

Making the case

The evidence, key ideas and intentions stimulating
Dudley Creates: a 100 year cultural strategy *in action* for Dudley Borough

Including resourcing considerations for 2023–2028



Dudley CVS is the local infrastructure organisation supporting all sizes and types of voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises, however formal or informal, which benefit the people of Dudley borough. The vision which Dudley CVS works towards is a borough that has caring, vibrant and strong communities where everyone can fulfil their potential. Dudley CVS manages Brierley Hill Civic, which has been host to artists, performers and theatre production since the 1960's and is the heart of the Brierley Hill community. Dudley CVS initiated and helps to run CoLab Dudley, a social lab and open platform experimenting with new approaches to creative, collaborative participation in Dudley borough.



In 2014 Creative Black Country, an action learning project funded by Arts Council England through the Creative People and Places programme was established. Now one of 39 Creative People and Places projects in the Arts Council's National Portfolio for 2022-2025, Creative Black Country continues to work to engage audiences in areas across the Black Country where evidence shows people are less likely to take part in publicly funded arts and culture. Creative Black Country has been working with creatives and communities in Dudley borough since 2020 through Creative Connections, Creative Communities, Cosy Communities and Dudley Creates. Dudley Creates saw local communities, artists and creatives producing new work together, inspired by people and place. This including a borough wide Summer of Creativity in collaboration with Dudley MBC and CoLab Dudley in 2022.



CoLab Dudley's network of Time Rebels (20 local creatives and designers) led the convening, collective enquiries, research and conversations which have resulted in this evidence base, and the ideas and intentions in Dudley Creates: a 100 Year Strategy in Action for Dudley Borough. All generously shared knowledge, ideas, imagination, talents, time and energy, some of which was invested in by Arts Council England, Dudley MBC and the National Lottery Community Fund.



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Dudley Creates: *A 100 year cultural strategy in action for Dudley Borough* www.dudleycreates.net

Dudley Creates: *Lessons in place based social practice programming and the emergence of an ecological approach*
bit.ly/DudleyCreatesLessons2020-2023

Cultural Collaborators Navigation Guide
Tools for thinking, designing and planning together
bit.ly/DudleyCreatesNavigationGuide

Introduction: cultural strategy in action



Culture is foundational. It is the soil from which our civilisations grow. If we want to ensure that humans have a long, thriving future on this planet, then we need to work at the level of culture as well as politics, science, technology, finance and infrastructure. If we can work with art and culture to stretch our time frames so that we care about the long-term future, then hopefully as a species, we will have a future in the long term.

*~ Ella Saltmarshe and Beatrice Pembroke,
The Long Time Project, 2019*

Dudley Creates: a 100 year cultural strategy in action for Dudley Borough brings together an abundance of insights emerging through action and experimentation in the neighbourhoods, green spaces and town centres of our borough. Across hundreds of hours of shared learning, creative animation and engaged research with local people some recurring patterns stand out. **These patterns have informed the strategy in action.**

They orientate us towards a focus upon **eroding barriers to cultural democracy** and **supporting cultural action for climate justice**. This means responding to the social and ecological crises being experienced by local people, by creating the conditions for them to take cultural action that generates flourishing cultural futures and restores our relationship and connectedness to nature.

Dudley Creates is a 100 year cultural *strategy in action* designed to nourish a flourishing local cultural ecosystem that cultivates curiosity and care for all life, and makes collective imagining, long-term thinking and cultural action by local people much more possible.



This is the first chapter in that story of reconnection. It is a big, hairy, scary story which doesn't shy away from the crises we find ourselves in, or their root causes. It is a story of active hope, of collaboration, and learning together through safe to fail experiments.

This is a story which has space for everyone on its pages. From people hospicing our institutions and systems which are no longer fit for purpose, to local pioneers working on emergent ways of organising and tactics for a just transition to 21st century economies. All are welcome, whether you are simply taking tentative steps to connect and learn, or are ready to boldly strike out towards the futures we want.

Everyone is invited to play their own unique and essential part in this journey.

Dudley's Time Rebels, July 2023

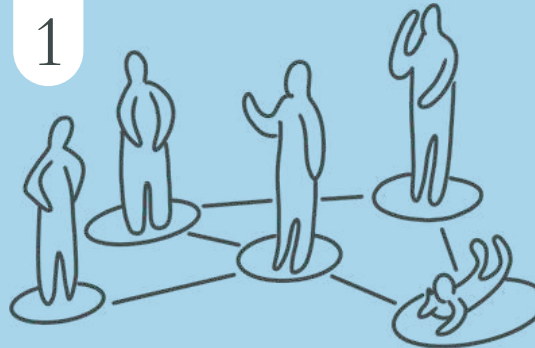
A two page overview

Dudley Creates is a response to the cultural emergency and an associated absence of cultural democracy and uneven cultural engagement across Dudley borough.

See the evolving strategy in action at www.dudleycreates.net



1



What if... we put relationships first?

Key idea: A Network Approach
Navigation Tool: Roles

Organising in a cultural emergency demands leadership from the most diverse array of lived experiences, perspectives and knowledges possible. We seek to achieve this through an open network of cultural collaborators embracing a plurality of culture making.

2



What if... everyone decides what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it?

Key idea: Cultural Democracy
Navigation Tool: Practices

Dudley faces similar challenges to many places across the UK around barriers limiting who takes part and shapes local cultures and creates cultural value. However alternative creative futures are possible – we just need take intentional cultural action.

3



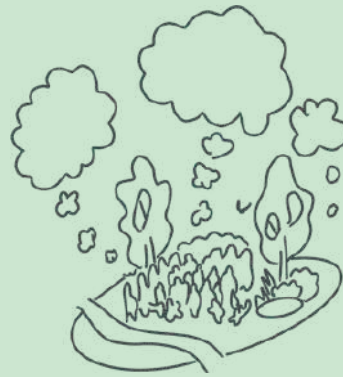
What if we followed nature's lead?

Key idea: Cultural Ecosystem

NavigationTool: Vital Signs

This is about paying attention to the ever changing, evolving and entangled nature of relationships which can help or hinder cultural possibilities in Dudley borough. It also embraces an understanding of place; ways that our local places shape us and our cultures.

4



What if we cultivated everyone's imagination?

Key idea: Collective Imagination

Navigation Tool: Imagination Sundial

Culture and the arts can help make the impossible seem possible.

Dudley Creates aims to nurture conditions for the imagining, growing, co-creating, living and celebrating of narratives of wonder and future possibilities.

5



What if we all became good ancestors?

Key idea: Long-term thinking

NavigationTool: Patterns

A 100 year timeframe helps us expand our horizons to consider the rest of nature, as well as future generations.

It also expands who has responsibility for the cultural landscape to a much wider web of people.

Evidence base

Creative Black Country's *Dudley Creates* programme and learning nurtured over 3 years (2020–2022) has significantly shaped Dudley's 100 Year Cultural Strategy in Action, as well as offering a fitting name for the strategy. Woven together with and by CoLab Dudley's collective of Time Rebels and 3 years of their experimentation and learning (2020–2022), the 100 Year Cultural Strategy in Action draws from an ever growing and evolving evidence base which includes:

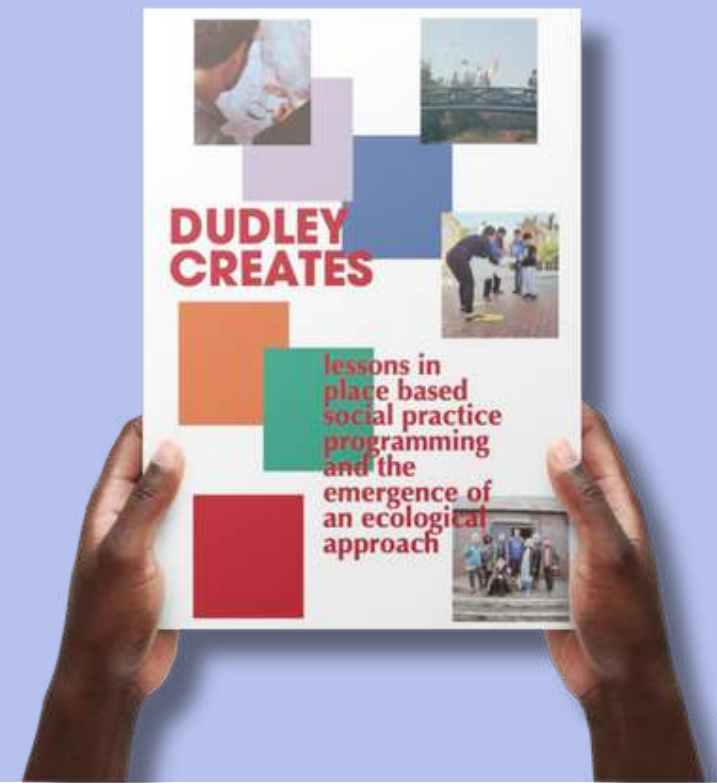
- **Baseline research of Dudley borough's local cultural landscape**. Collated in autumn 2021 through a process of engaged research and cultural animation with local creatives and cross referenced with local, regional and national scale desk research.
- **Detailed social research undertaken in 2022** drawing out learning from **Dudley Borough place based and participatory cultural programme *Dudley Creates*** developed by Creative Black Country. This learning included reflections and observations from artists and participants of over 30 creative projects, including deeper reflective sessions with seven of the project leads and programme producers.
- **Insights captured during 2021 and 2022 through mini-enquiries and creative documentation** led by local creatives convened by CoLab Dudley to unlock imagination and put long-term thinking into action in creative collaborations.
- **Cultural ecosystem sensing** through a 100 coffees listening practice, peer learning around cultural landscape futures qualities, collective building of our local cultural ecosystem vital signs and a cultural futures manifesto.

