

Placecast Episode 21 - Transcript

00:00:06 Nicola Headlam

Welcome to Placecast, a Local Policy Innovation Partnership Hub production based at the University of Birmingham.

00:00:12 Nicola Headlam

Placecast is essential listening for those keen to explore the ins and outs of knowledge mobilisation for influence in central and local government, based on the view that it is only through animating the power of place-based leadership that the wicked problems of 2026 can become more manageable.

00:00:28 Nicola Headlam

Whether you're a researcher, citizen scientist, an activist, a professional working in the public sector, a civil servant, politician, analyst or entrepreneur, we believe that it's through our networks that most solutions can be assembled, tested and the learning shared before we go again, and that universities can act as the repositories and observatories of these efforts.

00:00:49 Nicola Headlam

We're based in City-REDI and rooted in the LPIP programme funded by ESRC, AHRC and Innovate UK.

00:00:55 Nicola Headlam

This podcast aims to highlight knowledge and evidence-based ways of working and the strategies needed to make a real impact on the decisions that shape our society.

00:01:04 Nicola Headlam

Our guests are change makers from across the UK with stories about the ways in which influence can be achieved.

00:01:11 Nicola Headlam

We focus in particular on some of the connective tissue within and between sectors

00:01:16 Nicola Headlam

for clues as to how to animate place-based leadership, as innovating is a team sport best done in the open.

00:01:23 Nicola Headlam

Please contact us with feedback on the episodes or if you would like to be a guest or have strong views on the processes of advocacy, lobbying, public campaigning... in fact, if you have strong views on the *definition* of advocacy, lobbying, public campaigning and more, unpacking how research and evidence connect with neighborhood, local, city, regional and national missions.

00:01:44 Nicola Headlam

I'm here this morning with Joseph Owens, Nicky Marsh and Cara from the University of Southampton.

00:01:50 Nicola Headlam

Good morning.

00:01:52 Unknown

Morning.

00:01:52 Jospeh Owen

Morning.

00:01:53 Nicola Headlam

Joseph, do you want to introduce yourself and your colleagues?

00:01:57 Jospeh Owen

Yes, Hi everyone. I'm Joseph Owen.

00:01:59 Jospeh Owen

I'm a researcher in the English department at the University of Southampton.

00:02:03 Jospeh Owen

So I'm a literary scholar by training and I've been working on place-based projects that focus on culture and their relationship to place and community for about four or five years now.

00:02:14 Jospeh Owen

And my colleague is Nicky Marsh, who was the PI, the leader on some of those AHRC funded projects, and Cara Headon, who was the community development officer from the Mansbridge Heritage Project, our latest in the long line of AndTown's projects that we've undertaken.

00:02:31 Nicola Headlam

Can you explain the Feeling Towns project in a nutshell?

00:02:34 Josphe Owen

That was a project that we undertook in 2022, and that was following the Levelling Up agenda.

00:02:40 Josphe Owen

So we were interested specifically in Pride in Place, which was one of the missions of the Levelling Up white paper.

00:02:46 Josphe Owen

There was a desire from the UK government to restore Pride in Place.

00:02:51 Josphe Owen

And we were very interested in what that meant and what the implications of that were.

00:02:55 Josphe Owen

We noticed that any kind of metrics or measurements for understanding pride were exploratory.

00:03:02 Josphe Owen

The government didn't really know how to measure it or let alone understand it.

00:03:05 Josphe Owen

So we were interested in exploring in different places across the UK and we did field work across the country what pride in place meant to different communities and not in that kind of econometric sense, but in their feelings about place, their lived experiences, their felt experiences about where they lived and the histories of those places as well, all of which constituted a kind of different idea about what pride was.

00:03:27 Josphe Owen

It's one of our main kind of findings, obviously, quite intuitively in lots of ways, is that pride is complex, it's bound up with lots of other feelings, such as shame, and pride is place specific, so it's different depending on where you go.

00:03:39 Josphe Owen

We did a lot of work in Darlington, for example, where there's a lot of pride in the railways, there's a big history of the railways in Darlington.

00:03:45 Josphe Owen

Whereas in Southampton, for example, where we're based, our institution, that is much less prevalent as a kind of indicator of pride.

00:03:52 Josphe Owen

Bringing those insights back to government when they wanted to kind of measure and aggregate pride as something that could be kind of compared across different areas and sort of pitted against one another was the intellectual thrust of our work, I suppose.

00:04:06 Josphe Owen

And that work has now extended across different projects that have led up, like I say, to the Mansbridge's Heritage Project where we've worked with Cara.

00:04:13 Nicola Headlam

And how fortunate for you then that the Levelling Up white paper mission has become then the most identifiable subnational policy of the new government.

00:04:24 Nicola Headlam

Was that just, did you just land lucky or did you think that pride was going to matter more and more as time went on?

00:04:31 Nicky Marsh

You always land lucky.

00:04:33 Nicola Headlam

Born lucky.

00:04:36 Nicky Marsh

The idea that we can plan any of this, I think, is one that we've all relinquished.

00:04:40 Josphe Owen

Yeah, we keep saying the word fortuitous, I think, in meetings, which goes, oh, this is fortuitous when they think.

00:04:46 Jospeh Owen

But I think there is a luck to it, but I think there's a logic to it as well, insofar as we knew when we were following Pride in Place initially as part of the levelling up agenda.

00:04:57 Jospeh Owen

That local authorities were trying to respond to it.

00:04:59 Jospeh Owen

That was one of our key kind of findings is that local authorities were now trying to measure and understand pride or when they're putting together leveling up funds, they're trying to say this will boost pride.

00:05:10 Jospeh Owen

Where do we find the evidence for that?

00:05:13 Jospeh Owen

And government weren't providing an obvious steer for those local authorities.

00:05:17 Jospeh Owen

But I think for lots of councils, it became something that they became quite invested in.

00:05:22 Jospeh Owen

They liked the language around pride and place.

00:05:25 Jospeh Owen

Similarly, we found that quite a lot of local authorities quite liked the language around beautiful places or beautiful houses and beautiful homes, which was a kind of Gove thing.

00:05:35 Jospeh Owen

So I think there's always long tail to what central government decides from a top-down kind of perspective, and then what local authorities kind of invest themselves in and get used to.

00:05:46 Jospeh Owen

So I think that language of pride in place was still quite embedded in the policy system, even at a local authority level, but presumably as well in DLUHC or Department for Leveling Up, Housing and Communities, presumably that language of pride and those expectations around pride in place as part of their processes was still entrained to some extent when it became MHCLG again.

00:06:07 Josphe Owen

So I think there was a kind of policy trail which made it easier to pick back up that pride in place language and those semantics.

00:06:14 Josphe Owen

And yeah, very fortunately, that's what they labelled the new regeneration funding.

00:06:18 Josphe Owen

So yes, we're keen to kind of reiterate some of those initial findings, but translate them as well for these new neighborhood boards in particular.

00:06:33 Nicola Headlam

I must say sort of slightly betraying my own background, which is as in economic development and regeneration, it takes me a while to get into something like pride or something like beauty, because I sort of think that, I mean, they're such loaded, subjective cultural words that as a sort of economic development person, I'm instinctively about raising of those spectres into your policy, but

00:07:01 Nicola Headlam

obviously, I'm old-fashioned in that sense.

00:07:03 Nicky Marsh

We came from that too, from that position.

00:07:06 Nicky Marsh

We were worried that, and rightly worried, I think, that the idea of pride in place and emotional governance was kind of a fig leaf for not dealing with inequality.

00:07:13 Nicola Headlam

Yeah.

00:07:13 Nicky Marsh

You know, why aren't we dealing with structural inequality that we know about?

00:07:16 Nicky Marsh

Why are we thinking about people's emotions about place, which are ephemeral and complex and relational and short-lived?

00:07:21 Nicky Marsh

So we did, but then we found ourselves

00:07:24 Nicky Marsh

I think retrospectively we became really clear that this was an OK strategy with this two-phased policy.

00:07:30 Nicky Marsh

On the one hand, we were working with partners who did believe in pride in place and it was important.

00:07:34 Nicky Marsh

And we had to respect that that's what working in place means.

00:07:37 Nicky Marsh

And finding out what pride was in that place was important, which is what Cara and Joseph have done in Abri [Group].

