BWK-BCN: Exploring Co-Produced Local Responses to Climate Change
Alexia Mellor, SACS

How do we approach and understand abstract, global issues like climate change at the local level? BWK-BCN is a participatory art project exploring this question through a co-produced, fictional conurbation: a new place created by merging the cultures, values, languages and species of Barcelona with Berwick-upon-Tweed as an adaptation to climate change.

Through participatory activities and the development of a playful toolkit, members of the wider Berwick community collaboratively investigated what a merging of Berwick and Barcelona might be like. How does climate influence infrastructures, environmental systems, and socio-cultural activities? By exploring the relationships between climate and culture, we imagined how revisioning culture might play a critical part in our adaptation to climate change.

BWK-BCN created new learning and catalyst opportunities for stakeholders to reimagine Berwick. The project shed light on challenges and advantages of coordinating between institutions and communities, and the importance of drawing upon local experience and local expertise. Above all, participants shared the value they saw in how BWK-BCN brought together stakeholders from varying backgrounds in order to suspend disbelief and collaboratively reimagine how we address issues.

“This experience gave us permission to play, to remove restrictions. You made me think very differently.”

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Changing Stories
Dr Laura Mazzoli Smith, Karen Laing, CfLaT, ECLS

Changing Stories is based on evidence about the impact that the life stories of care-leavers who had gone to university can have on foster carers and other looked-after young people. It builds on research about the importance of diverse stories in widening participation more broadly, as too often young people talk about not being able to identify with university students. However, the reality is that there is huge diversity in the life stories of and pathways to university amongst students, yet these diverse stories are not always accessible to school pupils who may not feel that university is for them.

As part of this project, desk research was carried out which identified similar projects at Bristol and Bournemouth Universities. We are now working together with these two universities to develop a national bid and a symposium about this work has been accepted for BERA this Autumn. A workshop was held at Newcastle University where current students and a consultant from Bristol University were involved in the co-design of the Changing Stories portal. A core team of student ambassadors have recorded an introductory video to the Changing Stories portal and contributed their own life stories. This work has been disseminated and the portal is shortly about to be launched through Newcastle Students’ Union.

Since this stage of the project is about consulting with young people in order to create an appropriate context in which diverse life stories can be shared, the difference is best expressed by one of the students taking part (below). The student ambassadors have all been involved in the co-design of the portal through which life stories are shared and there is now a unique, democratic platform in which undergraduates are able to share their stories, which did not exist before. The project has further ESRC IAA funding to launch the portal widely and disseminate directly to schools in the region.

The changing stories project is incredibly important in allowing school students to recognise the available information that Newcastle University can be accessible to them no matter what their story is. Indeed the individual stories provide essential information that school students can use ultimately so they can feel comfortable about their own situations and understand that this cannot stop them from Newcastle. I believe this particular project will allow students to realise their full capabilities when deciding on university life because it will encourage more students to understand what they once believed were barriers will no longer stop them. As a local university student, this project was excellent for me to be involved in because I want students considering university from the local area to recognise Newcastle is for them no matter their background.

Emily Jobson, Stage 2 History and Politics Student.
From the Border to the Wall: Understanding the Archaeology and Historic Landscape of Northern Cumbria

Caron Newman, McCord Centre for Landscape

The project aimed to recover aspects of a forgotten and misremembered past in the Anglo-Scottish border in Cumbria using archaeological landscape survey with local volunteers and undergraduates from Newcastle University. It was aimed at building links with landowners and volunteers with publication of the results in peer-reviewed national and local society journals. The project wanted to address the relevance of the past in the present, and the formation and maintenance of a distinct regional identity and its role in present-day place formation and communities.

What did you do?

The project has provided a better understanding of the development of the historic border landscape of Cumbria, north of Hadrian’s Wall, by revealing the extent to which the medieval landscape survives as relict features, such as the earthworks of settlements and field boundaries. The project has also discovered seven new examples of prehistoric rock art. The discovery of new archaeological sites has led to a 70% increase in the number of entries in the Historic Environment Records for the case study areas. A better understanding of the historic landscape will assist Local Authorities and Historic England in their provision of advice in an area which is vulnerable to agricultural abandonment and significant expansion of forestry plantation.

The discovery of new archaeological sites has helped to clarify and refine appropriate approaches and techniques for a wider landscape-scale project of the borders, which is currently in development. In particular it has demonstrated how a combination of digital air photography and ground-truthing can greatly increase the known archaeological resource.

The project aimed to foster interest in the past landscape with the local community and to raise awareness amongst local landowners of the value of some of their unknown or misunderstood heritage assets. Five farming families were contacted and had the project explained to them. The children of one family became involved in the project survey. An amateur local historian took part in the surveys, sharing his knowledge with the team. Two local history societies were kept informed of the project’s progress and it is hopes to provide both with talks, along with one to the county archaeological society. It is also intended to lead a guided walk with members of the local community. The preliminary results of the project have already been presented to the Landscape Archaeology Conference, held in Uppsala, Sweden in August.