For a deeper dive into the evolving evidence base for this strategy in action see the research area on the Dudley Creates website:

dudleycreates.net/research

and the Cultural Sector Learning Resources we maintain an open repository of here:

bit.ly/DudleyCreatesLearningResources



Dudley Creates: a 100 year cultural strategy in action is a **response to a cultural emergency and associated absence of cultural democracy and uneven cultural engagement across Dudley borough.**

Desk research undertaken by the CoLab Dudley team in autumn 2021 involved zooming out and finding ourselves in a cultural landscape framed by three dominant challenges:

- the climate emergency
- manifestations of colonial legacies and racism,
- the complex socio-economic and cultural consequences of the global pandemic

These challenges are interlinked and underpinned by by narratives of individualism, scarcity, competition, consumerism, fear of the other and separation from nature.

Just as these ways of seeing and understanding the world have been created, new narratives and cultures can replace them. We are bringing people together to harness the potential that culture, the arts and creativity has in responding to the cultural emergency and related challenges.

Dudley Creates: a 100 year cultural strategy in Action is **an invitation to join cultural pioneers in Dudley borough.**

These are local people who are collaborating to invite curiosity, cultivate imagination and catalyse cultural activity with local people in the places they live, work and play. They ask What if...? to rekindle use of a critical tool in addressing the cultural emergency: our imagination.

You will find a What if...? question for each of five key ideas that this strategy in action is generating action around. These five ideas offer powerful practices, tools and tactics which can be used to overcome barriers experienced by local people and communities who would like thriving cultural lives.

We find it helpful to be explicit about *business as usual* behaviours and approaches that we are proactively letting go of due to the nature of the cultural emergency. In each section of this Making the Case document we've highlighted some of these, positioned alongside alternatives that we need to cultivate in the context we find ourselves in.

We've adopted / created navigation tools for each key idea, to help us talk, design and plan together. These tools (and others) are chosen to aid the transition from a cultural emergency to flourishing cultural futures.

Our navigation guide is shared on the Dudley Creates website:

bit.ly/DudleyCreatesNavigationGuide



Approach to strategy in a cultural emergency

What we need to let go of

What we need to cultivate

A single vision articulated by a handful of people.

A North Star instead of a single vision; strategy which unlocks change, rather than imposing it on communities.

Strategy as static documentation informed by one-off consultation which loses relevance in highly dynamic and uncertain environments.

Strategy designed with ongoing feedback loops from collective sense-making shared by people in many different roles.

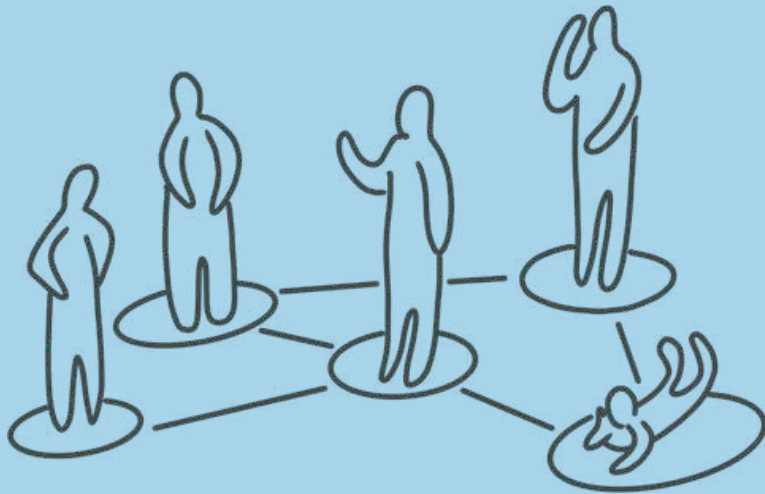
Strategy with a tendency to stay on the page, to be forgotten once published, lost in a mountain of subsequent policies and plans.

Strategy *in action*, a living, evolving, navigation tool supporting people to take cultural action, encouraging adaptation and permission to experiment.





1. What if we put relationships first?



Key idea:
A Network Approach



Navigation Tool:
Roles

Why?

Organising in a cultural emergency demands leadership from the most diverse array of lived experiences, perspectives and knowledges possible.

We seek to achieve this through an open network of cultural collaborators embracing a plurality of culture making.

To address the challenges of our time, we must embrace complexity and work collaboratively across systems of diverse stakeholders, even and especially when the path forward is unclear. It is not an overstatement to say that the future of civilisation and the planet depends on it.

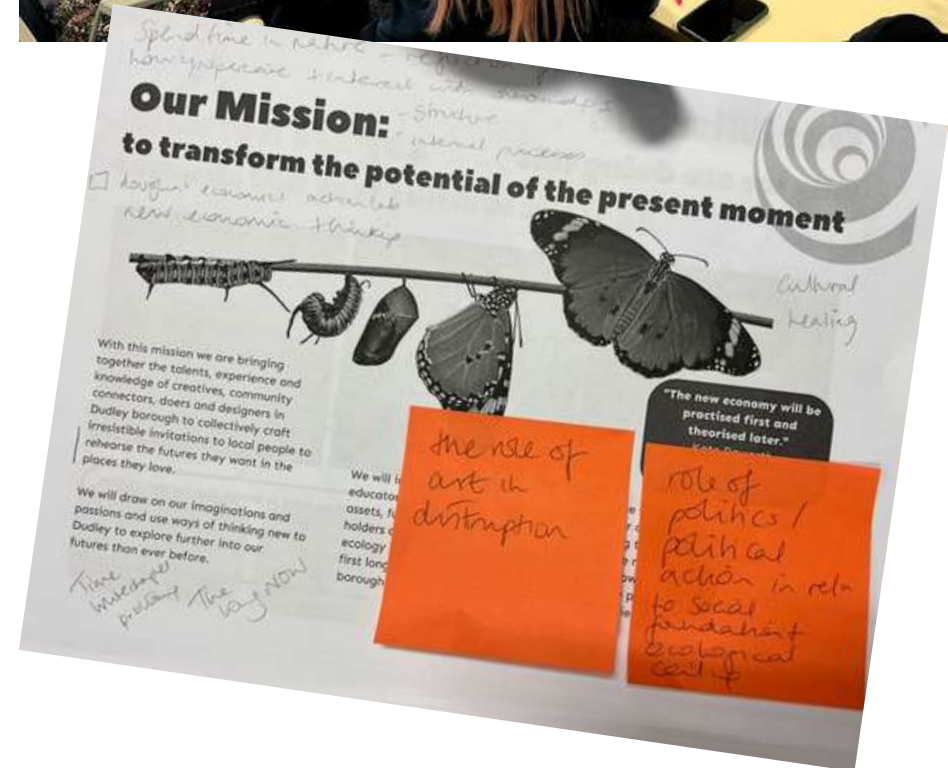
David Ehrlichman,
Impact Networks, 2021

Network development 2019-2022

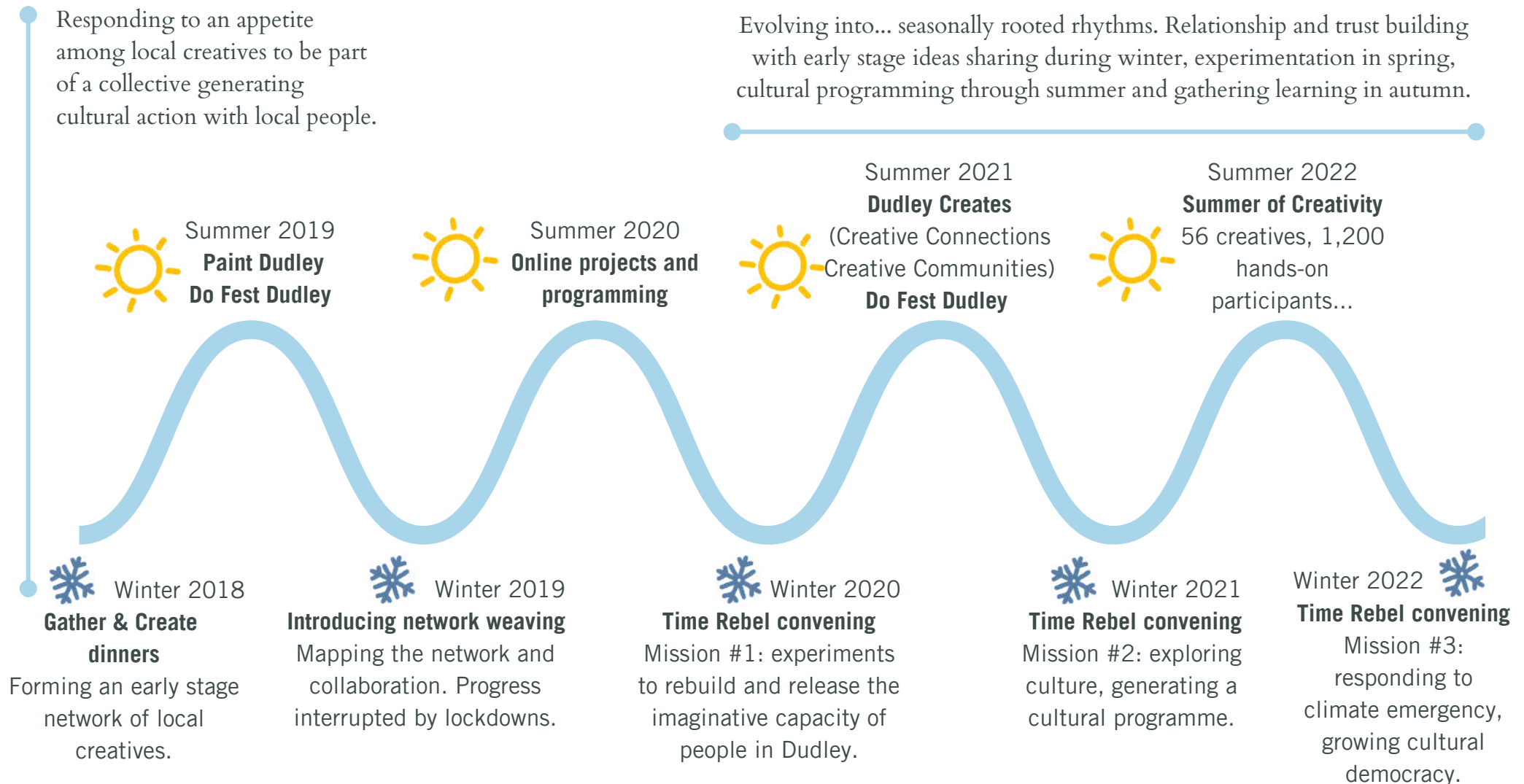
In January 2019 we surfaced an appetite among local creatives to form a collective taking cultural action with local people.

