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) saw a way to meet both of these needs by training young learners to produce short films about social issues, and using this opportunity as a self-empowering experience.

As a result of this extension of Dr Gharavi’s community engagement project, participants commented that they now recognised both their own talents and the value of their team involvement. Furthermore, this project has succeeded in involving young people in leadership, decision-making and social digital storytelling, allowing them to defend their opinions. It has also explored the impact of digital storytelling and the way it can serve as an arena for young individuals to express often publicly dismissed stories about themselves and their lives.

“The Change the Story project has enabled NACRO to provide its learners with an opportunity to express their story in a way that they can relate and that is relevant to their peers. Young people feel empowered by the opportunity and feel it is giving them a voice. Thank you!” - Chris Homans (Youth Manager, NACRO)

Maths in Everyday Life

In an increasingly competitive education system, children are hard-pressed to succeed in difficult subjects like Maths, let alone enjoy them in themselves. And yet both the experience of learning and the significance that Maths has in everyday life makes it a rewarding pursuit for any young person.

The ‘Murderous Maths’ series of books for children was created in a similar vein to ‘Horrible Histories’: to teach young people that Maths is fun. Newcastle School of Education, Communication and Language Science’s Steve Humble (aka “Dr Maths”) organised the 2015 Numbers Festival with this element very strongly in mind - he wants everyone to know that “Maths is everywhere”.

It was for this reason, and as part of the Numbers Festival, that Dr Maths invited author and entertainer Kjartan Poskitt to Newcastle University. On July 3rd, 300 of Newcastle’s primary school children were treated to a display of mathematical magic and intrigue, followed by a lecture and book signing in Newcastle city centre.

In December 2015, Dr Maths was recognised for his inspiration of thousands of young people with an MBE for services to education.
Knowledge exchange is at the heart of the work of the Institute for Social Renewal. Working with a range of partners and valuing diverse forms of knowledge enables us to develop pathways to research that informs practice and policy.

Working with Government: DEFRA Research Fellow

Dr Karen Scott (Centre for Rural Economy) has been working as a research fellow at the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This role facilitates the effective flow of information from academic findings into civil service teams and demonstrates the importance of evidence-based decision making. Within her role in the Policy Evaluation Team in the Strategic Evidence and Analysis Group, Dr Scott has worked on a variety of different projects. It demonstrates the central importance of trust and shared respect between academic and non-academic partners in creating fruitful knowledge exchange.

Professor Shucksmith said: “The evidence produced by universities is highly trusted but rarely reaches policy and practice. Working with the third sector could help increase the impact of universities’ work as well as helping community and voluntary organisations achieve their charitable objectives.”

Working with Education Professionals: “The deployment and impact of local authority services in hard times”

This project is establishing a foundation for the development of a model of the costs, effects and benefits that accrue from optimal deployment of Local Government (LG) services. Led by Prof Simon Gibbs (School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences), the role of Educational Psychology Services have been investigated as test cases. Contributions from external partners have provided insight into the complexity of issues involved, and the importance of support for young people, especially in times of austerity.

Working with Charitable Organisations: Carnegie UK Trust Fellowship

Institute for Social Renewal Director and Professor of Planning Mark Shucksmith was awarded a prestigious Carnegie Fellowship in 2015 to lead the Carnegie UK Trust’s project “InterAction: How the third sector and academics can work together to influence policy and practice”. As part of his study, Professor Shucksmith hosted a number of roundtable events across the UK to explore the issues with colleagues from the voluntary and community sector, and from local and national government.

By working with relevant stakeholders throughout, this project is developing conceptual and practical ways of delivering services that support social renewal, whilst evaluating necessary inputs, outcomes and benefits for local authorities, communities and young people - the citizens of the future.

Working with international non-governmental organisations: Understanding the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed by heads of government in September 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals are wide-ranging and aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

Dr Graham Long (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) researches the key aspects of the goals, ideas such as human rights and accountability of shared goals. He has developed close working relationships with major stakeholders and has attended expert group meetings in Paris and New York towards the implementation and adoption of the goals. His work has been able to inform the policy positions of non-governmental organisations in regard to the SDGs.