00:07:43 Nicky Marsh

But on the other hand, we could pull back and say on a kind of meta level, this is a terrible language for policymakers to use.

00:07:51 Nicky Marsh

Let's unpack what they're actually doing with that.

00:07:53 Nicky Marsh

So I think even though pride in places run through these two successive governments, it's actually flavoured differently.

00:07:59 Nicky Marsh

So for levelling up, it was about home ownership, it was about private places, the proxies gave away, it was about reducing perceptions of crime, the proxies gave away what it was really for.

00:08:10 Nicky Marsh

Whereas in this moment, it's about something else.

00:08:13 Nicola Headlam

Can you say what the something else is?

00:08:15 Nicky Marsh

I think Cara's best place to say.

00:08:16 Nicky Marsh

Well, I think that it is genuinely about community engagement.

00:08:19 Nicky Marsh

Whether the structures are there yet is a complicated thing, but it is about community engagement and community ownership rather than that swing towards proxies that speak to owning your own home.

00:08:29 Nicola Headlam

Which is rather wonderful.

00:08:30 Nicola Headlam

As I say, having been trained in community development and then kind of morphing into economic development, it's almost like we're going back again to a more care-imbued sense of what we're trying to do in place.

00:08:44 Nicola Headlam

Sorry, that's just an extended thought.

00:08:46 Nicola Headlam

Cara, can you tell us, as somebody working in place, what does all this language do for you?

00:08:51 Nicola Headlam

What do you think is, what do you have to hold onto?

00:08:54 Cara Headon

It's kind of interesting that how this Mansbridge Heritage Project started was all to do with, we did a survey, we surveyed the residents of Mansbridge, which is an estate of around 1000 homes right on the border of like the edge of Southampton City Council area.

00:09:11 Cara Headon

One of the things we ask is, would you recommend Mansbridge as a place to live to friends and family?

00:09:16 Cara Headon

And actually that response to that question had a really low score.

00:09:21 Cara Headon

However, the comments and the answers to some of the other questions, people were telling us how much they love the green spaces, like how they get on with their neighbours.

00:09:31 Cara Headon

On one hand, they were saying, no, we wouldn't recommend this as a place to live.

00:09:35 Cara Headon

But on the other hand, they're saying completely like other things and they're very concerned about antisocial behaviour and crime, which also is like a

00:09:45 Cara Headon

It's another way of displaying pride because you actually do care about what's happening where you live, you're just voicing it in a different way.

00:09:55 Cara Headon

The project came about because we were wanting to respond.

00:09:59 Cara Headon

to those, to find out why people wouldn't recommend it as a place to live.

00:10:03 Cara Headon

But equally, we're also coming up to 100 years of the beginning of Mansbridge Estates, which was built in 1925 and the founding of the Swaythling Housing Society, which is where Abri's history started.

00:10:15 Cara Headon

So we wanted to tie it all together to help people understand a bit more about where they live.

00:10:21 Cara Headon

Will that increase social connections?

00:10:24 Cara Headon

Because if you don't think you've got anything in common with the people where you live, the one thing you do have in common *is* where you live.

00:10:31 Cara Headon

You all live in the same place.

00:10:33 Cara Headon

You might only have that one thing in common.

00:10:35 Cara Headon

So yeah, that's kind of the basis of the project was to get people to understand a little bit more about where they live because there's lots of history and heritage in the Mansbridge area.

00:10:46 Cara Headon

And then I reached out to the University of Southampton and said, oh, I'm planning on doing this.

00:10:50 Cara Headon

Is there anyone at the university that would like to be involved?

00:10:54 Cara Headon

And that's kind of how it all sprouted from there.

00:10:57 Nicola Headlam

Brilliant.

00:10:58 Nicola Headlam

So that sort of estate-led regeneration, I've got a lot of experience of, particularly, I don't know your context, but Blackbird Leys in Oxford, again, similar, very large estate at the edge of the Oxford Ring Road.

00:11:11 Nicola Headlam

And we did a lot of work, turn of the millennium.

00:11:14 Nicola Headlam

Really around exactly as you're describing, a sense of the heritage of the area.

00:11:19 Nicola Headlam

It's quite difficult when you come from a local authority perspective though, because obviously these estates were built purposively and often housing allocation policy over generations have created the things that you're then describing, you know.

00:11:32 Nicola Headlam

So, I was arriving with my Oxford City Council badge on was always a slightly awkward afternoon because there's, you know,

00:11:40 Nicola Headlam

you're kind of functioning both as landlord and as kind of, you're trying to do community development with motives, but you can't ignore the history, the institutional history of how the estate came to be.

00:11:52 Cara Headon

I think that's the big, the big challenge, because Abri, we are a social housing provider, and although not all of those thousand homes are still social rent homes, just more than half are.

00:12:04 Cara Headon

The way I kind of saw it is when people were answering that question about would they recommend it as a place to live, they weren't considering the wider area.

00:12:12 Cara Headon

They were probably hyper-focusing on the flat or the house where they live.

00:12:18 Cara Headon

So it was trying to get people to realise what's around them.

00:12:22 Cara Headon

There's so much history and things to do and places to go and just walk out of your way to get people to appreciate what there already is.

00:12:32 Nicola Headlam

And I think also what you're describing from the sort of playbook of asset-based community development, you've got a long list of assets.

00:12:40 Nicola Headlam

You have got green spaces, you've got community spaces, you've got all those kinds of things.

00:12:44 Nicola Headlam

But what you're really trying to get into is how does all that add up into a place?

00:12:49 Nicola Headlam

But then equally with these sort of highly emotive pride and respect in a way for place, in some ways the things kind of collide in the middle, don't they?

00:12:59 Nicola Headlam

Joseph, you're a fellow at LPIP, are you?

00:13:02 Nicola Headlam

Do you then take the work and bring it to Birmingham with a proposal?

00:13:05 Nicola Headlam

How did that work?

00:13:07 Joseph Owen

Yeah, so there was a call for the LPIP Place Fellows and I think I just noticed, obviously you have lots of different themes.

00:13:15 Joseph Owen

And it just felt a lot of our work over the AndTowns projects just cut across so many of them.

00:13:20 Joseph Owen

And it was a kind of, almost didn't know which ones to say we could bring some interesting kind of insights to.

00:13:26 Joseph Owen

And I think obviously we're arts and humanities, so it's a slightly different perspective, I think, to lots of the other LPIP Place fellows, which is hopefully useful, or at least we're suggesting it is to justify our existence.

00:13:39 Joseph Owen

But

00:13:41 Joseph Owen

Particularly the communities in their places sub-theme and it was the felt experiences sub-theme felt like we had a lot to contribute to.

00:13:48 Joseph Owen

We did some subsequent work after the Feeling Towns project on qualitative data particularly and thinking about what a qualitative data observatory might look like and gathering together

all this lived and felt experience and testimonies from place and how that could be made, you know, aggregated or made useful for decision makers as part of a kind of decision making process about place in the same way that obviously econometrics forms a lot of the basis of understanding about a place.

00:14:12 Josphe Owen

So I felt like we had a lot to offer as a university, but also as all the partners that we've worked with along the way as well to some of these questions.

00:14:21 Josphe Owen

And also it cuts across culture in place because a lot of our work has been to do with cultural placemaking and the relative successes and failures of that.

00:14:28 Josphe Owen

But also the data in place stuff as well.

00:14:30 Josphe Owen

And one of the first outputs I produced for the LPIP hub has been about qualitative data and using that in a kind of place-based data observatory context.

00:14:41 Josphe Owen

It seemed like a really good way of extending and amplifying the work that we've been doing.

00:14:45 Nicola Headlam

And we will put all of that in the show notes if you are interested in the possibility of policy based on these kind of metrics.

00:14:53 Nicola Headlam

You've been describing this sort of hyper-local scale, neighborhood scale, estate scale.

00:14:58 Nicola Headlam

What is the potential for if we did genuinely work in a hyperlocal fashion, in a mature sense that was embedded and sort of worked, what might change as a result and what might the size of that prize be?

00:15:10 Nicola Headlam

I'm quite interested in the way that the scale of the neighborhood and the estate it merges sharply into view and then kind of recedes from view and comes sharply into view again in policy terms.

00:15:21 Nicky Marsh

What would change?