The project also provided training for undergraduates from the School of History, Classics and Archaeology with practice in the techniques of landscape archaeology. In particular, it provided them with knowledge in ‘reading’ difficult to understand landscapes which have undergone significant change. In the case of one student, it has inspired her to continue in the study of prehistoric rock art of the area for her undergraduate dissertation.
What difference did it make?

The project had raised awareness amongst local landowners and tenants of the rich archaeological resource on their land. It has increased knowledge of a poorly understood landscape in Cumbria. Both of these achievements will ensure better conservation management of heritage assets in the future.

One of the team members, a new archaeology graduate from Newcastle University, subsequently achieved a post as a graduate trainee with a professional archaeology company in Cumbria.

I learnt a lot about how to interpret the landscapes around us and what this can tell us about the past. I was particularly interested in the rock art which we found, this inspired further reading and has now expanded to become my dissertation topic. It was great to spend time learning how to use equipment such as the GPS and the TST and then seeing this imprinted onto a wider database. These skills are vital and the project enriched my understanding of archaeology. – Project team member, Tilly Reed, Stage 3 undergraduate student, History and Archaeology

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http://www.ncl.ac.uk/mccordcentre/research/projects/Border_to_the_Wall.htm
The Inspirational Women of the Law exhibition (and its sister event, held at Newcastle Law School on 5th March 2015) celebrates and promotes the achievements of just a small number of the inspirational women who have worked with the law, or who have used the law, to make a significant contribution to society. The exhibition aims to increase the visual representation in public spaces of leading women and to inspire the next generation of women engaging with the law. The portraits are of women renowned for their work internationally, nationally, and regionally, here in the North East of England.

Developed by Prof Kathryn Hollingsworth and Dr Nikki Godden-Rasul and 2 Newcastle University student interns, (one law student and one fine art student), the exhibition was officially launched with a full day event at the Law School. The event involved eight high-profile speakers, including Lady Hale, the only woman Justice of the UK Supreme Court; Vera Baird, Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, and Shauneen Lambe who established London-based Just for Kids Law (JfK) with Aika Stephenson.

The exhibition has moved from its original site in the Hatton Gallery, and is now a permanent feature of Newcastle Law School where it can be seen by students, staff and visitors. Example comments from the visitor’s book include ‘a wonderful exhibition; thought-provoking’; ‘inspiring and beautiful’; ‘truly inspirational – a great asset for the university’. The Inspirational Women of the Law website has attracted 1594 sessions and has been viewed by visitors from UK, US, China, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Qatar, UAE, Vietnam and Ghana), and has a popular following on social media. The aim of the exhibition is to celebrate and promote the achievements of the featured women as well as the work and lives of the many other women who are, in spirit, represented by our inspirational women. They demonstrate how, and instil hope that, structural barriers to women’s progression can be navigated and resisted; because despite the fact that a high proportion of law students and those entering the legal professions are female, there is a low proportion of women in more senior positions in legal academia, law firms, at the bar, and in the judiciary.

This event was the most inspiring and motivating experience which made me realise the kind of lawyer I want to be’

Feedback from a student
Groups of young people from Scotland have been working with Karen Laing and Jill Clark to gain research skills that they can use to conduct research to inform youth activism activity in their own communities. Following the work with us, one group (aged 12-17) now conducts research with community members on a regular basis about local issues that concern them, and disseminates this research through a fortnightly local radio show. Another group is developing learning resources. These young people were keen to share their experiences of working with academic researchers, to inform other researchers considering working with young people.

The aim of this project was to ensure young people’s voices are heard in discussions about research that centres on, or with, young people. In order to achieve this, we worked with young people to prepare a presentation, and the young people presented their experiences at the Youth Matters Conference held at the University in June 2016. It was thought that the young people may wish to contribute to a blog about their experiences, but instead, they decided to make a short film that illustrated the impact on them of working with academic researchers. This film was also shown at the conference, alongside a reel of visual images of the activities they had taken part in.

The four young people involved very much enjoyed the experiences they had, and appreciated the chance to make a difference by sharing their experiences from their own perspective with academic researchers. Although initially nervous about presenting at an academic conference, with support from us they grew in confidence and felt a great sense of achievement at having presented in front of a whole room full of academics.