Informal gatherings over dinners led to increasing collaborative cultural action and projects which continue to have ripples. Restrictions imposed during the first six months of the pandemic impacted the bonds in this early stage network, leading to a rethink and much more intentional network convening in autumn 2020 (albeit online to begin with). The pandemic prompted more urgent consideration of imagination and long-term thinking in our local cultural action. We borrowed a term from Roman Krznaric, author of *The Good Ancestor*, who describes **time rebels** as people dedicated to intergenerational justice and long-term thinking.

Invitations were made to local creatives to join a network of Time Rebels embarking on a seasonally rooted year long mission: to develop collaborative experiments testing ways to rebuild and release the imaginative capacity of people in Dudley. The experiments came together through Do Fest Dudley. We built on this through a second year long mission exploring culture and contributing to a Summer of Creativity. This related to a contract from Dudley MBC to undertake mapping, research and engagement to inform a borough-wide cultural programme building on the momentum created by the Commonwealth Games. This strategy in action is one emerging output of the third Time Rebel mission, which involves a collaborative focus on responding to the cultural and climate emergency, the absence of cultural democracy and uneven cultural engagement in Dudley.



Seasonal rhythms of network development, experimentation, programming and learning



Cultural Compacts and Cultural Collaborators

In 2022 we began exploring potential for the network of Time Rebels to steward the development of a 100 Year Cultural Strategy in Action for Dudley Borough.

Arts Council England has been investing in convening of Cultural Compacts to co-design and deliver cultural strategies for places. *Compacts are partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority.* – Arts Council England

We noted lessons and challenges shared in the *Review of the Cultural Compacts Initiative* published by Arts Council England which reinforced our conviction that an open network approach supported by established social infrastructure (which includes a team of Network Guardians and a space to convene) was well worth experimenting with, and likely to eradicate a number of the barriers faced by Cultural Compacts set up as traditional, closed partnership boards.

Within three months of Arts Council England investing in Dudley's Cultural Compact development there were 17 founding members. Within six months the inaugural gathering of Dudley's Cultural Collaborators saw 37 people from 14 local organisations and groups along with local residents, artists and creatives come together to taste, touch, glimpse, imagine and ultimately practice together the futures we want for culture in and across our communities in Dudley borough over the next 100 years.



Dudley's Cultural Collaborators Network is Dudley's Cultural Compact.

- The structure is that of action network; focused on connection, learning and action.
- Membership is open.
- The network convenes seasonally, four times a year.
- A collective of Time Rebels (local creatives, artists, designers) co-design the seasonal gatherings.
- A core team of Network Guardians in the CoLab Dudley team share network leadership responsibilities, with specific roles around network facilitation, cultural programming, network learning, and regenerative design.

Working in the spirit of action research

Woven into our network approach are evolving Action Learning Agendas that have become part of a creative and collaborative process of asking questions in public in a way that doesn't get slowed by bureaucracy. In their work on cultural democracy, Jonathan Gross and Nick Wilson encourage us to "*work in the spirit of action research establishing conditions in which it is okay to try things out, take risks, learn from experience and work iteratively*".

With many different cultural collaborators all bringing their curiosity in action, and diverse knowledges to bear, we believe this is a way to hugely expand who gets to shape the future cultural landscape in the borough.

The intentional weaving and socialising of old, new and emergent knowledge and skills is part of the process of creating conditions to nourish cultural capabilities across different local communities and between generations.

Action Learning Agendas emerging from our research in 2022 are areas that we feel would benefit from collective exploration in the journey towards our North Star. They offer practical ways for Dudley's Cultural Collaborators to further support cultural capability for all and opportunities to co-create culture.

This is an important part of our network governance and way of ensuring that we don't get stuck in patterns of behaviour that serve concentrations of power, or reinforce inequity and marginalisation with negative consequences for cultural democracy. Collective sense-making and experimentation across Dudley's Cultural Collaborators Network is at the core of this continual adaptation and strategy in action approach. It is how we have developed Dudley's 100 Year Cultural Strategy in Action, and it is an ongoing practice and vital sign of our network health.





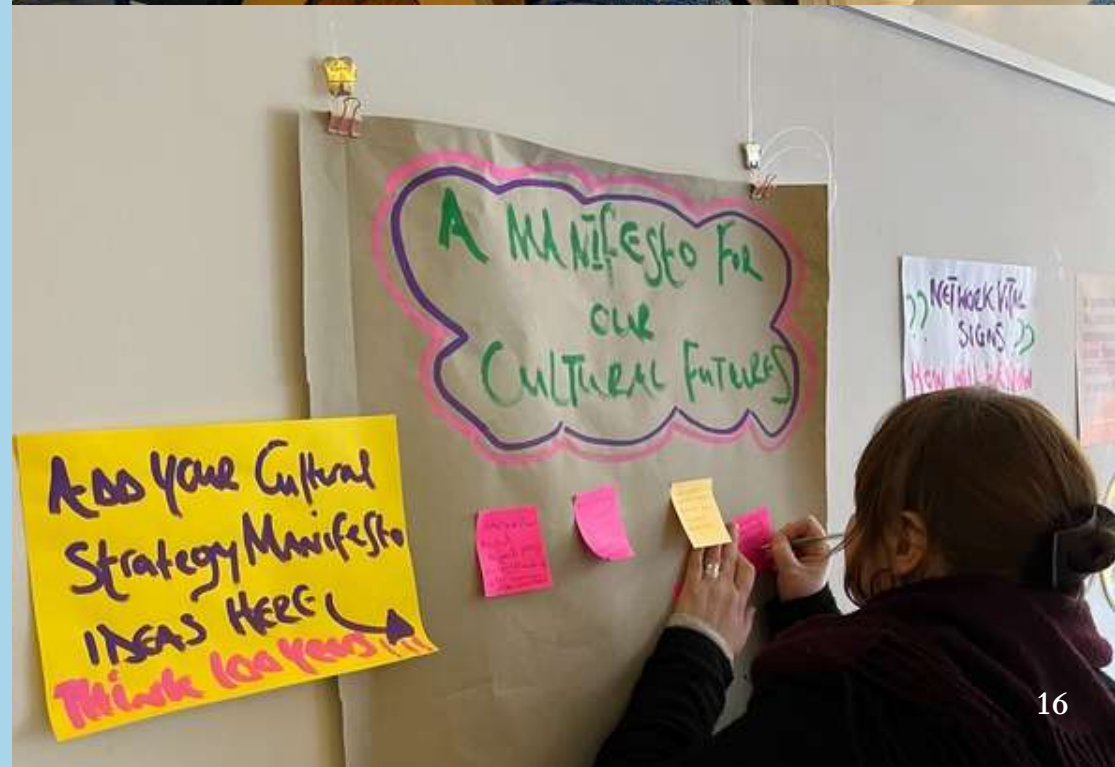
Winter 2022

Cultural Collaborators Gathering Rehearsing the Futures We Want

This inaugural gathering of Dudley's Cultural Collaborators saw 37 people from 14 local organisations and groups along with local residents, artists and creatives come together to taste, touch, glimpse, imagine and ultimately practice together the futures we want for culture in and across our communities in Dudley borough over the next 100 years.

Installations and/or invitations to create and connect at the gathering:

- We Are Makers
- Time To Make... Spaces
- Stitchers in Time
- Dudley People's School for Climate Justice
- Getting Into Hot Water
- Dudley People's Archive
- Dudley Creates Celebration
- A manifesto for Dudley's Cultural Futures
- Cultural Ecosystem Vital Signs
- Doughnut Economics and our Digital Allotment



Orienting towards our North Star: exploring the role and potential of creative documentation

Each Cultural Collaborators gathering focuses upon one or two action learning agendas inspired by sensing and sense making that has emerged from creative activity and cultural action in Dudley. The first action learning agenda to be explored in 2023 emerged from Dudley Creates programme learning around the agency of creative documentation in socially engaged arts practice.