00:15:22 Nicola Headlam

Yeah, what would it look like if we would work if we had true sort of place-based leadership at the scale that you've been working at?

00:15:30 Nicky Marsh

Yeah, and it was sustained over time because that's the thing that we've seen is that we've seen, we all know the effects of cliff edge funding and projects come and go.

00:15:37 Nicky Marsh

I think one of the things that really stays with me is when we were working with one of the big locals, you know, there's organisations that kind of preceded neighborhood boards in some ways,

00:15:46 Nicky Marsh

And they were talking about an intervention to clean the streets.

00:15:49 Nicky Marsh

Very kind of classic Sunday morning, you do a kind of community walk and you've got the litter pickers and you talk about the place and you pick up the litter and you take pride in place and you're outside.

00:15:59 Nicky Marsh

And it's a very, you know, it's a very kind of established model.

00:16:02 Nicky Marsh

And they said that for that, it worked.

00:16:05 Nicky Marsh

Their green places got cleaned, but the community didn't want to do it together.

00:16:09 Nicky Marsh

What worked is that they would come and pick up the litter pickers at separate times,

00:16:14 Nicky Marsh

by themselves and do their bit, do their patch, do around their garden, but actually not think about this as a place, or not think about this as a shared place.

00:16:22 Nicky Marsh

And I think that's the result of a very long, complex history that I think lots of us are familiar with.

00:16:27 Nicky Marsh

So for me, the real prize, I think, in place-based working is thinking about the commons, is thinking about the collective, is thinking about shared ownership.

00:16:36 Nicky Marsh

And that's what leadership, cultural infrastructure, social infrastructure, all of that needs to be built up.

00:16:40 Nicky Marsh

That's a very complex piece.

00:16:42 Nicky Marsh

We know that.

00:16:43 Nicky Marsh

But it is actually, it's not enough to just put those services there.

00:16:46 Nicky Marsh

We've got to change the mindset of wanting people to identify with those services and want to go out together on a Sunday.

00:16:52 Nicky Marsh

And we know the well-being benefits, we know that loneliness is bad for smoking.

00:16:55 Nicky Marsh

There are obviously, you know, economic benefits of doing that.

00:16:58 Nicky Marsh

But I think that's what it means for me to think about place that this big local was a successful big local in its own terms.

00:17:04 Nicky Marsh

It existed, it had a place, it had communities there. It didn't really work.

00:17:08 Nicky Marsh

It just offered these things.

00:17:09 Nicky Marsh

So I think for me that's the thing that stuck with me that I think I'd like to move the dial on.

00:17:14 Nicola Headlam

It's really interesting and there's sort of, and also as there's more pressure on kind of management and governance of green space.

00:17:21 Nicola Headlam

I mean, you know, local authorities are largely pulling back from active management of parks and they might have done in the olden times.

00:17:27 Nicola Headlam

You need to animate your kind of civil society to sort of pick up some of that slack that was there.

00:17:34 Nicola Headlam

Very interesting.

00:17:35 Nicola Headlam

Cara, what do you think about neighbourhood working?

00:17:37 Nicola Headlam

Does anything leap out to you as a scale you're familiar with?

00:17:41 Cara Headon

Following on from kind of the findings from the Mansbridge Heritage Project.

00:17:47 Cara Headon

As a housing association, we are very survey based.

00:17:52 Cara Headon

That's how we find out information about our communities is we use research data, both internal and external, and we tend to just survey as many people as will respond.

00:18:05 Cara Headon

But we use so many different creative methods through the Heritage Project.

00:18:11 Cara Headon

And since we've published our toolkit, we're really looking at taking these creative methods into other geographical areas where we focus our community investment so that we can get to know our communities better because you only get so many people answering a survey or you get the same people that you always speak to answering surveys.

00:18:33 Cara Headon

And we found some really interesting things.

00:18:35 Cara Headon

I mean, I think one of my favourite ones was the litter collage.

00:18:39 Cara Headon

So what people always complain about litter because it's really visual and people see it.

00:18:44 Cara Headon

So we got a group together to do a mini litter pick, but to use that litter to create art.

00:18:52 Cara Headon

And they found a bashed up, like I was just going to get them to do it on cardboard, but they found a bashed up internal door

00:18:58 Cara Headon

And they used that as a base and they were talking about how that represents anger and people shouldn't get angry about things.

00:19:05 Cara Headon

And so they stuck all the litter on, but then they also painted it really green and glittery because it's a garden city area in Mansbridge.

00:19:13 Cara Headon

So people were like, no, let's really make this pretty and let's not focus on the litter and let's focus on the positives.

00:19:20 Cara Headon

So I think that was really really nice.

00:19:22 Cara Headon

So it's really, I'm really positive that the work we've done in Mansbridge, we're now going to scale up across 58,000 homes across the south of England.

00:19:32 Cara Headon

So there's lots of potential to kind of use these creative methods in different areas to get to know our communities more than just surveying people.

00:19:39 Nicola Headlam

And that would be a sort of embedding across your large. [Inaudible]

00:19:43 Josphe Owen

I just love the continuity from Nicky's example to Cara's example.

00:19:49 Josphe Owen

And it's like, yeah, how do we address the isolated litter picker?

00:19:52 Josphe Owen

It's like we get everyone involved with, you know, sort of some kind of arts practice that interrogates the nature of the litter pick itself and the items that you find along the way.

00:20:01 Josphe Owen

But yeah, the door, the broken door as a canvas was so evocative and also really kind of engaged people in lots of ways.

00:20:08 Josphe Owen

I mean, I'm sure we'll have more to say about creative methods.

00:20:11 Josphe Owen

I think the only other

00:20:11 Josphe Owen

Another thing that I'd mention and it links back again to the kind of the sense of scale in place is that what we found quite a lot is obviously the local authority ward area, the political boundaries do not map onto people's sense of place.

00:20:26 Jospeh Owen

And it goes exactly back to what we were saying about it's their home, it's their street, it's the streets around them, it's the estate.

00:20:32 Jospeh Owen

And particularly we found in Southampton in different places is that even though the ward area as designated by the council

00:20:39 Jospeh Owen

has the same name as the estate, it actually extends beyond the estate, but people do not conceive of their place as the ward boundaries, they conceive of it as the estate.

00:20:49 Jospeh Owen

So there's always this mismatch in perception we find sometimes between local authorities and how they conceive of a place and how it's named and how people name their own place.

00:20:59 Jospeh Owen

And there's that mismatch between the actual geographies themselves, which I think is

00:21:03 Jospeh Owen

that's what that kind of commons community work can sort of actually really kind of address and sort of, or at least foreground those sort of challenges and issues and mismatches.

00:21:13 Nicola Headlam

And I think in and of itself the way that we built social housing at a certain period, thinking very clearly of Lindsay Hanley's book about estates where she describes like the minute you're on the estate, it's almost like a curtain closes behind you.

00:21:28 Nicola Headlam

That's absolutely known.

00:21:29 Nicola Headlam

These communities were built, as you say, either as a garden city or, again, Blackbird Leys.

00:21:34 Nicola Headlam

You know, it's very clear where the estate isn't and where the estate is.

00:21:39 Nicola Headlam

Really interesting point.

00:21:40 Nicky Marsh

That also affects our understanding of what social and cultural infrastructure is going to do in that place.

00:21:44 Nicky Marsh

Because one of the things that we found is that there could be a Sure Start Centre which covers that ward.

00:21:48 Nicky Marsh

People in that state will not go there or use that for lots of complicated reasons about buses, but also about local rivalries and then not feeling welcome there.

00:21:56 Nicky Marsh

So unless you understand that place and identity of that place, you can't really think about services.

00:22:00 Nicola Headlam

Yeah, and so again, my experience, we had one of the pilot Sure Starts in Rose Hill, which was a different estate.

00:22:09 Nicola Headlam

And the geography that had been given by the Cabinet Office, of course, concluded the Ring Road and a community other side.

00:22:16 Nicola Headlam

And, Rose Hill Littlemore Sure Start, which was the sort of official naming of the thing, it made no sense.

00:22:22 Nicola Headlam

You would never, there was no way in which Littlemore and Rose Hill, you know, were small popular deprivation split by a fast road.

00:22:31 Nicola Headlam

It's always the problem of the boundary that we have rather than the community's life.

