

Applying Design-Led Innovation to Improve Community Co-Created R&D

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Glasgow School of Art

CIP Case Study





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Summary

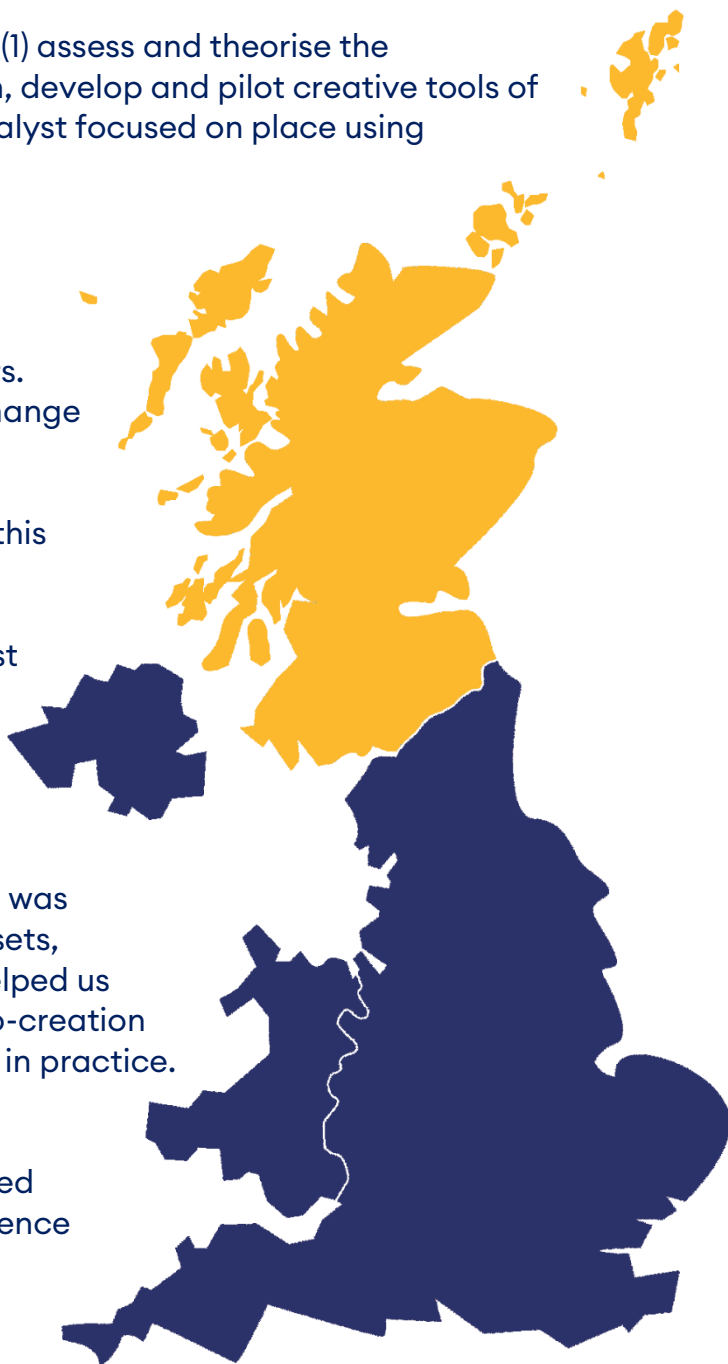
As a Community Innovation Practitioner (CIP), I supported the [Arts and Humanities Partnership Catalyst](#) initiative, a cross-sector collaboration launched by the College of Arts and Humanities (CoAH) at the [University of Glasgow](#) (UoG). The Catalyst is designed to bring research outside academia, facilitating mutual learning between academics and stakeholders.

The CIP research had three primary aims to (1) assess and theorise the Catalyst structure and methods (2) research, develop and pilot creative tools of engagement, and (3) co-develop a new Catalyst focused on place using the insights gained.

The Catalyst uses design-led methods to encourage cross-sector collaborations, involving academic researchers, private, public and third sector organisation partners. The Catalyst operates as a Knowledge Exchange programme, emphasising communities of practice and expertise. In my role as a CIP, I contributed a design practice approach to this creative engagement.

Workshops play a central role in the Catalyst methodology, facilitating the identification of key challenges, co-creation of future visions, and development of actionable strategies. I organised reflection sessions with the wider Catalyst team that mobilised an existing 3-part workshop structure which was then articulated as the 'Triple A' Model - Assets, Augment, and Action. The Triple A Model helped us re-interpret the process and approach to co-creation for the subsequent workshops in theory and in practice.

The Govan Old Catalyst project formed a significant part of the CIP research. It focused on establishing a sustainable model of existence for the Govan Old Parish Church, a historic South of Glasgow site dating back to the 9th century. This builds on the existing relationship with the University of Glasgow through collaboration with archaeologist Stephen Driscoll. The project examined how the rich heritage and resources of the area could help address the current needs of its communities and people.