More than illustrating or simply presenting information in the form of a report, for example, creative documentation produces an artwork or cultural product that is a form of knowledge. Chris Johnson states: "Creative documentation serves as another form of knowledge generation that has the potential to shift power by offering a better understanding of creative and cultural practice in communities"

Making Sense of Meaning: How Creative Documentation Enhances Our Understanding of Community Development, Policy Link, 2020

Action Learning Agendas

- How might creative documentation develop into a regular practice of co-creation, shared learning and reflection, as well as celebration within projects?
- How can we ensure this process is not extractive or imposed, but rather generative and supportive of artists and creative communities in their ability to co-create their cultural landscape?

Organising to deliver a 100 Year Cultural Strategy in Action: approach and resourcing

What we need to let go of

What we need to cultivate

Organising through executive panels or partnerships of senior cultural sector stakeholders to oversee, direct implementation and monitor cultural strategy, often in closed, formal meetings. *This severely limits the critical role of diverse lived experiences, perspectives and knowledges that unlock a plurality of culture making.*

A distributed, open, network approach

- Governance that creates an open network of cultural collaborators and expands a sense of shared responsibility for and agency within the local cultural landscape. *This encourages cultural capabilities to grow and diverse practices of culture-making to flourish. This approach embraces the plurality of culture making in the borough.*
- Invitations and navigation tools which encourage people to identify or step into a varied array of roles in a network of cultural collaborators, with a diversity of activity valued and celebrated, from connectors to guardians of cultural resources.



Budget to support a network approach 2023–2028: £362,000

- £70,000+ per year for rent and overheads of a shared network and exhibition space and a small, part time core team (Network Guardians).

2023–2024: £65,000 secured

- £14,800 Cultural Compact development funding (Arts Council England).
- £50,000 Reaching Communities (National Lottery Community Fund).



2. What if everyone decides what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it?



Key idea:
Cultural Democracy



Navigation Tool:
Practices

Why?

Dudley faces similar challenges to many places across the UK around barriers limiting who takes part and shapes local cultures and creates cultural value.

However alternative creative futures are possible. We just need take intentional cultural action.

‘Culture’ as Holden suggests, can no longer be ‘something that is ‘given’, offered’ or ‘delivered’ by one section of ‘us’ to another.’ It needs to be something, ‘that we all own and make:’ by encompassing ‘power with’ as well as ‘within’.

Power Up, Chrise Tiller, 2017

A portrait of cultural activity in Dudley

In 2021 through a four month process of desk research, mapping and engaged research with local creatives we captured a portrait of cultural activity in Dudley. Our analysis of the local and macro cultural landscape told us a story about existing and potential cultural activity and cultural assets. It also told us a story about evidence of enablers and barriers to cultural democracy and the need to nurture cultural capabilities across the borough.

This story is the foundation soil for Dudley Creates: a 100 Year Cultural Strategy in Action, the pre-existing cultural context which we understand, respect and are mindful about. It demands that we pay attention to the relationship between cultural democracy, cultural capabilities and cultural action for the co-created futures we seek.

Cultural Democracy

"Cultural Democracy describes an approach to arts and culture that actively engages everyone in deciding what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it."

64 Million Artists, 2018

Insights from desk research and observations in autumn 2021



Macro cultural context: a cultural emergency



Limits and challenges to cultural democracy



Helps to create the conditions for cultural democracy



Take aways from research so far

Our research and analysis is openly shared in the Cultural Collaborators Digital Allotment. Dig in at bit.ly/DudleyCultureInsights2021

"Cultural democracy requires equal access to a full cultural and creative life where people are able to develop cultural capabilities and express their personal cultural identity through cultural activities they value. It aspires to more equal conditions for imagining, creating, and participation in cultural experiences. It means multiple cultural value systems are respected and shared. It often involves participatory practices and socially engaged art."

Centre for Cultural Value, 2022

This is an urgent macro story where culture – the 'ethnosphere' – can either work to sustain or destroy future life on earth.

The existing local Dudley picture is one of uneven access to a creative life and imagining in the borough. This results in a limitation upon the types of futures that can be imagined and then manifest here. While this is a story of existing barriers to cultural democracy, it is also one of huge cultural potential if that cultural democracy deficit is reversed and regenerative cultures were nurtured instead.

We know this alternative story is possible because within this existing picture there is also evidence of active hope manifest in many examples of creative activity that offer 'seeds of the future in the present'. These seeds actively re-center the power of everyday creativity in a story of local cultural change made possible through cultural co-production and collective action. This local story of active hope is sparkling with many stories for inspiration.

There is however, a need to weave existing and emerging stories into relationship to support a cultural ecosystem that nurtures narratives of abundance not cultural deficit. This cultural ecosystem then needs to create the conditions for much wider collective future imagining and long-term thinking for generations ahead. (We explore these key ideas in the remaining sections of this document making the case for Dudley's strategy in action.)



We start from an understanding of the ability of culture and the arts to make the impossible seem possible. This is central to our collective ability to dream and take action towards futures in which local people, places and cultures express their unique contributions to the health and vitality of our communities and the flourishing of all life, for all time.

But there is a challenge. In Dudley Borough, as in most areas across the UK, the ability and opportunity to take part in imagining alternative futures; or to engage in creative and cultural activity that shapes your local cultural landscape, is tragically uneven across the population (Centre for Cultural Value, 2022; WMCA, 2021). This reflects a national picture of uneven access to arts education:

English state schools are facing a creativity crisis. Since 2010, enrolment in arts GCSEs has fallen by 40% and the number of arts teachers has fallen by 23%. This shift is most pronounced among state schools in deprived areas, where pupils are far less likely to sing in a choir or play in an orchestra. Meanwhile, private schools have invested substantial resources in art and music provision, according to research from Warwick University. This depressing trend is part of a wider and self-reinforcing pattern. As fewer state students have the opportunity to engage with arts or music, fewer go on to study these subjects at A-level or university. The risk is that arts subjects will be restricted to a privileged few, shrinking the cultural horizons of everyone but the elite.
(The Guardian, 2023)

Compounding this is the small and declining percentage of creative workers from working class backgrounds:

The proportion of working-class actors, musicians and writers has shrunk by half since the 1970s, new research shows. Analysis of Office for National Statistics data found that 16.4% of creative workers born between 1953 and 1962 had a working-class background, but that had fallen to just 7.9% for those born four decades later. ... The finding raises questions about why years of attempts to make the arts more open and diverse have not had more impact – people who grew up in professional families were four times more likely than those with working-class parents to be in creative work, the study found.
(The Guardian, 2022)

This is a national and local cultural democracy deficit. This worryingly limits who has the opportunity to develop cultural capabilities, who imagines new cultural futures into being, and who and what will flourish in those futures.

Our cultures and the climate emergency are interdependent. This story is premised upon the understanding that cultures are not static, they can change rapidly, and they co-evolve. This evolution is of course largely determined by **who** has the substantive freedom to take part and shape local cultures and create cultural value. This freedom, also known as cultural capabilities, is in part a function of the extent of cultural democracy in a place.



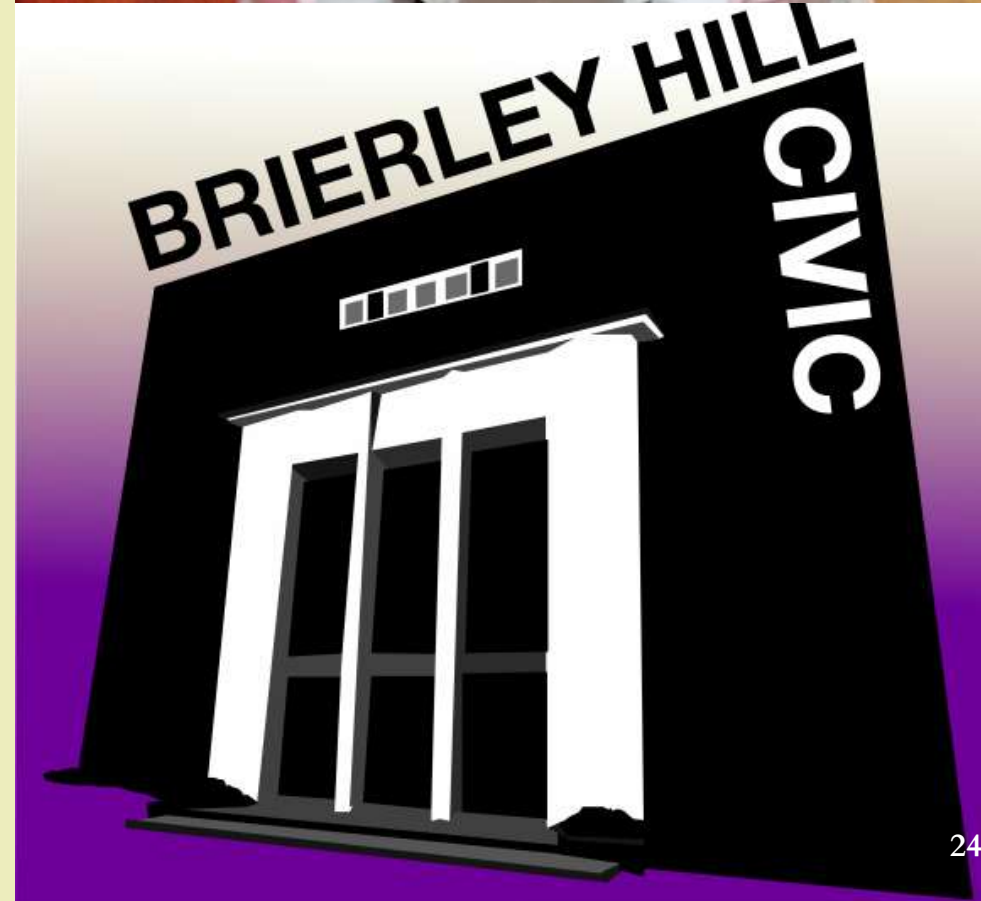
Reviving a local cultural venue

Dudley CVS taking on management of Brierley Hill Civic Hall

Brierley Hill Civic Hall has been host to artists, performers and theatre production since the 1960s. With a 695 seating capacity it is the largest theatre in the Dudley borough. However use had critically declined when Dudley Council approached Dudley CVS in 2013 to take over the running of this much loved local venue. Dudley CVS were entrusted to revive Brierley Hill Civic on an 18 month trial which began in March 2015. It was an incredible success.