Having attended many conferences and events which focus upon the lives of young people I feel that one of the elements which made our event stand out was the inclusion of a youth presentation. The young people were able to present to a packed room of researchers, telling us what they feel are the most important elements to consider when undertaking research upon young people. Their presentation was articulate and, above all, funny. They added a unique element to our event. (Conference organiser)
Newcastle University is a partner in Living Legacies 1914-1918, a First World War Engagement Centre based at Queen’s University Belfast set up to connect academic and community researchers interested in First World War heritage, and in the ways in which the events of 1914-1918 continue to resonate today. Social Renewal is at the heart of the Centre’s aim to bring together disparate communities – particularly those in Northern Ireland and the North East of England – through connecting projects that have a common interest in the First World War and its continued relevance. The Centre is 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.

Dr Emma Short, Research Associate for Living Legacies at Newcastle University since November 2014, coordinates, organises and publicises the range of activities taking place at Newcastle University to mark the centenary of the First World War, and also facilitates engagement with community groups through events under this theme. The position is co-funded by the Living Legacies Centre and by NISR, under the Past in the Present theme. These activities are logged in the central Living Legacies database, which will be submitted to the AHRC as evidence of the Centre’s activity at the conclusion of the project. Alongside this, events are publicised through a new weblog, ‘The First World War at Newcastle University’ which also includes information on the various ongoing projects related to the First World War.

The first two Living Legacy events took place in April 2015, supported by the McCord Centre for Historic and Cultural Landscape in addition. The First World War postgraduate symposium featured 16 speakers from institutions across the country as well as speakers from Newcastle and Northumbria Universities. Connecting Communities Through Researching First World War Heritage brought together community and academic researchers to share and discuss their work on the First World War, with the aim of developing relationships between HEI and non-HEI partners. Upcoming events include Your Community in the First World War, one of three roadshow events aimed at community groups and researchers who are involved in a First World War research project; and a one-day symposium on Women and the First World War. This project is further expected to lead to a journal article on Gertrude Bell’s role at the Arab Bureau from November 1915 until the end of the First World War, which will be published in 2016. Dr Stacy Gillis and Dr Emma Short have also recently submitted a bid to the Living Legacies Research Fund for a large project to be carried out over the next year investigating women’s leisure activities in the North East of England during the First World War. The project will explore new workplace opportunities as a result of male conscription, and co-investigators from Tyneside Women’s Health, the Women’s Institute, the Search Project and Newcastle University will identify how female leisure was remade during the War.

https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/fww
During May 2016 the Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts welcomed visiting professor, the poet Carolyn Forché to Newcastle. Carolyn Forché coined the term ‘poetry of witness’ which emerges from a tradition of 20th century poetry where political circumstances pervade the poem, as they pervade the life of the poet. In situations of war, imprisonment, torture or forced exile – the circumstances endured by many people in this century and the last – suffering, or the will to survive it, impresses itself on the poetic imagination. The presence of Carolyn in Newcastle presented a unique opportunity to share and discuss her ideas with a wide range of people, inside and outside the University, and to stimulate a conversation about human rights, and the role that poetry may play in communicating about world crises.

During May 2016, Carolyn provided a tailor-made poetry workshop for postgraduates and Northern Bridge students, a reading at the Newcastle Poetry Festival, and also took part in a discussion on human rights and poetry with the former director of Liberty, Shami Chakrabarti. The attendance at this event was 185.

The NISR award enabled the filming, editing and digital distribution of a video of this event which featured highlights from Carolyn’s and Shami’s discussion, alongside readings of poems of witness by Carolyn and Shami. This video was hosted on the NCLA Digital Archive, and distributed via The Poetry Society’s Young Poets Network, the Cuckoo Young Writers’ website, and NCLA’s social media. NCLA Archive: http://archive.nclacommunity.org/content/?p=2310 Young Poet’s Network (Managed by the Poetry Society): http://ypn.poetrysociety.org.uk/features/carolyn-forche-in-conversation-with-shami-chakrabarti/ Cuckoo Young Writers: http://www.cuckoowriters.com/features/detail/write-human-rights/

In addition, Shami Chakrabarti wrote an article on poetry and human rights for The Guardian. This was shared over 3000 times. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/may/11/poetry-is-a-perfect-form-human-rights-abuses-shami-chakrabarti
Carolyn’s presence also inspired a pop-up event led by postgraduate students. The event, The Cold Boat, featured readings from poets of poems of witness. A website and Facebook page was created to continue the conversation by sharing poems of witness written by workshop attendees and individuals inside and outside the University: [http://coldboat.blogspot.co.uk/](http://coldboat.blogspot.co.uk/) and [https://www.facebook.com/thecoldboat/](https://www.facebook.com/thecoldboat/)

Continuing the legacy of Carolyn’s visit, two creative writing workshops with New Writing North’s Cuckoo Young Writers took place during summer 2016. During these, three PGRs designed and ran creative writing workshops that introduced ‘poetry of witness’ to young writers through discussion and creating writing exercises. 5 highly engaged young people who weren’t familiar with poetry of witness, took part in these workshops.
Hadrian’s Wall is a vital attraction for northern England, but the Wall has benefitted from new audiences – fans of *Game of Thrones* – that want to see the original inspiration behind the fantastic reimagining of author George RR Martin.