Introduction

My research as a CIP aimed to integrate design-led innovation within co-created cross sector research and development.

My role had three primary aims:

1. **Assessing and reflexively theorising the Catalyst structure and methods**
2. **Introducing and piloting creative tools**
3. **Co-developing a new Catalyst focused on place using the insights gained**

In collaboration with Innovation Leadership Fellow Dr. Michael Pierre Johnson, I designed visual, tangible, and interactive engagement tools and workshops, analysed findings, and produced reports, while also documenting the co-creation workshop photographically.

The Catalyst is a Knowledge Exchange programme led by the University of Glasgow in partnership with [Glasgow School of Art](#) (GSA). It seeks to bridge academia and key sectoral stakeholders, facilitating mutual learning and the application of research beyond academic boundaries.

A focal point of the CIP work was the place-based Govan Old Catalyst, which serves as a case study for adapting collaborative approaches to a site-based, local context. This project explores the historical and cultural heritage of Govan Old Parish Church, discussing how to transform the church into a community hub (notably delivering heritage research and education), and supporting a sustainable economic model that integrates heritage with contemporary needs.

The core interdisciplinary team delivering the Catalyst programme includes [Dr. Lindsay Middleton](#) and [Dr. Neil McIntyre](#) (Knowledge Exchange associates), [Dr. Fraser Rowan](#) (Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Manager) and [Dr. Kirstie Wild](#) (Head of Research and Operations Strategy) from the University of Glasgow, as well as [Dr. Johnson](#) from the GSA's School of Innovation and Technology.

In the context of the CIP research, I use the word 'community' to describe a diverse network of people and organisations connected by shared interests, expertise, or stakes in a particular sector or issue. This includes academics, private, public and third sector stakeholders, as well as individuals with professional, lived experience, and/or direct involvement in the initiatives in the field, or simply an interest to contribute. The composition and focus of these communities can evolve dynamically based on the specific sector or context being addressed in each Catalyst iteration. These creative communities are brought together to co-create responses to themes such as digital cultural heritage, food, and mental health and wellbeing.

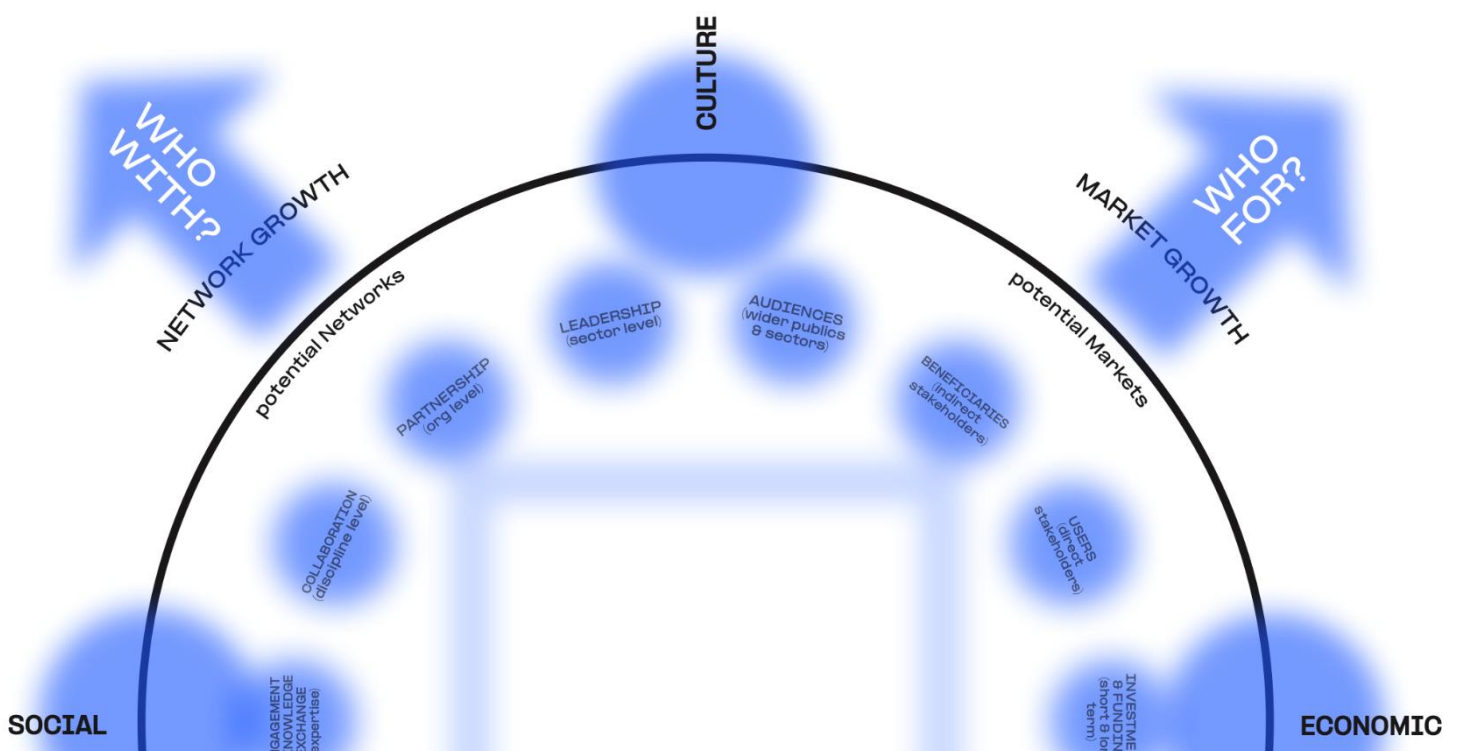
The 21 different partners and participants involved in the Govan Old Catalyst include non-academic representatives from [Govan Heritage Trust](#), [Govan Workspace](#), [Glasgow Life](#), [GalGael](#), the [Riverside Museum](#), [Historic Environment Scotland](#), [BBC Scotland](#), [Linthouse Housing Association](#), and the [Scottish Government](#).