00:22:42 Nicola Headlam

Okay, so you seem that the project and the creative solutions that you used both worked well and are, to scale them to other places.

00:22:51 Nicola Headlam

If I could ask you to just dig a little bit more deeply into the characteristics of the story itself.

00:22:55 Nicola Headlam

So was it specifically about the resource?

00:22:58 Nicola Headlam

Was it about people? Was there a political commitment? Was there some longevity? What made it work as a good example of estate-based regeneration.

00:23:09 Josphe Owen

On the Mansbridge Heritage Project specifically, yes.

00:23:11 Josphe Owen

So I mean, so Cara, as mentioned, engaged with the university and did that brilliant thing that is so tricky for so many external organisations and potential partners, which is to try and navigate the university and understand who to speak to and be quite dogged and intrepid and persistent, you know, inquiring, going, oh, I'm doing this work anyway, can the university support in some way?

00:23:35 Josphe Owen

Can we commission the university to do research which for, I mean it's hard enough in a university to understand how to do that, let alone externally.

00:23:43 Josphe Owen

So as with many of these projects that are fairly successful.

00:23:48 Josphe Owen

It requires an incredibly tenacious partner to kind of really carry a lot of the load of the work, but also to kind of even set up those relationships to begin with.

00:23:58 Josphe Owen

So I think you'd put it around a few colleagues and then you were directed to Jo, Cara, Joanna Sofaer, our colleague, who is part of the Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities, which Nikki has also been a co-director of.

00:24:11 Jospheh Owen

So it's all quite embedded and sort of interlinked as colleagues working in this kind of culture and place

00:24:18 Jospheh Owen

Area. Then Cara had early conversations with Jo.

00:24:21 Jospheh Owen

And then from there, that's where the project was kind of developed in the scope of what we as a university could do to extend and amplify some of the work that you were already doing.

00:24:32 Cara Headon

Yeah, I wasn't really sure what I was asking. I wasn't really asking.

00:24:35 Cara Headon

I was just saying, I'm doing this. Does anyone want to be involved?

00:24:39 Cara Headon

After speaking to Jo, it was quite, it came out that it would be really helpful to have better ways to measure and quantify impact.

00:24:51 Cara Headon

I'm quite good at the doing part and I've been working in the community for now nearly 10 years this year.

00:24:59 Cara Headon

So I'm good at that part, but it was trying to work out how could we kind of measure the impact and come up with some different ideas and work together with those creative methods.

00:25:10 Cara Headon

So I had a couple of ideas of activities and things I wanted to do

00:25:14 Cara Headon

But it was really having the university's input about how do we measure that?

00:25:19 Cara Headon

How are we going to understand what people are telling us?

00:25:23 Cara Headon

So yeah, that was really useful to me.

00:25:27 Josphe Owen

We were able to kind of supply some straightforward stuff around surveys and gathering data and research methods in that kind of

00:25:35 Josphe Owen

fairly conventional way, but I think the real sort of your interest in our work was predicated on the work we've been doing with creative methods on previous projects.

00:25:44 Josphe Owen

So on the Feeling Towns project that we'd undertaken before, we trialed and tested a lot of different creative methods as a large part of the grant.

00:25:53 Josphe Owen

It was a kind of this kind of testing lab, I suppose, for different types of methods.

00:25:58 Josphe Owen

So we worked with emoji maps, we worked with timeline drawing.

00:26:03 Josphe Owen

As literary scholars we were very keen to work with poetry so we did a lot of work on kind of poetry collage and different types of poetry workshop as different means of eliciting people's feelings about place.

00:26:14 Josphe Owen

That was the initial kind of thrust of that sort of work.

00:26:18 Josphe Owen

And then for the Mansbridge Heritage Project, we were able to work with brilliant local facilitators, well, several local facilitators who were able to undertake workshops with the community.

00:26:28 Josphe Owen

So in the Roundabout Cafe, which is like the kind of central spot where Abri works and where people kind of walk past and it's a very kind of like active communal space.

00:26:38 Josphe Owen

So we were able to hold regular, and that was really important as well, really regular, was it weekly, Cara?

00:26:43 Josphe Owen

I think it was weekly.

00:26:44 Cara Headon

Yeah, we did it weekly for kind of like... seven or eight weeks.

00:26:47 Cara Headon

But I'd already been holding, before I reached out to the university, I'd already been holding like, we'll call them Mansbridge memory sessions because I basically found a box of really old historic photos from the 1920s onwards.

00:27:00 Cara Headon

So I was holding regular kind of monthly drop-in sessions at Roundabout Cafe where people could come and look at the photos, look at some old documents.

00:27:08 Cara Headon

And I was quickly like, busily writing down little comments and snippets of information and it was just lovely. It was just the most heartwarming sessions.

00:27:17 Cara Headon

It was a mixture of people that currently lived on the estate or people that used to live there but had moved away and were coming together and they might not know each other but they had things in common or people in common and it was lovely.

00:27:30 Cara Headon

So I got a lovely document with all their kind of memories.

00:27:33 Cara Headon

So I just started doing that but that kind of led on to all these other methods that we used.

00:27:40 Josphe Owen

That was it. And there's a couple of things happening there.

00:27:41 Josphe Owen

So first of all, it was that socialising you were doing, Cara, with the community saying, this is a place where you can come and where we can talk or we can engage with different artifacts or work with different things and kind of come together.

00:27:54 Josphe Owen

But also it provided actual resources for the creative methods.

00:27:58 Josphe Owen

So obviously, ideally with creative methods, you adapt them to the place.

00:28:01 Josphe Owen

And what was brilliant is we had this archive of photos that

00:28:04 Josphe Owen

a lot of the community was already very interested in.

00:28:06 Josphe Owen

And as we know, old photographs are somehow inherently interesting.

00:28:10 Josphe Owen

And there's always Facebook groups, isn't there, about past and present, where I'm from Portsmouth originally, and there's all these Facebook groups that are past and present images of Portsmouth that get loads of kind of attention and exposure and people respond to them.

00:28:27 Josphe Owen

So we had these photographs from Mansbridge, which we were able to then use as part of photo elicitation exercises.

00:28:34 Josphe Owen

And then you also ran a heritage walking tour around the area, Cara, that also drew on these images and also information about these different landmarks and sites.

00:28:45 Josphe Owen

So we were able to kind of feed that in as part of the kind of creative methods workshops.

00:28:51 Josphe Owen

And again, it's about opening people up to have a kind of more felt and embodied sense of their place and then say things that they otherwise wouldn't be writing down in a consultation or a survey or in that kind of short any other thoughts section.

00:29:05 Jospeh Owen

You get so much more richer more complicated, often kind of fraught insights about place from using these creative methods.

00:29:15 Jospeh Owen

That's what we found over the course of several projects.

00:29:17 Jospeh Owen

And it really kind of came to the fore in Mansbridge because when people were talking about heritage, they weren't necessarily talking about the estate all the time or the building of the estate or even the architect, Herbert Collins, who was the kind of founding force.

00:29:30 Jospeh Owen

But they were talking about their relationships with one another and kind of more minor or marginalised histories from however long, about where

00:29:38 Jospeh Owen

they live, which were kind of foregrounded by those creative methods.

00:29:42 Jospeh Owen

So we found that a really productive exercise.

00:29:45 Jospeh Owen

Nicky, I don't know, obviously you were there when we were developing a lot of these methods.

00:29:48 Jospeh Owen

I don't know if there's, you have further thoughts on their kind of function and purpose in these contexts.

00:29:55 Nicky Marsh

So my background is in an English department and I've written about poetry quite a lot.

00:29:59 Nicky Marsh

And one of the things I often say is I stopped working on poetry because I wanted to do something very applied and real world.

00:30:05 Nicky Marsh

And when I entered that world, people kept saying, can you do some more things with poetry, please?

00:30:09 Nicky Marsh

And I've been kind of with Joseph and others, we've been reflecting on what that means.

00:30:13 Nicky Marsh

And I think one of the reasons that poetry has been really useful and we've used it across lots of different projects, we've iterated it as a methodology.

00:30:19 Nicky Marsh

is actually it's not about a single voice.

00:30:20 Nicky Marsh

It looks like it's about a single voice and kind of our Wordsworth notion of the romantic individual.