Working with cultural groups: North East Folk

In 2015, Dr Simon McKerrell (School of Arts and Cultures) launched North East Folk, a NISR funded website aiming to reach out to a community of interest around the globe, hundreds of whom are now using it to find information and share resources. From histories of North East folk music to analyses of The Blaydon Races and contemporary music, the site helps to further the profile of this music both locally and globally. It is also proving important for music students in Newcastle as a resource and a platform.

The value of this exposure can be measured not only in increased participation and economic value, but also through community empowerment and development, strengthening the region’s cultural foundations. When faced with times of change, the underpinning of cohesive cultural values is key in ensuring a community can adapt and thrive by imagining a collective future.
One of the hallmarks of a civic university is its innovative methods of undertaking research with others. Newcastle University encourages co-production of research, where external groups and individuals are equal partners in the research process, alongside other methods of knowledge exchange. Below are three examples from the last year of the Institute for Social Renewal’s collaborative projects.

Involving young people in social research

“The only way for humans to excel and expand our understanding and knowledge is to carry out research and unlock new experiences.” (Getting Your Facts Report by Shawlands Academy)

This is the opinion of a group of pupils from Shawlands Academy, a multicultural secondary school in inner-city Glasgow. However, although their school is frequently approached by researchers because of its diversity and its geographical location, the pupils themselves had never been asked for their opinions on such research being undertaken.

That’s what motivated Professor Peter Hopkins (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) to work with the students to develop a research protocol that will be used to decide what research takes place at their school. The group of 54 students visited Newcastle University to find out more about the research process, and then presented their finished work to officials from Glasgow City Council. Shawlands Academy is committed to securing the legacy of this project for future pupils and Glasgow City Council hopes to roll out the protocol for use in other schools.

Gath Sinclair, Deputy Headteacher at Shawlands Academy, said: “The genuine partnership between Shawlands Academy and Newcastle University was built firmly on the principle of allowing students to have more than just a voice about research in schools, but actually to steer the project from inception to outcome.”


www.ncl.ac.uk/engagement/casestudies

The Illustrated Soldier

The books we read and share are an important part of the way we understand who we are. This project was focused on exploring how children’s books and their portrayal of military personnel might help or hinder war veterans thriving in society. Working in collaboration with Seven Stories: The National Centre for Children’s Books, and the veterans’ charity Forward Assist, groups of service veterans and Dr Helen Limon (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) discussed the depiction of military personal and military conflict in a selection of picture books for children. A series of three workshops took place to gather the veterans’ responses, and a space was created for those who have been greatly impacted by their participation in conflict to take part in debates about military life and the place of service personnel in society.

Poverty Proofing Schools

Where present, poverty has an impact on all aspects of the school day, often in ways which are hidden. The administration of free school meals can single out children living in poverty and expensive PE kit can have a detrimental effect on pupil attendance. Despite this, investigations of this problem have rarely involved the whole school. Charity Children North East’s audit process was different. All pupils, parents, staff and governors were asked a series of challenging questions about poverty and school practices. A comprehensive action plan based on the responses was given to the schools, giving support for implementation.

Professor Liz Todd and Dr Laura Mazzoli Smith (School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences) interviewed schools to find out the impact of this audit process. They found there is reason to challenge some national trends in schools, for instance the number and cost of school trips and the ubiquity and cost of non-uniform and charity days. Stigmatisation is mainly unwitting and the impacts often go unnoticed. After the Poverty Proofing audits, there has been evidence from a number of participating schools that attainment and attendance figures for the most disadvantaged pupils have gone up and that the Poverty Proofing audit is a contributor to this.

The Town Meeting

Dr Paul Cowie (School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape) developed an innovative way for citizens to be involved in the process of town planning in his Social Renewal funded project “The Town Meeting”. Collaborating with theatre company Cap-a-Pie, he developed a play set in the fictional town of Little Rikjord.

A town in crisis, due to the exhaustion of the local iron ore mine, the town’s residents – played by the audience – must come up with a plan for Little Rikjord’s future, assisted only by a shambolic junior planning officer. After its popular North East tour, the Town Meeting is now set to tour the north of England more widely. This project enabled local communities to participate in debates about the future of their area, and has recently been awarded the Sir Peter Hall Award for Wider Engagement by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTP).