Research Context

The Catalyst initiative is a cross-sector project designed to bring research out of the university and into society, generating meaningful collaborations between academic researchers, third sector organisations, and public and private sector stakeholders. Each Catalyst addresses a chosen theme through a series of three workshops involving 20-30 partners and participants working together to progressively identify key challenges and assets, co-create future visions and develop actionable strategies. Prior to the Catalyst, initiatives from the IAA (Impact Accelerator Account) were primarily centred on application-based models, such as needs-based, one-off projects for impact generation.

The Catalyst was introduced to create long-term networks across different sectors, matchmaking academic research with non-academic practitioners and organisations to exchange knowledge, ideas, and insights.

At the heart of the Catalyst are designed participatory methods and tools that facilitate engagement and collaboration. The use of Innovation mapping, informed by Actor-Network Theory, makes the perspectives and interconnectedness of various actors and their roles in addressing key challenges more explicit, supporting shared discussion towards identifying opportunities for collaboration.



*Detail of The Innovation Map, as used in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Catalyst
© Gaston Welisch*

Before my appointment as CIP, the Catalyst initiative had undertaken two rounds of workshops, each focused on addressing specific sector-driven challenges. The CIP role enabled me to develop my experience and knowledge from these workshops and extend my involvement in the delivery of a mental health and wellbeing Catalyst that explored the value of the Arts and Humanities to address mental health and wellbeing between medical practitioners, academics and creative professionals.

The mobilisation of the Catalyst model to focus on **Govan Old Parish Church** is the chosen project site for the CIP research. Historically, Govan Old was a significant ecclesiastical centre dating back to the 9th century and has a rich collection of early medieval carvings, known as the Govan Stones. Today, the church sits within the Glasgow Riverside Innovation District (GRID), a major area of investment aimed at stimulating industry-academia collaborations.

This juxtaposition of heritage and contemporary investment makes Govan Old an ideal focal point to investigate how heritage sites can meaningfully contribute to community regeneration.

Govan's ecclesiastical prominence also extended into its relationship with the University of Glasgow. This historical connection fortified the university's financial foundation through the annexation of Govan parish in the 16th century. This historical connection suggests a 'spiritual debt' that remains relevant today.

GRID (Glasgow Riverside Innovation District) is the wider context for the Govan Old Catalyst. Led by the

University of Glasgow, [Scottish Enterprise](#), and [Glasgow City Council](#), GRID involves a £1 billion redevelopment of the University's West End campus.

Alongside GRID, the construction of the new Govan-Partick bridge is designed to reconnect Govan and Partick, restoring a historic link (perhaps dating back to the same early medieval roots uncovered by Driscoll) severed with the cessation of the [Govan Ferry service](#).

This infrastructure is key for enhancing Govan and Govan Old as cultural and touristic destinations integrating them into a cohesive network of attractions, including the [Glasgow Science Centre](#) and the [Transport Museum](#).

However, the potential influx of visitors raises concerns about the capacity of local volunteers and facilities. The significant flow of capital into these projects also brings with it the risk of tokenism and gentrification. As one Govan-based participant noted, 'invest in the people, not just the infrastructure'. There is a genuine concern that development benefits might not sufficiently uplift residents but rather displace them.

The role of UofG in the Glasgow Riverside Innovation District, according to Prof. Driscoll, is to leverage academic activities to drive local regeneration. Govan Old stands out in this regard as an accessible site, partly due to its central location and its openness since it is no longer affiliated with the Church of Scotland. This openness makes it more welcoming to people of different faiths, and well-placed to create a centre for community cohesion.