Early engagement of local residents, colleges, cultural groups, local businesses, charities and voluntary groups and schools led to 28 new users making bookings within 4 months, doubling occupancy. By the end of the trial the Civic had been transformed from an underused, deteriorating venue into an award nominated 5* rated cultural venue offering a huge range of events to suit all tastes and budgets. Dudley CVS then proceeded to take over the running of Brierley Hill Civic on a permanent basis through an asset transfer process.

Dudley CVS took on Brierley Hill Civic with clear aspirations for it to stimulate and host locally grown creative and cultural activities and become a home to many more local groups particularly during the daytime. This ambition is yet to be realised, and strongly relates to intentions around cultural democracy in this *Strategy in Action*, and the need for investment in cultural engagement and participation.



Orienting towards our North Star: cultural capabilities focused programming

Creative Black Country's Dudley Creates programme has shown us a really hopeful example of what it means to design a cultural programme in the context of crises. We learnt that by designing and facilitating a cultural programme that is flexible, relational, empathetic and experimentation orientated you reduce artist risk and vulnerability and increase their capacity and confidence for practice development, innovation and adaptation.

Within the context of extreme uncertainty owing to intersecting crises this programme patiently held open space for emergent and diverse cultural opportunities. This capacity to flex in response to shifting context and changing variables will be critical to future cultural programming alongside and with communities as crises evolve. A more rigid and less relational approach risks lost cultural opportunities and increasing barriers to cultural democracy.

By expanding who co-creates culture and where and how they do that this programme has gently disrupted cultural norms of what is or is not expected, while growing what is perceived as possible for those that took part. This capabilities approach within cultural programming and strategy will become even more critical if communities are to nurture the regenerative resilience required to navigate crises.

Dudley Creates – lessons in place based social practice programming and the emergence of an ecological approach, our research report is available from www.dudleycreates.net/research

Action Learning Agendas

- *How might we test aspects of Dudley Creates Creative People and Places programme design in other programmes?*
- *What other parts of Dudley's cultural ecosystem can support this approach?*
- *How might we design a cultural capabilities approach to cultural programming and cultural ecosystems so we are better able to respond to intersecting crises?*

Addressing a cultural democracy deficit: approach and resourcing

What we need to let go of

What we need to cultivate

A traditional approach to cultural strategy involving plans for audience development, aligned with a dominant national cultural policy focus upon greater participation in state endorsed cultural activity. *This undermines the cultural value potential of places by failing to nurture the cultural capabilities of everyone in that community.*

- A **cultural capabilities approach**; *our shared learning indicated that this is central to overcoming barriers to cultural democracy.*
- Growing cultural potential through cultural democracy in the borough.
- Support for everyday existing and potential creativity, non-arts creative spaces, or locally grown alternatives.

The myth that cultural sector scarcity, creative life precarity and cultural democracy deficit are inevitable in Dudley.

A shift in the cultural landscape, the structures that shape it, the practices and behaviours that animate it, the myths and narratives that breath life into it. .



Investing in cultural democracy

2023–2028: £2,000,000

- Micro community commissions: £45,000+ per year
- Curation, production, Creative Advisor support: £50,000 per year (2025–2028*)
- Work led by and with marginalised / under represented group: £25,000–£50,000 per year
- Capital investment and dedicated programming in key cultural venues managed by / with communities: £1,500,000

*beyond Creative Black Country's current NPO agreement



3. What if we followed nature's lead?



Key idea:
Cultural Ecosystem



Navigation Tool:
Vital signs

Why?

An ecological approach sees culture as a collective and interconnected endeavour, with multiple values.

This is about paying attention to the ever changing, evolving and entangled nature of relationships which can help or hinder cultural possibilities in Dudley borough. It also embraces an understanding of place; ways that our local places shape us and our cultures.

I think H. G. Wells had it right when he said that we are in a race between education and catastrophe.

This race will be decided in all of the places, including classrooms, that foster ecological imagination, critical thinking, awareness of connections, independent thought, and good heart.

The Intelligence of Ecological Design,
David Orr, 2004

Interconnections and interdependencies

Dudley Creates: A 100 Year Strategy *in Action* emerged through weaving together multiple strands of learning to form a collective enquiry. The enquiry is ongoing, multi-layered, invites many voices and knowledge types, and takes the approach of creative experimentation approach. It is intentionally designed as a demonstration of ecological governance in support of a flourishing cultural ecosystem. We know from Arts Council England commissioned research that a flourishing cultural ecosystem:

“works in the spirit of action research ... undertakes ongoing process of always unfinished mapping of the cultural ecosystem ... collectively co-producing knowledge of the cultural life of the area including tangible and intangible cultural resources ... create democratic spaces for ongoing discussion of cultural value, ambitions and experience”

Gross and Wilson, 2019

We have taken these considerations for a flourishing ecosystem seriously by collectively sensing and sense-making an ecosystem portrait (current and potential) to inform this strategy in action.

“[C]ultural opportunity needs to be understood not as located within single organizations or spaces, but through the interconnections and interdependencies between cultural resources of many kinds”

Gross and Wilson, 2018



A flourishing **cultural ecosystem** has the potential to support the conditions for **cultural democracy** and so wider **cultural capabilities** (Gross and Wilson, 2019). These three concepts and ways of understanding culture are interlinked.

While specific responsibilities will differ with roles, ecological leadership and governance will require a more diverse collection of voices, distribution of power in co-creation and decision making, and shared action towards a flourishing cultural ecosystem.

Dudley Creates: A 100 Year Strategy *in Action* lifts our collective knowledge of the plurality of existing and potential cultural value in the borough off the page and pours it into creative action.

While ensuring that we continue to hold open spaces for anyone to share in shaping their cultural landscape. This ecological governance practice supports cultural democracy in the borough.

An ecological approach in action

Flourishing ecosystem practices in Dudley People's School for Climate Justice

Dudley People's School for Climate Justice will catalyse a network of community-led climate action in Dudley town centre and host a co-created curriculum of unusual and creative outdoor learning and nature connection. Community-led peer learning pods will form around local interests in climate and nature. They will reveal the curiosity and imagination of local people and grow the creative confidence needed for community-led action. The People's School will be a demonstrator, sowing seeds of learning to support climate transition.

Collaborations led by local creatives which will act as support for new ideas to grow around or be inspired by are: Getting Into Hot Water; Growing Land Connections; and Stories of Place. These projects are already paying attention to flourishing ecosystem practices and vital signs which include:

- Place based practice
- Collaboration practices
- Socially engaged (arts) practice (responding to social and ecological crisis)
- Working out loud / creative documentation practice
- Collective sense-making practice



Getting Into Hot Water H2O and Climate Crisis in Dudley



Helen and Bill, social artists from Workshop 24 are exploring the impact of climate crisis on water in Dudley

Please come and talk to us, we would like you to get involved

Orienting towards our North Star: an ecological approach to cultural ecosystem stewardship

The use of ecological language and analysis of cultural value within the sector, in addition to the critical link between an ecological approach and enabling conditions for cultural capabilities and cultural democracy has gained greater understanding and acceptance in recent years (Gross and Wilson, 2019; Holden, 2015).

“Cultural ecology is: (i) a condition of the world (an ontological reality). (ii) a descriptive and analytical perspective (an epistemological framework). (iii) an approach to cultural policy, programming and practice (an organisational, managerial or strategic method)... to take an ecological approach (in the third sense) means engaging at a strategic level with interconnections and interdependencies between cultural resources of many kinds. It means paying attention to the dynamic nature of the relationships between the (tangible and intangible) ‘assets’ that enable and constrain cultural opportunity.”

Gross and Wilson, 2019

Action Learning Agendas

- *How are local people part of the ecological governance and spaces of decision-making that shape their cultural landscape?*
- *What is the role of ecosystem stewards in unlocking that distribution of power?*
- *How does an ecological approach create the opportunity to expand/ disrupt limits to what is 'valued' cultural activity, where that should happen, and by whom?*

A healthy cultural ecosystem in Dudley borough

What we need to let go of

What we need to cultivate

Ways of thinking that locate cultural opportunity within single organisations or spaces.

An understanding of cultural opportunity arising through interconnections and interdependencies between cultural resources of many kinds, in many places.

A handful of people and institutions shaping culture in Dudley borough, reinforcing the status quo and dominant hierarchies of cultural value.

Cultural strategy as an agent of social change, with people and organisations across a cultural ecosystem sharing responsibility to celebrate a plurality of cultural values and create the conditions and opportunities for everyone in the borough to co-create culture.