Dr Cowie said: “The reaction to the play has surprised both me and Cap-a-Pie. Communities are really enthusiastic about having these types of debates about their future. Hopefully the play and project will continue to offer opportunities for communities to do that and perhaps stimulate them to have these debates for themselves.”
Newcastle University staff and students work with governments, NGOs, universities, colleges, schools and organisations worldwide to collaborate on research and teaching projects that address the needs and challenges of a global society.

Newcastle Forum for Human Rights and Social Justice

The Forum of Human Rights and Social Justice aims to foster debate within and beyond Newcastle University about the concepts of human rights and its place within broader conceptions of social justice. Since 2010, the Forum has been a part of AHR: an academic network of human rights centres and institutes across Europe and the Atlantic. The forum is based within Newcastle University Law School has a wide range of members including NISR Theme Champion for Children and Young People, Prof Kathryn Hollingsworth.

Exploring Identity: The Lens of Documentary Film

OLD MAN is a short documentary that explores the embedding of an elderly Amateur Radio operator from South India, set against the sights and sounds of the general election campaign in India, 2014. OLD MAN is a poignant and life-affirming account of how one elderly man’s passion for this old form of communication technology has enabled him to connect to a global social network, keeping him both included and alert in a fast changing society that sees disappearing families and an indifferent state. This film by Dr Ian Macdonald and Dr Geetha Jayaraman (both School of Arts and Cultures) explores the relationship between technology, ageing and well-being in India. It builds upon work of their first feature documentary, the multi-award winning Algorithms (2015).

Listening and Learning in Addis, Ethiopia: Documenting Stories of Rapid Urban Change

This collaborative project, led by Dr Peter Kellett (School of Architecture Planning and Landscape) shares research expertise and supports academics and postgraduate students at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. Urban change and housing redevelopment has been documented through recording the voices and experiences of those most affected: the urban poor who are being moved from centrally located traditional courtyard housing to multi-storey blocks on the periphery of Addis’s Ababa. These powerful stories are being heard within Newcastle University teaching, in order to understand the complexities of urban change.

Salmon Fishing on the Tweed

In the small Northumberland town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, a sense of stewardship was reignited by threatened closure of the last Berwick fishery in 2014. This project, led by Dr Helen Jarvis from the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, gave residents of the town a chance to record their untold stories of salmon fishing on the Tweed, and prevent their local and specific knowledge being lost.

Local history experts worked with the Newcastle researchers to hold a series of pop-up events and an exhibition. This encouraged public debate and stimulated new ways for citizens to participate in the exploration of both stories from the past and possibilities for the future.

A truly locally-embedded project, and part of the Berwick 900 Festival, this work is important for the civic organisations and fishing family communities who contributed as well as beyond.

Newcastle University is an institution embedded in its local community. The Institute for Social Renewal welcomes the opportunity to work with organisations, businesses, community groups and policy makers on research projects based in the North East region, which have a wider relevance.

launched this Social Renewal project to find out how museums and the public interact in this forum, providing a safe space to explore concepts of ‘belonging’ and ‘home’.

After taking part in a focus group, local participants (both long-term residents and asylum seekers) visited the gallery wearing special glasses (Pivothead) with inbuilt audio-visual recording technology. The results are now being analysed and these will help to assess the value of museums in public dialogue around issues such as these.

Hearing History

In the midst of massive and rapid technological change, there is an increasing awareness of the ease in which we can “press record”, and how this has changed how we listen. As we have moved from phonographs to mobile phones, society has had to consciously and subconsciously revise its listening behaviours.

Dr Paul Fleet (School of Arts and Culture) wanted to bring this history to local people and help them consider what this change has meant for them. In a series of “Hearing History” workshops, Dr Fleet actively engaged the public to confront the processes of committing sound to a medium to be stored and what it means to capture the sounds of the past to be then rehashed in a future present.

Who do we think we are?

North East communities have seen many changes in recent years, including continuing migration into North East cities. Newcastle’s Discovery Museum has been framing these changing landscapes of identity and belonging in an exhibition called Destination Tyneside.