CIP Activities

My research has focussed on 4 areas in the Old Govan Catalyst:

- **Approach:** reviewing and contributing to the Catalyst structure and methods based on insights generated through the CIP research.
- **Design Methods:** testing and refining new design methods, including performative framing and place-based methods, to improve interaction and engagement in Catalyst workshops.
- **Dissemination:** storytelling and analysis of key insights through documentation and report production, contributing to disseminating the project's progress to participants and stakeholders.
- **Capacity:** contributing to continuous reflection and innovation in creative engagement practices.

My CIP research began with an 'identity session' which helped the team reflect on what makes the Catalyst. The ethos, as described during the session, is to embrace curiosity, collaboration and naivety. This means maintaining an open, inquisitive approach, and learning from others. It's a way to approach problems with fresh perspectives, even if it means acknowledging what we don't know.

The Triple A Model

To better understand and contextualise the Catalyst, I collaborated with the team to articulate 'process' and 'value' more clearly. This led me to conceptualise the **Triple A Model**, a framework derived from the three-part structure of the first three Catalyst workshops, which I present as: (*map*) *Assets*, *Augment*, and (*plan*) *Action*.

Alongside the triple 'A', four emergent lowercase 'r' – or *relational routes* – represent elements less visible to participants, the 'pipework' and relationship building efforts which make the workshops and network possible.

The *relational routes* articulate key learning from colleagues at University of Glasgow and are presented here to provide the broader context surrounding the CIP work, and their potential to incorporate design-led methods in the future.



R1 & R2: Pre-workshop ‘pipework’

Relevance & theme selection: The selection of themes for each Catalyst is driven by the key strengths and interests within the College of Arts and Humanities. This involves identifying areas where existing expertise can be used to address pertinent sectoral issues. Parallels can be drawn with [Assets-Based Approaches](#).

Recruitment & invitations: Recruitment looks notably to existing networks to identify key stakeholders and potential participants. Desk research and recommendations are used to identify additional relevant stakeholders. Outreach is conducted via email, with proposals for calls or in-person meetings to present the value of the Catalyst. This personalised approach helps to build relationships and clarify expectations.

Triple A: Catalyst Workshops

Assets: The initial phase focuses on articulating existing assets, relationships, and ideas. Through a collaborative working group, participants map out these elements and discuss potential initiatives to align with wider communities. This phase serves as an introductory platform where participants meet each other and present their practices and expertise, through rapid fire slide presentation, facilitating network building.

Augment: The second phase aims to connect the initial vision with a broader network of stakeholders. By brainstorming a collection of future visions, the workshop builds connections and co-creates narratives that aim to illustrate collective aspirations. This phase serves to share ideas and build upon the initial insights gathered in the Assets phase.

Action: The final phase is dedicated to refining the collective vision into a detailed action plan. Through co-design processes, participants develop concrete strategies and initiatives that embody preferred futures. This phase focuses on transforming the collaborative insights and identified synergies into actionable steps and tangible outcomes.

R3 & R4: Post-workshop ‘pipework’

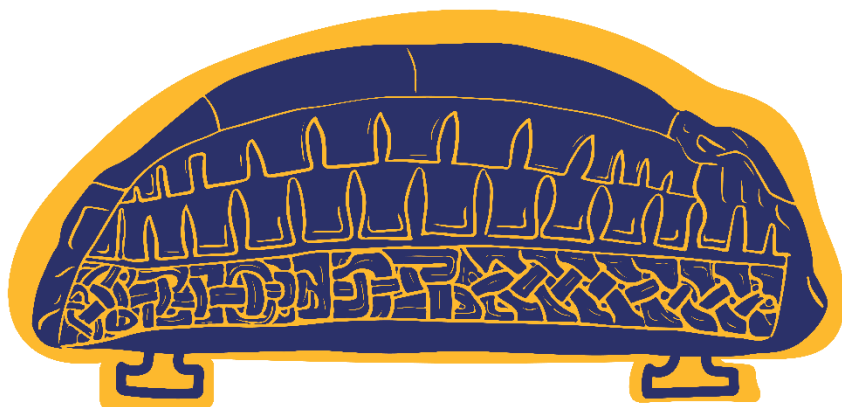
Reflect: Producing reports and discussing as a group after each Catalyst session allows for capturing learnings and insights. This reflective practice helps refine methods and improve future Catalysts. The reports are resources for participants: they showcase outcomes and encourage ongoing engagement.

Resilience: Post-Catalyst, information, insights, and opportunities are shared through a dedicated mailing list, building a resilient community of expertise. The mobility fund and the team support the continuation of relationships and projects and encourage offshoot initiatives that stem from initial collaborations.

The Triple A model was discussed with the team, iteratively developed and later expanded into Assets, Associate, and Assemble to better fit the purpose of the Govan Old Catalyst.