00:30:25 Nicky Marsh

That's not really what it means.

00:30:27 Nicky Marsh

What poetry allows in a workshop is debate and difference and contestation and then consent to emerge.

00:30:35 Nicky Marsh

So one of the methodology we use is collage.

00:30:37 Nicky Marsh

People put a line in a response to a prompt, different kinds of prompts, and then they've got a

00:30:42 Nicky Marsh

write a poem together and where that really becomes a kind of form of research or a form of kind of qualitative data.

00:30:47 Nicky Marsh

It's that conversation around actually what are we prioritising here and how do we put something very, very complicated into a line that makes sense to us and that is powerful.

00:30:56 Nicky Marsh

I think it's that process that has made poetry, I think across different projects really, really useful.

00:31:01 Nicky Marsh

And you can work with a poet from the place

00:31:03 Nicky Marsh

and that they can choose a forms, in Darlington they were writing books, in Dorchester they were writing long narrative poems together on the Isle of Wight, they were writing kind of these kind of shorter poems that we've turned into sound pieces.

00:31:18 Nicky Marsh

So I think there's a lot there which is about collectivity again, actually.

00:31:22 Nicola Headlam

Gosh, yeah.

00:31:23 Nicola Headlam

I think what you're all describing in different ways are the thickness of meaning, either mobilised by semantics, so words, but place inherently is even just situating place as in not an administrative container or whatever, involves layers and layers of not quite this, it's that.

00:31:43 Nicola Headlam

Oh, it's not quite that, it's this.

00:31:45 Nicola Headlam

So that's specificity.

00:31:46 Nicky Marsh

Exactly.

00:31:46 Nicola Headlam

When poetry is about place, we see the place again for the first time.

00:31:53 Nicola Headlam

There's something really, really important there.

00:31:56 Nicky Marsh

Yeah, one of the formalist quotes that we love in literary studies is it makes the stone stony.

00:32:00 Nicola Headlam

Yeah, it makes the stone stony.

00:32:02 Nicola Headlam

This is brilliant.

00:32:04 Nicola Headlam

So in terms of your toolkit of creative methods, I'm guessing that some of it was quite intuitive.

00:32:10 Nicola Headlam

Cara, it seems like you

00:32:12 Nicola Headlam

just seem like the kind of person who is craving thickness of description about how you work and where you work and who you work with.

00:32:19 Nicola Headlam

Were there any good international lessons that you had gathered along the way?

00:32:24 Cara Headon

Personally, I like to do things slightly differently to some of my colleagues.

00:32:29 Cara Headon

I've had a long running music group for mental health running at Roundabout Cafe.

00:32:37 Cara Headon

That's mainly to reduce social isolation, but under the banner of let's come together and sing in a really informal way.

00:32:45 Cara Headon

So that's kind of a bit unusual.

00:32:48 Jospeh Owen

That second point you made Nicola about letting these things evolve from place.

00:32:53 Josphe Owen

That's the way we iterate those methods. It tends to be from the place and when we worked, I mean, it's easier in some places than others.

00:33:00 Josphe Owen

Obviously, we did some work in Ledbury, which is in Herefordshire as part of the Feeling Towns project and obviously they had the poetry festival there.

00:33:07 Josphe Owen

So that really was an obvious kind of hook to kind of think about volunteering in that place.

00:33:15 Josphe Owen

So we haven't really worked, we've looked, obviously when we were developing the creative methods, we did look in the literature and that's an international literature, but there wasn't anything specific, I don't think, from abroad that we were like, that's a great model for us.

00:33:30 Josphe Owen

But we're aware of an incredible number of case studies of different types of work happening in lots of places.

00:33:36 Josphe Owen

Nicky, I don't know if there was one thing that we identified, The Depot perhaps?

00:33:42 Nicky Marsh

I think The Depot is such a, I don't know whether you know it, the Deindustrialisation and the Politics of Our Time (DEPOT)

00:33:47 Nicky Marsh

There's a project, it's Canadian, it's funded by Canada, but it stretches Canada, the US, Germany, France, Italy, the UK.

00:33:56 Nicky Marsh

36 research centres and it's a phenomenal scale.

00:33:58 Nicky Marsh

But what I think is great about it is that it's based why it's been a kind of model for me, why I've been interested in what it's been doing, is that scale allows this comparativeness,

00:34:09 Nicky Marsh

always, and allows us to think about deindustrialisation in place, which is what we're talking about here in different ways, is to think about it as intersectional.

00:34:17 Nicky Marsh

So it brings in race, it brings in gender, it brings in history of trade unions, it brings in colonialism, it brings in class experience, and it has those kind of baked into these very specific, very kind of familiar art projects, art exhibitions, working with local artists.

00:34:31 Nicky Marsh

But because of that scale, it allows this kind of reflection, which I think is just very hard to get up.

00:34:36 Nicky Marsh

I mean, that's always the problem when we're working in the local is

00:34:38 Nicky Marsh

How do we extrapolate out and think about what here could be shared?

00:34:42 Nicky Marsh

What here is common in other places?

00:34:45 Nicky Marsh

How can we kind of be bigger than our place?

00:34:47 Nicky Marsh

And so I think Depot is a model I've been envious of.

00:34:50 Nicola Headlam

Well, it's kind of extrapolate without destroying the very thing that was special in the first place.

00:34:55 Nicky Marsh

Exactly.

00:34:56 Nicola Headlam

It's a really subtle business being able to, as you've said, go a scale

00:35:01 Nicola Headlam

through operations, but also, I mean, that's a slightly mind-blowing scale, isn't it?

00:35:05 Nicola Headlam

All that international intersectionality.

00:35:08 Nicola Headlam

I've done quite a lot of comparative work and I think you get lost for a bit in the sort of how could any of these things ever compare?

00:35:16 Nicola Headlam

And then actually when you come right down to it, there are sort of really human things that are the same if you're, you know, in the Rust Belt or some of those big social processes and what it is to be a person are really universal in the end.

00:35:32 Nicola Headlam

Gosh, that got a bit highfalutin, didn't it?

00:35:34 Nicola Headlam

So what next? What next for the work? What next for the place?

00:35:38 Nicola Headlam

What next for the, you know, what are you working on next either together or what's really exciting you?

00:35:43 Nicola Headlam

I mean, I can see a million applications for kind of what you've done and how you've done it particularly, but what are you going to do next with it?

00:35:54 Jospheh Owen

So I'm currently the AHRC LUCIA Fellow and LUCIA stands for Locally Unlocking Culture Through Inclusive Access.

00:36:03 Jospheh Owen

That's a new program from the City and Urban Environments portfolio, part of the AHRC and they've funded 5 projects or networks as they're calling them, which are across the country and they're all

00:36:15 Jospeh Owen

focusing on the idea of culture and access and participation and particularly trying to understand how these things can speak to social cohesion, education, participation in lots of different ways.

00:36:27 Jospeh Owen

So I'm the fellow who's kind of convening those projects, but I'm also running my own project on the visual arts and it's looking at a new model for visual arts participation.

00:36:35 Jospeh Owen

So thinking about visual arts as a practice

00:36:38 Jospeh Owen

as theory, as methodology, as socially engaged practice, and thinking about what it can do to address some of those social outcomes, which are particularly acute for local government.

00:36:47 Jospeh Owen

So I'm seconded as well with the Local Government Association, working in their culture, tourism and sport team to try and translate some of those insights, some of those experiences of visual artists, some of that research around the visual arts to understand how they can work with visual artists better to engage with communities.

00:37:04 Jospeh Owen

So that's that kind of broader thrust of that work.

00:37:06 Jospeh Owen

Then hopefully we're thinking of extending that perhaps continentally and I'm off to Paris next week for one of those kind of Horizon Europe networking event-y things where I'm going to be like, let's make it Europe.

00:37:19 Nicola Headlam

Let's make it Europe.

00:37:21 Nicola Headlam

Nicky, back to poetry or back to place or back to place poetry or what do you think?

00:37:27 Nicky Marsh

Well, I've got to stay with Pride because of the neighborhood boards for that being rolled out.

00:37:32 Nicky Marsh

So I'm working with Joseph and some colleagues from Sheffield Hallam and Plymouth on thinking around how can we use what we've learned to support these neighborhood boards because they've got the same challenges and they don't really have the infrastructure to do this kind of sustained community engagement.