Cultivating increasingly collaborative activity 2023–2028: £2,000,000

e.g. bringing work resourced through UKSPF, heritage, public health, regeneration and tourism into relationship

- Programming in green spaces, food, craft events, arts/literature/poetry/culture festivals, street art festivals, pop-ups etc. £350,000+ per year
- Activities in neighbourhoods e.g. workshops in libraries, heritage projects, curated walking trails: £80,000+ per year



4. What if we cultivated everyone's imagination?



Key idea:
Collective Imagination



Navigation Tool:
Principles

Why?

Culture and the arts can help make the impossible seem possible.

Dudley Creates aims to nurture conditions for the imagining, growing, co-creating, living and celebrating of narratives of wonder and future possibilities.

Art,' has the capacity, 'to help shift our sense of what is possible, to unleash our radical imaginations, to model and experiment with new ways of being in the world, to enact social change'. The increasing inequity of our times would seem to demand a new and 'fierce urgency' for the arts to do just that.

Power Up, Chrise Tiller, 2017

Narratives of wonder and future possibilities

Across the collective enquiry which informs **Dudley Creates: A 100 year Strategy *in Action***, we have learnt about the important role of creatives, creativity and arts in disrupting stuck narratives that limit imaginations and what is perceived as possible. These narratives limit Dudley's cultural potential by undermining opportunities for local people to grow cultural capabilities and create cultural value.

We are in desperate need of new narratives that help us to imagine new futures into being.

- How might we create the conditions in Dudley Borough for new and more just narratives, collective dreaming and nourishment of our long range imaginations?
- What would it take to disrupt the patterns of social and ecological crisis and cultural democracy deficit we've drawn attention to?
- What would it mean to create conditions instead for cultural ecosystem flourishing?
- What is the role of culture in the borough in that transition to regenerative futures?

Shifting from limiting narratives of deficit and extraction, **Dudley Creates** focuses upon what is more possible and the unique cultural potential of Dudley. To do this we create conditions for the imagining, growing, co-creating, living and celebrating of narratives of wonder and future possibilities. Just as our energy, communication or transport infrastructures are a shared public resource that we all rely upon to enable our daily lives, **imagination infrastructure** is a public resource that will shape our futures.

Imagination infrastructures

Imagination infrastructures enable the development, the practices and use of collective imagination. The tools and programmes and projects which create a mycelial web of support for the practices of collective imagination are infrastructure – just as much as paths, road signs, or maps.

Moving beyond the fixed temporality of 'infrastructure' – often imagined as a permanent fixture, "inert and intransigent" (Oldham, 2021) – reconceptualising infrastructure as a verb, 'to infrastructure', enables us to perceive this work as a process.

Edited extracts from: www.imaginationinfrastructuring.com

Revealing and imagining stories of place across Dudley borough

Regenerative design academic and practitioner Pamela Mang explains why reconnecting to place and restoring our relationship to the rest of nature is so important, and how integral culture is to that reconnection. This requires shifting from ‘place-blind culture’ to regenerative cultures.

“Humans, like all other species, are place-based creatures—shaping and shaped by the places we inhabit. Our diverse cultures are the products of our interactions with particular places. Cultures that sustain their vitality and viability have developed practices appropriate to their place, and rituals, moral systems, songs and stories that sustain those practices. Since the advent of the Industrial Age and its universal, place-blind culture, we are increasingly losing the ability to develop and maintain appropriate relations with place. We have, “fallen out of place” and are losing or have lost the once inherent capacity to understand and then establish right relationships, to put ourselves “back in place.” We are becoming what David Orr describes as residents rather than inhabitants. Where residency requires only cash and a map, an inhabitant “dwells . . . in an intimate, organic, and mutually nurturing relationship with a place. Good inhabitance is an art requiring detailed knowledge of a place, the capacity for observation, and a sense of care and rootedness.” Learning how to restore the value and the capability for inhabitancy is the creative challenge and opportunity . . . “ (Pamela Mang, 2005)

Across Time Rebel experiments we have found that the unique potential in Dudley has often emerged through local people connecting to, exploring, designing with and reimagining place based knowledge and narratives.

Time Rebels have been testing out curiosity sparking methods of revealing place based knowledge by surfacing and sharing untold stories through oral histories, creative arts and crafts, locative/ place specific collage, creative writing, illustration, poetry, soundscapes, photography, archiving, site specific dance, counter-mapping, observing, listening and more broadly sensing in place.

These stories of place are made up of more than words, they are often embodied and tacit knowledge rooted in memories, language, geology, ecology, weather systems, the built environment, new and old cultural artefacts, food, and much more besides. They inform the patterns of life in present day Dudley, as well as holding insights into the future potential of this place.

Through practices such as citizen storycatching, people’s archiving, and collective counter mapping, place based knowledge and narratives become visible, valued and better cared for, openly shared, and critically animated. With this place based knowledge seems to come increased capacity for wayfinding and new ways to relate to that place, to nurture a sense of belonging and responsibility for its future. Experiments rooted in place based sensing and sense-making of past, present and future narratives invite new pathways to stewardship. We’ve learned this in Dudley projects: Stories of Place, Poetry of Place, the More-than-Human High Street, Dudley People’s Archive, High Street 2030 and Extinction Rebellion Architecture, and Afro Histories Dudley.

The link between new narratives of place and our capacity to move towards more regenerative relations with place is being brought to life in Dudley in a multitude of ways.

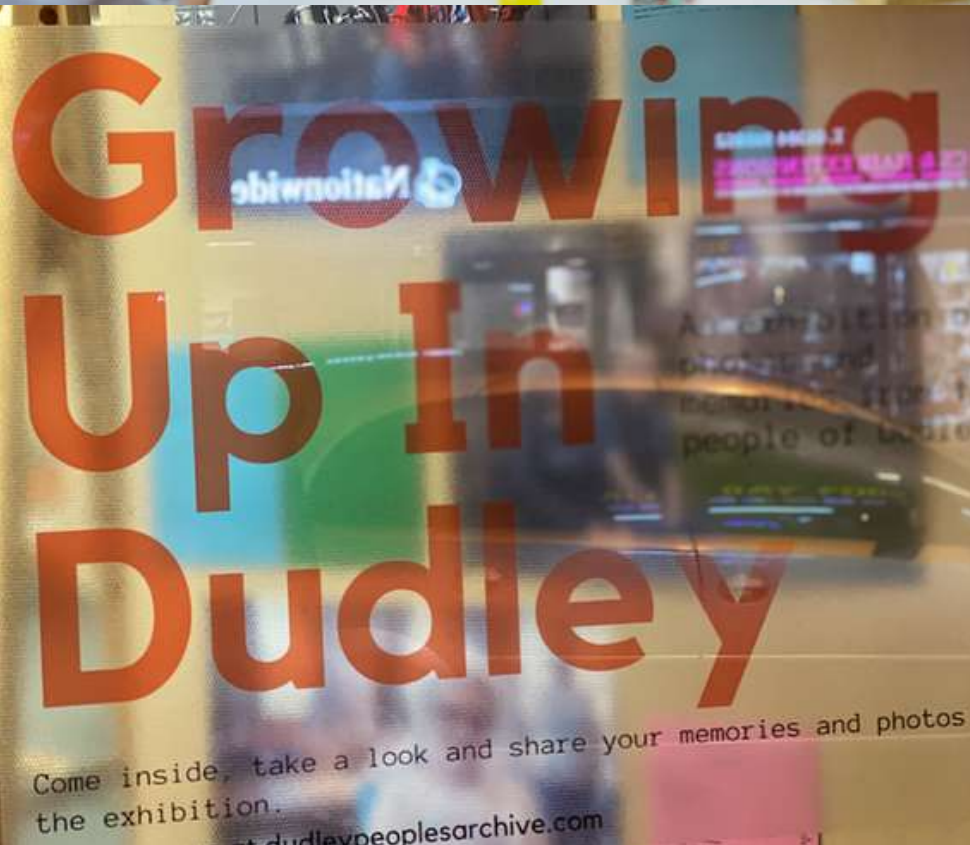
Creative Black Country's Dudley Creates place based programme was intentionally designed to dispel negative local narratives relating to the cultural value and potential co-created by local people and artists. **Afro Histories Dudley and Creart-Collective CIC** learning shows us how therapeutic and collective creative practices rooted in care, reflection, and liberation disrupt limiting cultural narratives about the potential for flourishing creative lives within Black and migrant communities in Dudley. **More-than-human High Street, Stories of Place, Getting into Hot Water, and Growing Land Connections** all use a more embodied creative practice to disrupt narratives of separation from nature and instead invite narratives of re-connection, entanglement and interdependency.





Stitchers in Time and Black Country Collage Club are disrupting narratives of isolation and decay in a post industrial town through relational and creative practices. They acknowledge past narratives of place whilst simultaneously reframing them within new narratives of Dudley as a home for regenerative economies concerned with alternative technology and local food growing.

Dudley People's Archive, Afro Histories Dudley, and emerging Growing Land Connections projects are re-animating, re-connecting to and caring for untold, obscured or forgotten narratives of place and cultural heritage that in turn invite collective imagining of alternative futures informed by those pasts.



High Street 2030 and Extinction Rebellion Architecture, collaborations with Birmingham School of Architecture and Design students and staff lifted up narratives of place based knowledge interwoven with more reciprocal relationships with the more-than-human through regenerative design. *Time Rebel What If...?* creative experiments on Dudley High Street have revealed a wealth of shared learning about the potential of creative practice in inviting new relationships with place that are rooted in alternative narratives.