Govan Old (GO) Catalyst

The workshops were conducted in collaboration with Prof. Stephen Driscoll and involved a mix of academics and stakeholders. Previously, Catalyst workshops were held at the [ARC \(Advanced Research Centre\)](#) at University of Glasgow. Given the Catalyst ethos of bringing research out of academia, and the clear place-based nature of this Catalyst, it was decided to hold the workshop in Govan Old.



GOVAN STONES GLASGOW

For the Govan Old Catalyst, the concept of '[Little Futures](#)' and '[Big Futures](#)' helped us conceptualise the dynamics of community development and heritage preservation within Govan Old. 'Little Futures' refer to localised, small-scale narratives and interventions that focus on immediate, actionable and specific local needs. Conversely, 'Big Futures' encompass broader, overarching structural changes that are more widespread and far-reaching; they might seem hegemonic or unchangeable. This contrast highlights how futures are enacted and mobilised by various stakeholders, including publics, participants, practitioners, and Arts and Humanities academics.

In applying this theory to Govan Old, I wanted to provoke participants to think across different scales of futures, encompassing time, investment, and people. This approach encouraged participants to see how these scales interacted, conflicted, or augmented each other.

Workshop 1: Assets

This initial phase focused on articulating the existing assets, networks, and relationships within Govan Old and its partners. Participants engaged in a thorough mapping of the existing assets, networks, and relationships. This exercise showed the diverse resources Govan Old has accumulated over time. We identified central assets, surrounding ideas, and intermediary relationships.

Next, the focus shifted to envisioning futures. Participants were guided through a series of questions to delineate 'Little Futures' and 'Big Futures': Who are the key stakeholders ('Who with?'), who are the beneficiaries ('Who for?'), what resources and tools are available ('What with?'), and what are the ultimate goals ('What for?').

The final step involved identifying opportunities and tensions between these futures. Participants examined how these futures might clash, contrast, or augment each other.

We discussed how Govan Old's future visions can navigate and integrate these synergies and conflicts.



Assets Phase workshop mapping © Gaston Welisch

Workshop 2: Associate

In the second phase, the vision of Govan Old's Futures was shared with a wider network of stakeholders. The second workshop aimed to connect the mapped assets, relationships and co-created futures for Govan Old from GO Catalyst 1 with wider invited stakeholders and academic experts through co-creating shared futures. We did this by first showcasing Govan Old through a tour, then sharing the mapped assets and emerging future vision presented through the identified themes. We then asked each participant to introduce themselves with a brief overview of their work in one-minute presentations. This rapid introduction helped establish common grounds and areas of interest among attendees.

Participants were organised into four tables representing the four GO futures themes that emerged from Workshop 1 (Heritage, Community, Tourism, and Place Regeneration) based on their preference. They were then given 'shared futures' tools to support group discussion and propose connections towards 'shared futures' they could make with Govan Old and each other. This took place over two rounds, allowing participants to connect over two of the four themes.

A plenary session then summarised and mapped these shared futures onto the original Govan Old assets map to illustrate how they enriched or developed each theme.

The key outcome of 'Associate' has been refining the themed GO futures into briefs or calls for collaboration to frame our final GO Catalyst: Assemble.



Assemble Phase workshop © Gaston Welisch

Workshop 3: Assemble

The third and final Workshop – Assemble – aimed to synthesise the collection of shared futures into preferable futures for Govan Old. The process focused on idea and project development between participants.

Participants were grouped according to the GO briefs which were identified following the first two Catalyst workshops (Community Needs, Education Hub, Stories, Heritage Assets & Experiences, and Infrastructure). Groups co-designed project proposals, using templates to articulate project aims, assets, stakeholders, actions, and outcomes. The session started with a welcome and group formation, followed by the *Discover & Define* round where participants used the [Design Council's double diamond](#) to identify and define the challenges and opportunities within their briefs, creating a physical narrative with 3D coloured blocks.

Brief presentations followed, allowing groups to present their *assembled* project briefs. After a break, the *Develop & Deliver* round expanded on these briefs using an Innovation Map to visualise a final action plan, detailing key relationships, outcomes, and actions. Due to the lack of non-academic, Govan-based voices, it was decided the session should conclude with presentations of more open-ended themes and discussions, culminating in a discussion to prioritise community involvement in determining next steps.

Dérive Walks

Place-based research methods that were new to this Catalyst were employed to better understand and relate to the context of Govan. The primary aim was to ground the research in relevant spatial experiences. ‘[Dérives](#)’, as developed by the [Situationist International](#), were trialled, allowing participants to navigate their environment guided by emotional and sensory responses rather than predefined routes.

The data collection captured a range of qualitative data to inform the research, including observational and reflective notes, audio recordings, as well as photographic documentation of key sites, artefacts, and significant moments.