00:37:47 Nicky Marsh

They don't have the metrics they've been charged.

00:37:49 Nicky Marsh

History is repeating itself, we can see that.

00:37:51 Nicky Marsh

So how do we get some kind of baseline research in now?

00:37:54 Nicky Marsh

How do we think about longitudinal measures now?

00:37:56 Nicky Marsh

How can we think about qualitative data now?

00:37:59 Nicky Marsh

So working on that as a project that needs to take place in the next 12 months, but I've also gone back to literature, not just poetry, but poetry as well, to think about housing and the housing crisis and the way in which the housing crisis is being written about by contemporary writers.

00:38:13 Nicky Marsh

I think gives us another way of thinking around, thinking about precarity and experience.

00:38:18 Nicky Marsh

And it puts that into a really interesting history of what housing means.

00:38:22 Nicky Marsh

Housing and literature have always been sort of synonymous with each other.

00:38:26 Nicky Marsh

Yeah, plots and plots.

00:38:27 Nicky Marsh

So, exactly. So thinking about that, to do both sides around housing.

00:38:39 Nicola Headlam

So getting specific, I think we've got Cara

00:38:43 Nicola Headlam

I am chalking up all your features of a excellent broker.

00:38:49 Nicola Headlam

If you think of other specific people that you've come across who are really good brokers and then I should explain in my world a broker is like a Lego brick and it bricks onto a good place leader.

00:39:00 Nicola Headlam

So all place leaders are brokers but not all brokers are place leaders.

00:39:05 Nicola Headlam

I think that's the formulation as I've got to it at the moment.

00:39:08 Nicola Headlam

So brokerage is the kind of leadership which you've been describing, Cara, intuitively feeling into deep meaning making and all that malarkey.

00:39:18 Nicola Headlam

But a place leader is somebody who have the leadership of a place kind of conferred onto them or it's their kind of job or role or whatever.

00:39:26 Nicola Headlam

So just all three of you, if you think of a specific person who's a really good broker or a specific good place leader that you've worked with, Cara.

00:39:34 Nicola Headlam

Thoughtful.

00:39:35 Nicky Marsh

And we're not just allowed to say Cara.

00:39:38 Josphe Owen

Cara.

00:39:40 Nicky Marsh

We practiced.

00:39:41 Nicola Headlam

I'm getting the feeling that Cara is a really good broker.

00:39:43 Josphe Owen

It's already been revealed to you.

00:39:45 Nicola Headlam

Yeah, it has been.

00:39:47 Nicola Headlam

The revelation has happened.

00:39:49 Nicola Headlam

Exactly.

00:39:50 Nicola Headlam

I did a thing with Birmingham Citizens recently all about animation.

00:39:53 Nicola Headlam

They were kind of, you know, by this point it was like, well, clearly the work of Birmingham Citizens is doing a thing.

00:39:59 Nicola Headlam

So I think we can take as read that Cara.

00:40:01 Nicola Headlam

So maybe the question for Cara is what allows you to be a good broker?

00:40:05 Nicola Headlam

Is it about having a lot of, you know, you can do whatever seems to make sense with your community, again imagine you're handing over to somebody and saying this is the job, this is how to do it well, what are those conditions?

00:40:21 Josphe Owen

If you have a partner in this case Cara who is able to kind of explain what the ask is, what the need is

00:40:27 Josphe Owen

and do a lot of graft, really, insofar as being available to talk and to be kind of engaged with the kind of co-creation of the work.

00:40:37 Josphe Owen

And again, we talk about co-creation and all that sort of thing, or co-production.

00:40:40 Josphe Owen

This genuinely was because it was Cara bringing all the insights and all the knowledge from her place, from Mansbridge, and then us being able to kind of respond to that, really.

00:40:51 Josphe Owen

I mean, we were responding to Cara a lot of the time, not leading Cara, but Cara was leading us.

00:40:56 Josphe Owen

And given the nature of capacity and universities on all our time.

00:40:59 Josphe Owen

We don't have loads of it. So if we don't have a partner, even if they've commissioned us, it's not tons of money, obviously.

00:41:06 Josphe Owen

So it requires, yeah, incredible commitment on behalf of the partner to kind of really present the work and give us obvious routes to feed in and support.

00:41:18 Josphe Owen

And this was, yeah, it was a small project, really, but we made it look like a massive project, really, relative to the sums involved.

00:41:27 Josphe Owen

And that was almost all down to Cara's commitment to be able to facilitate and to be present at these creative workshops, to build connections with the primary school where we ran a further two poetry workshops to kind of develop and kind of extend the work as we went along would have been incredibly tricky for us.

00:41:46 Josphe Owen

But it was Cara kind of pushing us all the time saying, should we do this? Should we do this? Should we do this?

00:41:50 Josphe Owen

And they're all good ideas. So you're going to go,

00:41:52 Josphe Owen

we will do them then and we'll make the time, we'll make it work, we'll make it fit.

00:41:56 Josphe Owen

And then if you look at the, I'm sure you've got an activity list from the project, Cara, the sheer extent of the work and activities that were undertaken is incredible given the resource involved and that is down to you putting in that work.

00:42:11 Nicola Headlam

There we are.

00:42:14 Josphe Owen

I just want to underline that thing about impact as well, and also extending beyond the usual suspects, in terms of who you were speaking with in place and where the project really succeeded.

00:42:24 Josphe Owen

And that was done to your organisation and your colleagues organisation at Abri was with that showcase events.

00:42:29 Josphe Owen

Obviously, we'd undertaken all these creative workshops over the course of the project, and that generated lots of artifacts and lots of images and photographs and stuff.

00:42:39 Josphe Owen

And that was exhibited in the primary school.

00:42:42 Josphe Owen

And we had on that day, what, 400 attendees from the area and surrounds?

00:42:48 Josphe Owen

So it's an incredible number of people who came and engaged with the work, with the heritage, with the creative artifacts.

00:42:56 Josphe Owen

And well, Cara, you can speak to that a little bit, can't you?

00:42:59 Josphe Owen

But that was a day where people were meeting each other for the first time in like 10, 15 years or seeing each other, having known each other from a long time ago.

00:43:09 Nicola Headlam

So all the things that you're describing, they seem incredibly wholesome.

00:43:13 Nicola Headlam

We feel, don't we, that sometime, well, certainly with the rise of the far right and sort of narratives about place and pride and, you know, kind of just wonder how far you would advocate, was there, is there conflict?

00:43:28 Nicola Headlam

Do you have to manage the more difficult end of community relations, Cara, and how do you?

00:43:34 Nicola Headlam

I'm assuming that, like everywhere, you're not inured from the wider politics.

00:43:39 Cara Headon

Yeah, I mean, in my role, we are getting more involved in the kind of the social cohesion part of what's been happening, the flags being put up, just people being generally kind of less welcoming.

00:43:53 Cara Headon

But that's been the underlying kind of theme of this project was about like getting to know your neighbors.

00:44:02 Cara Headon

And as I said at the start, it's the one thing you do have in common.

00:44:05 Cara Headon

So I don't, I wouldn't in my role wouldn't directly deal with any, we have different teams, we have community safety teams and housing teams, but we're there to support those teams.

00:44:16 Cara Headon

So for example, tomorrow I'm doing an event with housing at a particular block where there's some issues.

00:44:22 Cara Headon

So we go out and we can support those teams.

00:44:25 Cara Headon

And it might be that we'd run some projects or some activities with the hidden agenda of improving social cohesion, but without it being really obvious.

00:44:38 Nicola Headlam

I just wonder if, as I say, everything you've described is so kind of careful and nuanced and about making meaning, but there are of course, you know, we see it everywhere, very, you know, the past isn't a settled thing under which everybody was kind to each other, as Nikki was saying about deindustrialisation across the whole world.

00:44:58 Nicola Headlam

There are, you know, political and economic forces that come to bear on your place

00:45:03 Nicola Headlam

And, you know, some of the analyses of the past or a pride in the past can be, you know, antithetical to kind of a progressive or kind of hopeful future, I guess.