BCU M.ARCH EXTINCTION REBELLION ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS
& CoLAB DUDLEY PRESENT:

DUDLEY HIGH STREET FUTURE VISIONS

Radical ideas which respond to climate crisis,
from BCU Master of Architecture Students

Visit our exhibition at CoLab Dudley
Monday 4th April 2-5pm - Free Entry
201a Dudley High Street,
Dudley, DY1 1QQ





Imagination Infrastructuring

CoLab Dudley and a growing ecology of Emerging Futures Pathfinders

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has identified CoLab Dudley as one of 11 Emerging Futures Pathfinders in the UK leading the way in the difficult and important work of reimagining and redesigning the world they want to live in, to achieve deep, transformative change and realise more equitable and just futures. Shared characteristics of these pathfinders have been described to date as follows.

Bringing a propositional approach

The Pathfinders are practitioners: not just coming up with ideas of what we need, but building these propositions in the real world. There is a tangibility to their work: something that people can see.

Plural practices

Skilled at weaving together lived, learned and practice experience to inform their work, they give value to many different forms of knowledge and theories of change. They have transdisciplinary teams with expertise in a range of approaches to influence change.

Starting from a different place

While they are not necessarily explicit about it, through their work the Pathfinders are showing what it means to move away from an extractive economy that sustains poverty. The path they are charting to a more equitable and just future has a different starting point, rooted in concepts of solidarity, liberation, and interdependence. These are organisations that centre care and compassion in the work, as well as addressing the climate crisis, in the way they think about change in socio-economic and environmental systems.

Addressing change in multiple, interlocking systems simultaneously

The Pathfinders work is happening on multiple levels: while their day-to-day work may be happening in a neighbourhood, it can still be located as a story of change in something more systemic, about a commitment to reshaping economic paradigms.



An introduction to CoLab Dudley's approach to Imagination Infrastructuring

See bit.ly/dudleyimaganationinfra

Ecosystem mindset

Pathfinders are generous as well as generative. They set out to work in a way that is open and generative on behalf of the wider ecosystem – sharing learning, dilemmas, and giving away their models and assets for others to adopt and adapt. They are led by a next generation of ‘social entrepreneurs’ whose practices are firmly rooted in a collective approach to leadership that goes well beyond organisational boundaries.

More about Emerging Futures at jrf.org.uk/society/emerging-futures

Orienting towards our North Star: imagination infrastructuring

Design considerations from work to date

How might we continue to ensure that imagination infrastructuring in Dudley:

- **is intentional and prefigurative?** Co-designed and lived in order to manifest futures and new norms in the present.
- **centres intergenerational justice?** By drawing insights from the past and wisdom inherited, as well as asking us to be dreaming, caring and thinking about the lives of many generations ahead, being mindful of who gets to imagine and who / what thrives in that imagined future.
- **is grounded in place?** Through creative expressions of and care for place based wisdom, narratives and knowledges; forging new relationships to place in terms of feeling welcome, feeling seen, building a connectedness of human and more-than-human in place (entanglement), and nurturing an agency for long-term stewardship of place.

Design considerations from work to date

How might we continue to ensure that imagination infrastructuring in Dudley:

- **is relational?** Co-created and animated through cultural collaboration and collective dreaming.
- **is creative and collective cultural action led?** Evolving and adapting to shared learning, sense-making and discovery through experimentation.
- **creates spaces and times to convene for co-creation and collective dreaming?**
- **open sources tools and shared learning?** Testing and sharing tools across our network to supports further imagination infrastructure design and animation.
- **values everyday creativity?** Creating space for and bringing attention to imagination and creative action in the everyday; a way to reframe and reclaim ordinary or abandoned spaces as shared creative/ cultural assets.

Cultivating collective imagination: approach and resourcing

What we need to let go of

What we need to cultivate

The Business as Usual narrative which encourages a culture of individualism, competition, separation from and extraction from nature that is accelerating climate emergency shaped futures.

Collective imagination infrastructure to support us to imagine alternatives, and to take action together for flourishing futures for all peoples and the planet we share.

Existing, man-made systems which have become temporarily culturally embedded *but are not fixed*.

The collective creative power to imagine new systems, new cultures and new narratives.



Investing in imagination infrastructures 2023–2028: £650,000

£120,000+ per year for rent and overheads of an imagination lab space and a small, part time lab team. NB. Up to 50% of this annual budget could be offset by investment in a network approach (see section 1.)

2023–2024: £50,000 secured

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation Emerging Cultures core costs investment.

Subtle Gender Protest

PROGRESS
+
REFLECT

Initiated
action.

GART is a sensory
experience

Create an
interactive art
exhibition

Quiet making
Important for our ecosystem
that we have a healthy
mindset & self care

Altered
State.

Part of our practice is
evaluation/iteration/
updating from done in
public spaces - opening
up further conversations

Meditative
Practice

INSPIRE
don't intimidate

Personal
Journey for
us as individuals
& us as duo

Homey

Person

Pop up

We can do the
making because we
are looking from the
interaction.

Our encounters exploring with
us I want to
tr
nos
self test
ANDSI

It's ok to!!!

Our message/energy
is positive/energetic
...BECKING GREER!!!

People seem to find it easier
chat/open up when there
are no way of finding
themselves.

OUR PLACE AS ARTS

ITS GOOD
TALK

5. What if we became good ancestors?



Key idea:

Long-term thinking



Navigation Tool:

Patterns

Why?

A 100 year timeframe helps us expand our horizons to consider the rest of nature, as well as future generations. It also expands who has responsibility for the cultural landscape to a much wider web of people.



Transformative change

We start from a place of long-term thinking because real transformational change takes time and requires that intention and patience.

Dudley Creates: a 100 year strategy *in action* is intentional in creating the conditions for a flourishing cultural life for future generations in the borough. More than that, it encourages us all to consider the connection between culture making, cultural capability and the fabric of place – Dudley – with all its many histories, local knowledges, built environments, geologies, and ecologies. What we can't know yet is what those increased cultural capabilities – that is, the freedom to co-create culture and so to imagine alternative futures – might unlock for possible futures in Dudley borough.

Regenerative designer and educator Daniel Christian Wahl explains the scale of our aspiration and one that we believe culture – in all its meaning making forms – has a central role to play:



Regenerative Futures

“Co-creating a regenerative future is about supporting people, places and cultures to express their unique contribution to the health and vitality of the nested complexity in which we are embedded. To do so simultaneously serves ourselves, our communities and life as a whole.” **Daniel Christian Wahl, 2021**

The result of a shift to regenerative thinking is about supporting **the flourishing of all life, for all time** (Ichioaka and Pawlyn, 2021). The focus upon ‘all life and all time’ here helps us circle back round to the golden thread of cultural democracy in this strategy in action.

We know we urgently need to overcome existing barriers to who imagines the future of Dudley Borough, and the resulting limited view of who and what is thriving in those imagined futures. Collective enquiry learning has stressed the cultural potential we can realise by focusing our energies upon imagination infratructuring that creates the conditions for cultural democracy and nurtures cultural capabilities across the borough.

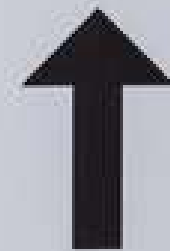
If we then expand our understanding of cultural democracy to future generations and the more-than-human then these capabilities unlock the potential for cultural acts that are conducive to all life, to long-term thinking, and a flourishing future for people and planet.

This is a regenerative future for Dudley Borough.

To be really clear **this is not a single vision of the future**, rather it is a way to orientate towards many flourishing emergent futures shaped by the cultural action of the ecosystem over time. Regenerative cultures work in support of the potential of all life; human and more-than-human.

A photograph of a wooden post with a white sign and a yellow tag. The sign has the text 'THIS WAY TO A MORE-THAN-HUMAN FUTURE' and an upward arrow. The tag is yellow and has some text on it. The background is a wooden wall.

THIS WAY
TO A MORE-
THAN-
HUMAN
FUTURE



A practice of prefiguration

Regenerative designer Bill Sharpe describes examples of projects and deliberate action aligned with alternative futures in the present as “pockets of the future in the present” (2020). These examples of the future intentionally stand apart from dominant business as usual patterns of activity, and instead offer a glimpse of alternative patterns and alternative futures. We call these pockets ‘seeds of the future in the present’. The use of ‘seeds’ relates to our use of ecological language as part of taking an ecological approach to culture. We believe these ‘seeds’ help germinate futures ideas, practices, behaviours; as well as existing in connected ways to different parts of the cultural ecosystem not as isolated pockets. These seeds of the future are also living and as such are an act of prefiguration.

Practicing living our desired regenerative futures in the present entails knowing what practices embody a future where how we relate to each other, to the past, to the future, to the land, and to other beings is defined by interdependency and mutual flourishing. These practices are often missing from business as usual relationships, civic spaces, cultural experiences, partnerships, and organisations.

“Creating regenerative systems is not simply a technical, economic, ecological or social shift: it has to go hand-in-hand with an underlying shift in the way we think about ourselves, our relationships with one another and life as a whole”. (Daniel Christian Wahl, 2016)

RADIO PUBLIC FESTIVAL



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AT COLAB AND IN DUDLEY HIGH STREET
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CHATTERBOX
RADIO STATION
CHINESE CREATION MYTH

MY FEET ARE MY EARS
EXPLORE AND DRAW
DAN'S MAP
COMING TO HONG KONG

MEET THE RADIO PUBLIC COLLECTIVE

FOR MORE INFO: WWW.WORKSHOP24.CO.UK

Prefiguration

“prefiguration is the ability to enact and manifest future realities as though they already exist now. This entails practicing living our desired futures in the present.”