The first walk was useful for the team to better understand the Govan area, which we were not all familiar with. Prof. Driscoll accompanied us, sharing his knowledge of the area. This provided us with a more experiential understanding of the context, including insights into shipbuilding heritage, bridge construction, shopfront facade renewal, and areas of deprivation. This walk helped anchor the subsequent workshops in something tangible and spatial.



The Partick-Govan bridge worksite and the Transport Museum, visible from Govan during a walk with the Catalyst team
© Gaston Welisch

The second dérive involved GO Catalyst participants, archaeologist Dr. Megan Kasten and Govan Urban Planner Eamonn Campbell. Among other topics, during our walk we discussed historical burial practices, noting how older graves were repurposed as new families moved in and changed the demographics of the area and the evolving, biographical nature of community spaces.

The one challenge on these walks was recruiting participants and a lack of wider uptake raises an important question: did I force this method of engagement, when other methods would have generated more enthusiasm? Did my description of the research method lack clarity? Did the approach run the risk of inadvertently ‘aestheticising’ deprived areas of the South of Glasgow?

As a result of my learning, I can reflect that an earlier initial engagement with participants, like a quick call or in-person discussion, would have lowered the barrier to entry and allowed me to build rapport. This early-stage co-creation approach would have also enabled me to gather insights on preferred method of engagement and allowed for a more varied group of participants.

Results & Change

The CIP role has helped deliver University of Glasgow's IAA aims in four key areas:

1. Contribution to the Catalyst Approach

The CIP project enabled the infusion of theoretical and methodological knowledge into each stage of the Catalyst development. I held discussion sessions and workshops with the team, reflected on the insights provided, and aimed to augment them with theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

2. Development of Design Methods

The CIP research enabled the adoption and testing of new design methods to facilitate interaction, from visual language and activity design to analysis. For instance, we trialled a performative framing for part three of the Catalyst workshops ('actions' or 'assemble'), using an analogy based on the three-act narrative structure of a play. This method helped participants shape their thoughts in an action-oriented manner, to overcome challenges in planning more concrete potential actions. Additionally, place-based approaches (e.g. *dérives*) allowed the Catalyst team to relate to Govan and GO in delivering the project. Finally, interest was sparked in holding smaller, more agile methods of engagement, termed 'micro-Catalysts', alongside the main workshops, to reach other demographics or allow in-situ engagement.



3. Documentation and Reporting

The CIP award significantly contributed to the documentation and reporting on the Catalysts, enhancing the storytelling and analysis of key insights for dissemination. My tasks included photographing workshops, observing interaction dynamics and facilitating discussions. I also designed the layout and narrative structure of the reports in collaboration with Dr Johnson. These reports have been vital for keeping the network updated with events, providing feedback, and sharing information. They served as a tool for ongoing engagement, making the value and progress of the project accessible to all participants and stakeholders.

The Assets phase

- Assets identified both current and forthcoming resources within Govan Old and its surroundings. The new footbridge linking Govan to the Transport Museum (which draws 1.2 million visitors annually) and Glasgow's West End was identified as a significant future asset. This future-oriented perspective pushed participants to anticipate how new infrastructure could transform Govan Old's tourism dynamics and influence its strategic positioning within Glasgow's broader cultural landscape (including within Glasgow's tourism circuit, collaborations with tour bus companies, museums, and cultural programmes)
- The discussions during this phase highlighted the importance of sustainable monetisation. By framing the assets not just in terms of their current value but also their future potential, and drawing lessons from other heritage sites, the group explored how Govan Old could develop its offering to increase tourism revenue.

The Associate Phase

- The Futures framing encouraged participants to reinterpret unique selling points that could set Govan Old apart. The idea of 'necrotourism'—leveraging the historical significance of the graveyard to attract heritage and history enthusiasts—emerged as a niche yet innovative example. By giving new meaning to existing assets, emerging potentials can be generated for places.
- Critical themes like food poverty and housing insecurity, which emerged at this point, might have more directly influenced the Catalyst's direction if identified earlier.
- Stakeholders articulated a shared Future vision, positioning Govan Old as both a local heritage site, educational hub and civic space. This broader vision is the start of a robust case for support, which is necessary to attract the substantial investment required for these transformative goals.

The Assemble Phase

- The process of using narrative-building with 3D blocks allowed participants to visualise and prioritise initiatives. Local stories were identified as having potential in shaping Govan Old's future, proposing that these narratives are collected, preserved, and shared by those who are directly connected to them, with a strong emphasis on community involvement, drawing on existing archives, community assets and oral histories.
- The Assemble phase reinforced the need for local leadership in assessing, validating and driving the initiatives that emerged from the workshops. Participants considered what actions needed to be taken but also who should be responsible for them. Emphasising leadership from Govan-based organisations, such as Govan Workspace, GalGael, and Fairfield, the discussions highlighted the importance of grounding the project in the community to ensure its long-term sustainability.