00:45:14 Nicola Headlam

And like, again, nowhere in this nation is inured to the fact that yes, symbols like flags, things like that, that these are really multi-layered artefacts in place. Nicky, you look like you want to-

00:45:25 Nicky Marsh

Yeah, we, I think we started off thinking that

00:45:29 Nicky Marsh

was going to happen, that's what we were going to uncover.

00:45:32 Nicky Marsh

If anything, people feel very strongly what local pride is and what national pride is and civic pride is, and they don't conflate them in a way which we kind of expected them to move into that kind of register of national pride.

00:45:44 Nicky Marsh

They don't even feel pride in Southampton, they feel pride in their park.

00:45:47 Nicky Marsh

So it doesn't go up to the national very quickly, was one of the things that we found.

00:45:52 Nicky Marsh

If anything, the pride agenda that was conflated was the LGBTQ agenda.

00:45:56 Nicky Marsh

That was confused in people's mind when they were thinking about pride in place.

00:45:59 Nicky Marsh

And we literally had meetings with organisations and volunteer groups and they thought that's what we were talking about.

00:46:04 Nicky Marsh

That's what they think about Pride.

00:46:05 Nicky Marsh

So I think, although we started off, because it was under that kind of Johnsonian moment, thinking it was going to be about...

00:46:12 Nicky Marsh

It was going to be about the flags and everything that the flags represented and continue to represent them also.

00:46:18 Nicky Marsh

And I think it wasn't the case because we were in public places.

00:46:22 Nicky Marsh

And I think, Joseph, I'm thinking of the work you did in Darlington with the kind of recent immigrant communities in Darlington and the way in which they express pride in place, the ways in which we work with food banks and you were in wrestling gyms.

00:46:33 Nicky Marsh

And they really were about that local community and the infrastructure in that local community.

00:46:36 Nicky Marsh

And they weren't thinking about those other agendas, which we were fearful of and assumed

00:46:41 Nicky Marsh

wrongly that we were going to find and actually people are more sophisticated than that.

00:46:46 Nicola Headlam

Really interesting point that, because in my experience, no space is hermetically sealed from any other space.

00:46:53 Nicola Headlam

There's sort of a lot, a lot of, if you see space as like an administrative container, but more like in the kind of idea scape, whether there is a lot of leakage from kind of very local to very national and back, you know, again, Pride, classical example, a lot of that is

00:47:10 Nicola Headlam

objects of gay pride are really international and they settle in sort of specific places, in specific ways, with specific queer histories.

00:47:19 Nicola Headlam

But Joseph.

00:47:21 Joseph Owen

No, I mean, that's right.

00:47:22 Joseph Owen

And so there were leakages, but they weren't so clear cut and they were strange and disaggregated and shifted in strange ways.

00:47:30 Josphe Owen

And, you know, when I suppose how we need to think about this, when we engage with people around these questions of pride or relationship to their place,

00:47:39 Josphe Owen

it then didn't necessarily invoke the wider national sentiments, I suppose.

00:47:45 Josphe Owen

That wasn't to say there wasn't a kind of insidious politics still at play, or like, you know, some kind of very kind of exclusionary, sometimes racist, sometimes homophobic views expressed in different places.

00:47:57 Josphe Owen

There were, I suppose it's thinking about that register and that cadence of

00:48:01 Josphe Owen

Pride in place, as it links the agenda, it wasn't that was less clear-cut those relationships, as Nikki points out, between the local and the regional and the hyper-local and the national and so on.

00:48:12 Josphe Owen

There's one thing I wanted to come back to, which...

00:48:15 Josphe Owen

When Nicky was giving the example of Depot earlier, I thought it was really interesting, the thing about deindustrialisation.

00:48:20 Josphe Owen

In Mansbridge, the Ford factory, which is nearby, or was nearby, is the kind of, was the employer.

00:48:27 Josphe Owen

That's what Mansbridge supported, basically, employment of the Ford factory.

00:48:31 Josphe Owen

And obviously that's now since closed.

00:48:33 Josphe Owen

So a lot of people who lived in Mansbridge, who we spoke with, had either worked in the factory themselves, or their parents did, or their grandparents did, and that's that kind of classic lineage we might expect.

00:48:43 Josphe Owen

But what was interesting, and this again, what creative workshops were able to draw out, was complicated feelings and then talking about intersectionality.

00:48:50 Josphe Owen

But for instance, one of the participants I really recall spoke about how they came to Mansbridge and they really disliked the environment or parts of the environment in Mansbridge because of the influence of the Ford Factory, this kind of

00:49:05 Josphe Owen

paternalistic outlet that had a real kind of sort of dominion over Mansbridge's vision and how people felt about their place.

00:49:12 Josphe Owen

And she actually found it very kind of, she was an outsider in some respects as a new person in that community, but also as a woman, she felt quite excluded in lots of kind of sharp and challenging ways.

00:49:26 Josphe Owen

And that would obviously be like in the social clubs or whatever, you know the people who worked at the Ford factory.

00:49:31 Josphe Owen

And then there's a real gender divide between their partners or their wives or their children.

00:49:36 Josphe Owen

And that all was kind of under this locus of the Ford factory, which is obviously seen as this loss is obviously lamented in the ways that you might expect.

00:49:46 Josphe Owen

But even its existence as a kind of authority or as a kind of employer in the area is loaded with lots of kind of threaded sort of

00:49:55 Josphe Owen

feelings and memories and perceptions that aren't clear cut.

00:49:58 Josphe Owen

So that gnarliness that you were alluding to, Nicola, is very present.

00:50:01 Josphe Owen

And again, I think it comes to the fore again, not through those standard consultations.

00:50:08 Nicola Headlam

You just reminded me again of the Morris factory and then became the BMW factory.

00:50:12 Nicola Headlam

And yeah, the locus of that plant as so much more than just a site of production.

00:50:19 Nicola Headlam

But equally, we don't often think about it in terms of like a Detroit narrative, like a post-car, post-Fordist even, you know, modes of production.

00:50:29 Nicola Headlam

But that's because I think our economic policy is in such denial about how

00:50:35 Nicola Headlam

stuff gets made, where it gets made, sites of production and consumption.

00:50:40 Nicola Headlam

And we've just got this mad and completely wrong notion that this service economy, which is clean and placeless industry in making and shaping not just the objects, but the subjectivities of the object.

00:50:54 Nicola Headlam

And then what happens when you no longer make the objects, but the subjectivities

00:51:01 Nicola Headlam

And as you said, there's a gender to that and there's a whole power politics to that.

00:51:05 Nicola Headlam

And yeah, of course, it makes the neatness of a kind of literally Fordist mode of production under which there is a lot of clarity about who does what, where, when, and then this sort of splurgy mess of economic function, role in the world.

00:51:24 Nicola Headlam

I was interested in what you said about sort of not uncovering far-right narratives and all that kind of thing, because one of the things that they look like they do is speak to a sense of, well, the economy's moved on, but, and the left behind, I mean, I, again, that's, I think I feel funny about pride, but left behindness, like just because an economic tide has gone out, this sort of notion of strandedness and prosperity is elsewhere.

00:51:52 Nicola Headlam

These are just, these are just

00:51:53 Nicola Headlam

mad economic narratives that we allow ourselves to have, the ways in which who gets what and how and where.

00:52:02 Nicola Headlam

It's pathetic in our policy making that we're not strong on who, what, whom, where.

00:52:07 Nicky Marsh

And the pride agenda is so complicated here because one of the things if you want to become a city of culture, which we didn't, you had to demonstrate how awful you were.

00:52:16 Nicky Marsh

It's the opposite tribute to a beauty competition.

00:52:18 Nicky Marsh

You actually really have to plumb your depths to get that.

00:52:21 Nicky Marsh

And then if you don't get it, then you're left with this narrative that said how awful you are and no prize.

00:52:27 Nicky Marsh

I mean, they're very damaging to, you know, Southampton.

00:52:29 Nicky Marsh

Forward is doing lots of work in that area and is very aware of that and worked with the university on that.

00:52:34 Nicky Marsh

But they're a very difficult thing to mobilise a community around an emotion that's a deficit.

00:52:39 Nicola Headlam

Yeah, and deficit models then that feed funding models that feed

00:52:45 Nicola Headlam

worst first or the rest of it, again, again, I like you, Cara, was trained as a community developer.

00:52:50 Nicola Headlam

You're looking at assets all the time, but then somehow I think there is a really difficult thing between sort of small and beautiful, layered and complex, and then it sort of thins as it gets, as it goes up.