Professor Rhiannon Mason (Newcastle University International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies)
“13,228 Newcastle students are involved in activities and volunteering; 56% of the total number of students. Of this, 1,397 students have been involved in Go Volunteer, and 9,000 participate in a student society.”

Performance and Interpretation

This project is a collaboration between Dr Stacy Gillis and Dr Ruth Connolly (School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics), Gateshead Council, and Cap-a-Pie theatre company. It combines performance, reading and interpretation to develop a theatre project based on a modern English translation of Homer’s epic Odyssey. It aims to inspire young people to engage in reading and to further their literary education. Foster children from Gateshead worked with Newcastle University students and with Cap-a-Pie, to examine the story. This powerful text contains themes of homelessness, exclusion and community. One of the young people who took part in the project commented: “The project has helped me meet new people. I used to be shy but this has made me feel confident.”

Our Postgraduate Researchers

Postgraduate Students are an important part of our research community. In 2016 we will be building on our links with the student body to bring the research themes of Social Renewal to the fore, initially within the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences doctoral training programme. We share and promote the excellent research and innovative methodologies that the PGR students are developing and will take part in the Postgraduate Research Showcase in June 2016.

Translation Skills: The Value of Language

This project offers vocational students the opportunity to work with Newcastle University students and be introduced to French. Coordinated by Dr Sandra Salin (School of Modern Languages) and functioning within Walker Technology College where the students are based, a self-organised learning environment was created, enabling Newcastle University students to work with the young people on the Health and Beauty courses. Together they will compile an English-French Illustrated Glossary and Phrase Book for Health and Beauty.

Pride of Newcastle University Awards

These awards celebrate the achievements of students and contribution to university life and the wider community. In 2015 Institute for Social Renewal was pleased to sponsor two awards: Community Spirit Award, won by Xarius Austin for his dedicated and inspiring work on first aid training, making campus a safer place and Contribution to Arts & Culture Award, won by Luke Robson for his imaginative and pioneering work with FilmSoc and Theatre Society.
Looking Ahead

Martin Luther King Legacy

On 13th November 1967, Newcastle University awarded an honorary degree to Martin Luther King Jr., the only UK University to do so in his lifetime. As the 50th Anniversary of his degree ceremony approaches, Newcastle University plans to take forward his legacy to our city, remembering not only the three “great problems” that he identified in his acceptance speech: poverty, racism and war, but also Newcastle’s civic traditions. Newcastle Gateshead will therefore host Freedom City 2017, a two year programme of arts, culture and debate.

Alongside the Freedom City 2017 commemorations, celebrating Martin Luther King’s commitment to social justice and his impact on Newcastle, the Institute for Social Renewal will reflect Martin Luther King’s legacy to our academic research in the year ahead. Knowing that the three problems he identified in 1967 endure, the Institute for Social Renewal will ask how people can be equipped to thrive in the context of rapid, transformational change, in 2017 and beyond. www.freedomcity2017.com

Making a difference with research

From 2015-2018, Newcastle University is one of fourteen universities taking part in the ACCOMPLISH project through the Institute for Social Renewal. This EU-funded project has at its core the understanding that in complex societies, with growing and interconnected challenges facing them, it is more important than ever that research addresses the real problems in the world. Social Science and Humanities research therefore needs to be innovative, work across disciplines, and involve partners from outside academia from the earliest stages.

ACCOMPLISH (which stands for Accelerate Co-creation by setting up a Multi-actor Platform for Impact from Social Sciences and Humanities) will function across fourteen European universities and their partners in the societal, business and governmental spheres, aiming to refine and test the concept of creating knowledge with others. Using training and toolkits, this expert knowledge will then be applied in order to really make a difference with the research that European universities create. www.accomplish.eu

Citizenship and equality

Citizens UK, the “home of community organising” is a charity working with community groups across the UK, aiming to bring civil society into democracy. They are the organisation responsible for the Living Wage Foundation as well as numerous other social justice campaigns of recent years. Alongside the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Newcastle University, the Institute for Social Renewal is partnering with Citizens UK to explore and understand how citizens can act together to support social justice.
Find out more about the work of the Institute:

- Go online for more information: www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal
- Follow us: @Social_Renewal

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