This Triple A model enabled a shift in approach from mapping existing strengths to imagining potential opportunities and futures for Govan Old. Participants bracketed existing constraints, enabling exploration of future-oriented ideas. This approach, rooted in the area's history as a foundation for future uses, acknowledged current challenges while identifying pathways for growth.

Future Developments

The GO Catalyst aimed to adapt the broader Catalyst process by engaging with the local context through key relevant stakeholders rather than through community members directly. The participation of organisations like Govan Workspace and Gal Gael demonstrated a genuine effort to include community voices. The learnings from the workshops show significant opportunity and ambition for deeper involvement with Govan-based community members going forward.

Our transition from engaging with communities of expertise in the first three Catalysts to a place-based context required new methods to approach and engage with place-based stakeholders, surfacing new skills and sensibilities. This shift also reflects the broader challenge of achieving a shared contextual understanding, necessary in achieving better alignment between external perspectives and what place development can mean in a different cultural context.

The approach taken to our engagement presents an opportunity for reflection, given the sensitive context of Govan and the surrounding socio-economic tensions—marked by poverty, unemployment, and the at-times sensitive GRID investment. There is a question to address regarding the extent of limited community participation within future place-based Knowledge Exchange projects: the limited participation of Govan residents—only two attended the first, three the second, and one the third. Academic and non-local participants had emphasised that the local community was at the heart of their thinking. Had more local participants with knowledge of residents' experience been present, it could have shifted the focus of our discussions (as evidenced by the different points brought up by Govan residents in the second workshop).

The workshops yielded rich & valuable insights, and there remains potential to further explore and validate these findings with local inhabitants. In the workshops, participants opened avenues for future iterations and initiatives to deepen community involvement – they were adamant about ensuring that the project's outcomes resonate more directly with Govan's population.

Recommendations

The Catalyst project's transition into the place-based context of Govan-Old achieved its original aims of generating meaningful connections, mapping local assets, and seeding opportunities for future interventions.



My research as a CIP addressed its three primary aims, providing insights and opportunities for future development:

Assessing and theorising the Catalyst structure and methods:

The CIP enabled the theorising and adapted application of the Triple A Model in a place-based context. Through reflexive analysis, four 'r' relational routes emerged during the transition of the Catalyst Model to Govan Old. These routes provide a framework for understanding and developing cultural interventions, with a focus here on learnings when adapting this for place-based contexts, like Govan Old. The recommendations outlined in this case study come from a design perspective, aiming to explore how professionally-driven Knowledge Exchange activities could more directly engage with place-based contexts. It is to be acknowledged that this approach was not an original aim of the GO Catalyst and would present challenges for full implementation.

Introducing and piloting creative tools:

Futures framing and dérives were introduced as creative methods which allowed participants to shape and discuss meaningful projects for Govan Old and its potential links to the community. However, some participants expressed hesitancy during discussions without community members present. While direct community engagement is not typically part of the Catalyst process, this observation raises questions about the benefits of incorporating additional community perspectives in place-based contexts. The dérives method partially addressed this by providing the Catalyst team with insights into Govan, and proposed projects clearly emphasised working with community members. Future iterations could consider widening methods like the dérives at an earlier stage to support relationship building with community-linked organisations, leading to greater input and insights into place based-contexts.

Co-developing a new Catalyst focused on place:

The project opened up considerations for how the Catalyst model could incorporate place-based relationships and insights. This revealed potential for evolving the current framework, surfacing new principles, methodologies and sensitivities, outlined in the recommendations below.

Building on these aims, the following recommendations are based on my documentation of the Catalyst process, reflexive practice as a contributor to the Catalyst, as well as the recorded interviews with the Catalyst team and participants.

These suggestions aim to augment future projects and offer insights for other Creative Communities looking to adopt similar methods.

Place-based scoping

Expanding scoping from the start, to include more professionals who are local to the context, and those who can champion underrepresented groups, could enrich the project's place-based framing. Design-led approaches at this earlier stage could gather community voices and perspectives, or even recruit additional participants, for the Catalyst. For future projects, developing an understanding and potential relationships with community groups from the beginning would help identify suitable participants and ensure their perspectives are considered.

Visibility of Catalyst Theme Selection Process

To ensure that the University of Glasgow can effectively support the outcomes of the Catalyst, past topics were heuristically selected to align with the College of Arts' significant academic strengths and interests. The GO Catalyst, as a place-based context, was developed from existing relationships (Prof. Driscoll) within existing research strengths. This raises the reflection for future iterations of place-based Catalysts, whether such relationships will keep being the main driver to initiate, or whether other places could be able to approach and propose or access a Catalyst process in future, opening up new relationships and research strengths within the University. Alongside existing approaches, a space of discussion could evolve as a designed process specifically within the Catalyst, providing an equitable channel for non-academic actors to suggest and shape future themes based on emerging sector needs.