00:53:04 Nicola Headlam

And as I say, for me,

00:53:06 Nicola Headlam

our like national economic mission plan is pathetic, yet the space that we have for making meaning locally is kind of curtailed.

00:53:18 Nicola Headlam

We're still in the wrong place on everything.

00:53:19 Nicola Headlam

We need to be strong here on this and we're weak on it.

00:53:21 Nicola Headlam

We need to be strong here.

00:53:22 Nicola Headlam

It's like it all, it's like we're in this odd shuffle between thick and thin understandings of place.

00:53:29 Nicola Headlam

Sorry, that's just.

00:53:31 Nicky Marsh

No, it's no, that's really, it's really, really true.

00:53:34 Nicky Marsh

And somehow the neighborhood borders are kind of in the middle of that sandwich as well and expected to do both.

00:53:40 Nicola Headlam

Sure.

00:53:41 Nicola Headlam

And having an eye on kind of international best practice and having an eye on a deficit model, you know, you can't look in all those directions and be seeing clearly, I think, is that kind of what I think about all that.

00:53:54 Nicola Headlam

And I think that the neighborhood renewal agenda over the 30 years of its kind of most recent

00:54:00 Nicola Headlam

incarnation in this country has demonstrated that in a whole stacked set of power, resource and competence and capability, you know, you just, and part of the reason why our national mission has completely faulted is because where you have levers, you don't have interest, where you have interest, you don't have, you know, it's just, you're really, really out of whack in terms of all of the above.

00:54:32 Nicola Headlam

I am going to let you have a wave of my place-based innovation magic wand.

00:54:37 Nicola Headlam

You have to be careful with it.

00:54:38 Nicola Headlam

It can grant a wish.

00:54:39 Nicola Headlam

You have absolute power to do one of these things, but you must use your powers to make a tangible change to a specific place.

00:54:46 Nicola Headlam

Your change will be specific, measurable, actionable, recordable and transferable - SMART

00:54:50 Nicola Headlam

Magic is hard to get a hold of at the moment and is subject to a 20% reducing multi-year budget settlement.

00:54:56 Nicola Headlam

You can have 10 million pounds, half an hour with the cabinet and a slide deck, poking stick,

00:55:00 Nicola Headlam

editorial control of a tabloid, a clause in a bill, or you can have a whole new act.

00:55:06 Nicola Headlam

You've got new, King's Speech is new, so you can have a whole act.

00:55:10 Nicola Headlam

A simple message that would go viral.

00:55:12 Nicola Headlam

Someone as an advocate for the work, and this one is for the real nerds, an answer to something that has bothered you forever.

00:55:20 Cara Headon

I think it would be weirdly good to have a message go kind of like viral on TikTok.

00:55:28 Nicola Headlam

Very good.

00:55:29 Cara Headon

I think, and other social media outlets.

00:55:32 Nicola Headlam

All social media is available.

00:55:34 Cara Headon

Yeah, other social media, just because I feel like newspapers are a dying breed.

00:55:40 Cara Headon

I mean, I don't know personally apart from a particular age of people that read them now.

00:55:47 Cara Headon

So yeah, we did have a quick discussion, didn't we, Joseph, about if we could choose a particular person maybe to share a message to be that person that went viral on TikTok.

00:55:59 Jospheh Owen

So I think there's a couple of things.

00:56:01 Jospheh Owen

I suppose our message from the Mansbridge Heritage Project was very straightforward.

00:56:05 Jospheh Owen

It was just basically, you know, heritage is the friends you make along the way.

00:56:08 Jospheh Owen

It doesn't have to be

00:56:10 Jospheh Owen

old buildings, it doesn't have to be necessarily having a good heritage literacy, whatever that might mean, but it's simply a way of engaging with your place and understanding that a lot of heritage is the relationships you have with other people and being able to foreground that and understand that as a part of your heritage.

00:56:25 Jospheh Owen

So that would be probably part of the message that we try and communicate.

00:56:28 Nicola Headlam

Who's your influence then for that?

00:56:30 Jospheh Owen

Unfortunately, when we were discussing this previously, it was very much around the David Attenborough 100 years old celebrations and all sorts around it.

00:56:39 Jospheh Owen

I think actually David Attenborough, I was a bit cautious about that when Jo and Cara raised that, but I can kind of see it in a way because he does have mass broad appeal and I think he has been on an interesting trajectory himself.

00:56:53 Nicola Headlam

I tell you what, in a similar vein, I'll tell you who would like everything that you've said today.

00:56:58 Nicola Headlam

The King.

00:56:59 Nicky Marsh

I was going to say, you're going to say The King, aren't you?

00:57:01 Nicky Marsh

You're going to ruin it.

00:57:02 Nicola Headlam

I just think that...

00:57:03 Nicky Marsh

He would.

00:57:04 Nicola Headlam

Can you not hear it?

00:57:05 Nicola Headlam

Like for me, this is king-friendly stuff, this.

00:57:08 Nicky Marsh

It is, but we would say we did work in Dorchester.

00:57:14 Josphe Owen

Oh yeah.

00:57:15 Nicola Headlam

You've been kinged.

00:57:16 Nicky Marsh

Yeah, we've been dekinged, dethroned by Dorchester because of this relational notion between places and competitive place building, Dorchester feels rubbish.

00:57:27 Nicky Marsh

That's where the middle classes all went.

00:57:28 Nicky Marsh

That's where the resources went.

00:57:30 Nicky Marsh

And so we're saying, think about heritage in Dorchester.

00:57:32 Nicky Marsh

And so those model villages, those utopian places, you've got to be careful what's next to them.

00:57:38 Nicky Marsh

So the king would like it, but Poundbury is not as simple as success.

00:57:43 Nicola Headlam

We had a very similar story actually between there was work on millennium communities and also an urban Poundbury up here and yeah to say that it did not succeed is an understatement of all.

00:57:54 Nicola Headlam

I just say I just think in terms of the point Joseph that you know the living heritage and it's all about the relationships you make along the way I can see that would be appealing

00:58:05 Nicola Headlam

All right, so you want David Attenborough, I suggest the King.

00:58:07 Nicola Headlam

Nobody agrees.

00:58:08 Cara Headon

We said David Attenborough and a young influential person.

00:58:12 Cara Headon

We couldn't actually pick someone to pair him up with.

00:58:15 Josphe Owen

We were all too old to actually know of anybody who would be relevant.

00:58:20 Nicola Headlam

Right, so you've got influencers.

00:58:22 Nicola Headlam

Nicky, do you want any of the other levers?

00:58:25 Nicky Marsh

I left this to them.

00:58:26 Josphe Owen

Legislation we'd want, surely, in this brave new world.

00:58:31 Nicky Marsh

Well, I'd really like to tax second homes out of existence.

00:58:34 Nicky Marsh

There we are.

00:58:35 Nicola Headlam

Bosh, you can have that.

00:58:36 Nicola Headlam

If that helps, good.

00:58:37 Nicky Marsh

That would help everything.

00:58:38 Josphe Owen

And we'll sort social care while we're at, is this just a shopping list?

00:58:42 Nicky Marsh

Well, in terms of place, taxing second homes out of existence and reinvesting in social housing is what we need to do.

00:58:48 Nicola Headlam

I think we could be radical, we could just seize them.

00:58:51 Nicky Marsh

Yeah, they just shouldn't exist. No one should own more than one home.

00:58:56 Nicola Headlam

Let's seize them.

00:58:57 Nicola Headlam

Good idea.

00:58:57 Cara Headon

And empty homes. Get rid of them.

00:58:59 Nicky Marsh

Yeah.

00:59:00 Nicola Headlam

Seize them too.

00:59:01 Nicky Marsh

There's enough housing.

00:59:02 Nicola Headlam

Guards, seize them!

00:59:04 Nicola Headlam

Right. Well, that took a turn. Thank you so much for joining us.

00:59:08 Nicola Headlam

We set out to mine insights from experts, real world case studies, practical tips, career advice, not sure, and to spotlight the solutions as well as wave the place-based innovation magic wand.

00:59:20 Nicola Headlam

And we have

00:59:21 Nicola Headlam

That was great everybody.

00:59:23 Everybody

Thank you.