Combining expertise in Hadrian’s Wall (Collins) and genre literature (Gillis), the Reading the Wall project has laid a research foundation for mapping and exploring the cultural significance and impact of the Roman monument across disciplines.

*Reading the Wall* has engaged in foundation research that will support an interdisciplinary application to the AHRC. A key component of the research has been the work of two Research Assistants in Archaeology and English whom have compiled a database of the appearance or reimagination of Hadrian’s Wall across media.

The project also hosted an interdisciplinary, international conference 15-17 June 2016. The conference brought four keynote speakers to Newcastle, including award-winning authors Garth Nix and Christian Cameron (in photo above). The conference proved to be insightful and useful in understanding the appeal and role of Hadrian’s Wall for writers, academics, and artists, and has allowed to identify further project outputs and impact activities that will be included in the AHRC application.

Support from NISR was vital in securing the necessary time and resource needed for foundation research – especially RA time and in hosting a networking event in conjunction with the *Reading the Wall* conference.

The conference and networking event has enabled us to build a network of scholars researching the topic that has previously remained ‘unframed’.

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**Garth Nix, author**

‘It was very interesting and enjoyable conference and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate.’
Making Homes, Making Rural

Dr Menelaos Gkartzios, Centre for Rural Economy

As an innovative knowledge exchange partnership, the Centre for Rural Economy hosts an annual artist-in-residence with Berwick Visual Arts. Last year, an artist was selected against the theme: ‘making homes, making rural’. The ambition for the residency was to provide new perspectives on rural housing research, and to provide a space for engagement between the local community, artists and academics. Through ethnographic research and workshops, this project explored how this residency mediated social renewal goals such as: responding to community concerns regarding housing development; valuing the practice of rural art residencies; and, working with non-academic partners.

The project was a collaboration between Belgian artist Sander Van Raemdonck, art ethnographer Dr Julie Crawshaw, Director of Visual Arts James Lowther and Dr Menelaos Gkartzios. It involved three workshops: i) ‘Guide the Guide tour’ (12/3/16) in the case of Spittal Point with the local community (open invitation) and discussing the proposed housing development; ii) ‘art and rural housing’ workshop (16/3/16) exploring the artists’ working practice as a response to housing development tensions; and iii) ‘researching rural residencies’ workshop (14/4/16) exploring the nature of rural artist-in-residence programmes as well as the role of the academy in supporting those. The results and experiences of these workshops were presented at the World Congress of Rural Sociology in Toronto, Canada (11/8/16) by Dr Gkartzios, and in a two-day event in Berwick-upon-Tweed called ‘New Ways of Seeing: Creating Pathways To Confident Market Towns’ (19-20/10/16), which was chaired by Dr Crawshaw.

Workshop participants, amongst others, included: Annette Reeves, Northumberland County Council Building Conservation Officer and Peter Rutherford, Northumberland County Council Planning Officer (Communities and Infrastructure Team). In their own words, the NISR workshops engaged Annette and Peter in ‘seeing’ Berwick in a more holistic, thoughtful and sensory way. From this experience, attending the workshops expanded Annette and Peter’s interest in exploring the role of art in the planning process, and the role of academics as a conduit to knowledge exchange partnerships.

“The models that Sander makes have produced enough tangible emotion, and that is the value: getting those emotions out on the table; and then people can get to a much more rational discussion about change” (Peter Rutherford, Northumberland County Council Planning Officer)
Independent Creative Living

Prof Rose Gilroy, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape

The symposium was over-subscribed and well-attended, with 79 people present. It was received as an inspirational event. It drew on a wide range of ideas and knowledge, and heard from experts in the field from across the UK and beyond. Most importantly, the idea behind the initiative was enthusiastically welcomed. The symposium aimed to bring together people who had expressed an interest in the scheme, either to support its development or with a view to becoming residents, and to identify the context, the gaps in current provision in the region, what such a scheme might consist of, and who might be willing to be involved in a Steering Group to take it forward.

The rest of the afternoon was spent developing ideas about what Independent Creative Living’s housing scheme and community would ideally look like and contain. Most of the 8 groups drew their ideas using diagrams, some using the ideas for St Gall, a 9th Century monastery, which was provided by the facilitators. All 8 were agreed on the basic premise of needing independent living with communal aspects, and it not being a gated community but a space opened up to the community at large, and outward-facing. There were also common views on the need for an exciting design, for sustainability (environmental and economic), for good accessibility to the site, good links with local transport, lots of light and running water, and ease of communication with each other and the outside world. The scheme needs to be affordable to people with different levels of income and assets, and to engage residents in providing services within the site.

“You don’t stop playing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop playing”

Attributed to Benjamin Franklin