Fair Compensation

If the Catalyst were to facilitate broader and more diverse involvement from cross-sector stakeholders we should offer fair compensation. Existing mechanisms to facilitate participation, like providing refreshments and snacks, and reimbursing travel when requested, are great initiatives to enhance equality of participation that need building on.



Initial Mapping

The Catalyst process naturally brings to light existing projects through the information shared by the networks we gather. In previous workshops, there have been consistent calls to secure funding for a thorough mapping of these projects, assets and actors. It's worth exploring how some lighter initial mapping—through walks, discussions and creative outreach—could then provide immediate value to participants in early workshops, as a solid foundation for collaboration.

With a design-led lens, it would be worth revisiting approaches used in past Catalyst projects, being mindful of past experiences where methods were tried and why they were ultimately replaced. An initial mapping approach could help us avoid repetition and reduce the risk of [participation fatigue](#) which can drive reluctance to engage with HEI activities.

Reflecting on Assets-based approaches

The Design-led lens introduced asset-based approaches during the Associate and Assemble phases. While these methods are valuable, it's important to consider their potential limitations, particularly in contexts with fewer resources where critical work is still needed. Practitioners have noted that these approaches can risk '[obscuring structural drivers of inequality and encouraging individualisation and marketisation](#)'. This doesn't diminish their value: it presents an opportunity to reflexively refine our design methods further.

More Inclusive and Action-Oriented Exchange of Knowledge

The Catalyst operates within communities of practice and expertise where principles from [Community-based Participatory Research](#) (CBPR) and [Participatory Action Research](#) (PAR) can offer valuable insights to augment our assets-based approach. CBPR promotes the active involvement of stakeholders at every stage, from defining the key questions to interpreting the outcomes. PAR emphasises collective inquiry grounded in experience and social history, making proposed interventions more [relevant and actionable](#). Adapting and learning from these frameworks could help us balance the strengths of assets-based methods with a broader, more inclusive and action-oriented exchange of knowledge. This distributed agency would also allow us to actively '[deconstruct and utilise policy ideas and discourses](#)' to better address underlying inequalities.

Interpreting toward Action: What happens now?

The process of interpreting and filtering outcomes through facilitators presents an avenue for exploring more collaborative analysis and translation methods. While our non-binding recommendations and themes have been valuable and consistent with our approach, there is potential to strengthen the project's impact by developing guided mechanisms that translate participant contributions into tangible outcomes. Although creative tools, such as the metaphor of a play, have helped shape ideas into actions, there remains a challenge connecting participants with live opportunities and funding. Enhancing these articulations would further strengthen the project's impact and relevance to the place-based communities who participate in subsequent Catalysts.

Reflection & Resilience: Beyond the Triple A

Improving the visibility of long-term engagement would clarify expectations for participants and showcase the Catalyst process's full scope beyond the Triple A. What structured methods could further strengthen relationship building past the events? What is the public-facing legacy of the Catalyst process - could documentation, for example, serve toward producing public facing outputs (in addition to the existing newsletter and blog)? Building on long-term approaches beyond the three-workshop format (like the co-evaluation sessions currently held and the projects funded) would benefit from creative, design-informed methods of relationship building. These measures would make sure the Catalyst continues to build trust and sustained participation.

Conclusion

The CIP research has provided a robust framework for advancing collaborative, design-led research through community engagement. My role as CIP centred around contributing to the Catalyst theoretical Model, developing new Design Methods, and documentation and reporting. The CIP work enabled the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical methodologies into the Catalyst model. These have augmented our IAA approach to community R&D and co-creation.

The CIP award enabled me and my team to create a collaborative environment where diverse participants could explore opportunities to address the identified challenges using creative methods. We co-developed the Triple A Model and employed place-based research methods, such as dérives, to ground our research in the spatial experiences of the community in Govan. These approaches facilitated the identification of key assets, the co-creation of future visions, and the development of actionable strategies that were tailored to the needs of the identified sectors.

Our collaborative efforts have yielded several tangible outcomes, including

enhanced community engagement strategies, improved documentation and reporting processes, and the creation of new networks and partnerships. These outcomes reflect the Catalyst model's value in bridging the gap between research with the world outside academia.

The CIP project also enabled me to learn and grow as a researcher. I gained valuable skills in facilitation, co-creation, and reflexive analysis, and I deepened my understanding of place-based research methods. The insights and relationships developed through this project will inform my future work and professional development as a researcher, particularly in adopting more inclusive and participatory approaches to community innovation in my R&D.

Looking forward, when dealing with place-based contexts I recommend shifting approaches to integrate community voices in the initial stages of project planning, reflecting methodologically on how this integration is achieved and maintaining a continued emphasis on long-term engagement and follow-up. These steps will help ensure that future projects remain beneficial to the communities and sectors involved and continue to fulfil the original aims and ethos of the Catalyst initiative.

Further Information:

For more information on AHRC Creative Communities visit <https://creativecommunities.uk/>

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