Art/Work, Practice



Developing long-term thinking

Inviting different questions and nurturing new practices

Time Rebels of Dudley

Roman Kraznaric, author of *The Good Ancestor*, illuminates an emerging global movement of Time Rebels; activists dedicated to intergenerational justice and long-term thinking.

Since autumn 2020 CoLab Dudley has used the concept of Time Rebels as a convening call for a collective of creatives and people who have other roles in our local cultural ecosystem. These Time Rebels of Dudley co-create experiments rooted in nurturing collective imagination capacity and creative animation of 'What If' questions of regenerative futures.

The last two years especially have seen Time Rebels testing new forms of social infrastructure that creates the conditions for cultural action rooted in long term thinking, collective imagination, and regenerative design. At the heart of this infrastructuring is an understanding of the critical relationship between the co-creation of our culture as a community, and the possibility of regenerative futures in Dudley. A focus upon culture means paying attention to everything from creative activity and cultural ecosystems, to the design of the physical fabric of our towns, to the invisible cultural inheritance of worldviews and narratives we use everyday in orientating, dreaming and sensemaking.

Paying attention to narratives of future possibilities at a range of scales from the personal to the global has revealed powerful lessons. It is also a handy reminder that regenerative cultures must be nurtured at these different scales as part of our ecological and systems understanding of culture and our interconnection to nested living systems.

The creative interventions, experiments and activities of Dudley's Time Rebels embrace place based wisdom and the specificity *and* multiplicity that comes with that. That is not to say it doesn't invite from and draw insights from outside that place, quite the reverse, it has porous boundaries, however, the focus is always upon the conditions for, and manifestations of imagination and regenerative futures in Dudley.

Time Rebel projects have taught us the power of telling new stories as part of shifting our relationships with each other and the rest of nature. We have made this learning a prominent feature of **Dudley Creates: A 100 Year Strategy in Action**.

"Through shared stories I came to realise that, although we have cultural differences, we share a common goal, which is to change a system that no longer serves humanity and is destroying the planet".

Marlene, CreHeart CIC & Time Rebel

A MANIFESTO FOR OUR CULTURAL FUTURES

Co-create an emerging manifesto for our cultural future to help guide our shared journey and inspire others to join in that journey.

Build on existing learning around the role of the local cultural ecosystem in enabling **cultural democracy**, **imagination for all**, and **21st century economics** rooted in intergenerational and climate justice.

100 years is a long time but we know that justice movements hold their North Star, no matter how choppy and changing the weather, by having guiding principles and collective manifestos - use your insights and hopes to contribute to, and be part of, this essential navigation aide.

Action Learning Agendas

- *How might ecological governance practices nurture connections to local places that encourage long term thinking and so help us develop a cultural legacy mindset?*
- *What shifts in terms of what we imagine is possible by advocating for and exploring a definition of cultural democracy that embraces long-term thinking and so considers future generations, ancestors, and the rest of nature?*

Long term thinking: approach and resourcing

What we need to let go of

What we need to cultivate

The typical short term lifespan of projects, strategies, organisations, policies, and programmes which we are familiar with. *These limit the framing of who or what is a 'stakeholder'.*

A 100+ year timeframe which helps us expand our horizons to include consideration of the rest of nature as well as future generations.

Striving for 'quick wins', focusing on action over questioning and reflection.

Patience; growing new narratives takes time, and requires multiple emergent creative manifestations that result from a practice of questioning. This helps inform the many layers of our meaning-making, identities, values and cultural actions.



Investing in long term approaches and transition 2023–2028: £2,500,000

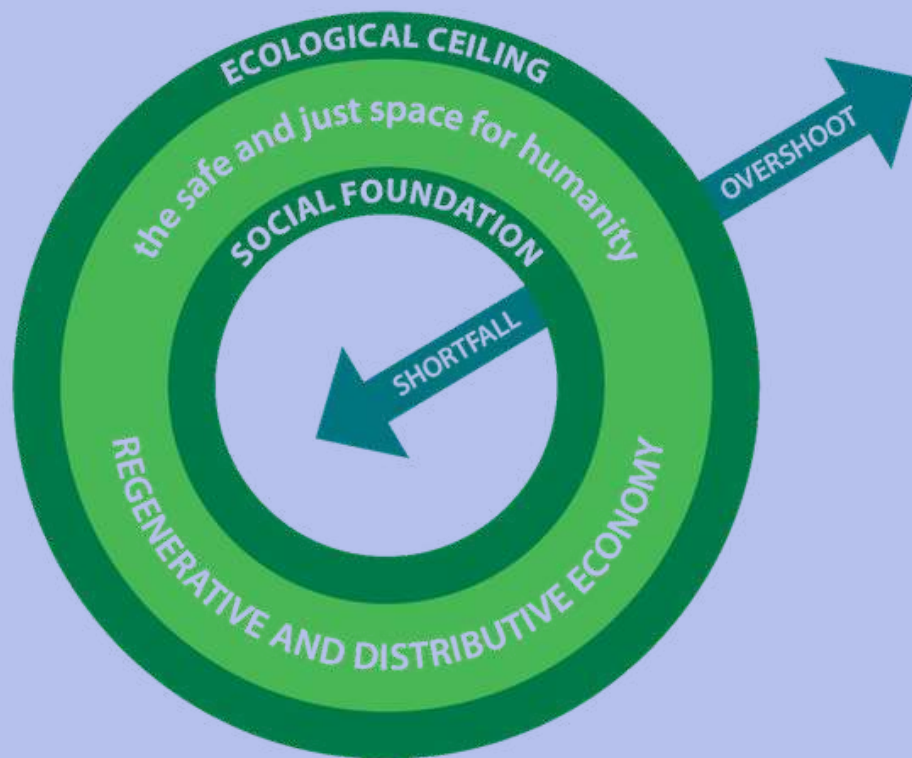
- Co-designed Time Rebel cultural experiments and projects: £75,000–£150,000 per year.
- Dudley People's School for Climate Justice peer learning and action platform: £200,000–£500,000 per year

2023–2024: £75,000 secured

- ACE National Lottery Projects award for Time Rebels of Dudley.

Culture and economics

Critical cultural action in response to crises



A simple representation of the Doughnut, from Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics work

The cultural strategies we've read through our research have little to say about the nature of our dominant economic system.

The stated purpose of the Cultural Cities Enquiry which catalysed Cultural Compacts and associated cultural strategies was to: *consider how we can radically increase the ability of our cities to use culture to drive inclusive growth.* **Dudley Creates** is instead shaped around foundational intentions relating to economics in response to the crises we are living in:

1. **To make explicit and invite explorations around the critical relationship between cultural narratives and the economic systems that shape our lives.** The economics of recent history has been driven by a dominant cultural narrative of relentless growth, separation from nature and unsustainable resource exploitation. This is the narrative that reinforces a failing human relationship with rest of nature, enabling the social and ecological crises we find ourselves facing. Culture guides and shapes our value systems, how we relate to each other, our decision making, and our everyday actions. Without regenerative cultures, regenerative economies will fail.
2. **Embracing the 21st Century Coal of meeting the needs of people within the means of the planet.** The compass we use for this the Doughnut (left) from Doughnut Economics, see doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics The key ideas in **Dudley Creates** help us further to put the ideas of Doughnut Economics into practice, as outlined below.

Dudley Creates: working to put the ideas of Doughnut Economics into practice

A Network Approach

A Network Approach invites us to:



Nurture human nature

Promote diversity, participation, collaboration and reciprocity.
Strengthen community networks and work with a spirit of high trust.
Care for the wellbeing of the team.

Collective Imagination

A focus on what is more possible and the unique cultural potential of Dudley leads us to work in which we:



Aim to thrive rather than to grow

Don't let growth become a goal in itself. Know when to let the work spread out via others rather than scale up in size.

Cultural Democracy

Actively engaging everyone in deciding what counts as culture, where it happens and who makes it asks us to:

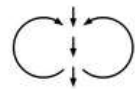


Be distributive

Work in the spirit of open design and share the value created with all who co-created it.
Be aware of power and seek to redistribute it to improve equity amongst stakeholders.

Long-term Thinking

Becoming good ancestors helps us to:



Be regenerative

Aim to work with and within the cycles of the living world. Be a sharer, repairer, regenerator, steward. Reduce travel, minimize flights, be climate and energy smart.

Cultural Ecosystem

An ecological approach to culture encourages us to zoom in and out, and...



See the big picture

Recognise the potential roles of the household, the commons, the market and the state – and their many synergies – in transforming economies.
Ensure that finance serves the work rather than drives it.

Strategy in action

Strategy as a living, evolving, navigation tool supporting local people to take cultural action supports us to:



Think in systems

Experiment, learn, adapt, evolve and aim for continuous improvement.
Be alert to dynamic effects, feedback loops and tipping points.

Dudley Creates: a 100 year cultural strategy *in action*: indicative budget 2023–2028

	2023–2024	2024–2025	2025–2026	2026–2027	2027–2028	Totals
A Network Approach						
convening Dudley's Cultural Collaborators (Cultural Compact)	£65,000	£70,000	£72,800	£75,700	£78,700	£362,200
Cultural Democracy						
Micro Community Commissions	£45,000	£47,000	£49,000	£51,000	£53,000	£245,000
Curation, production, creative advisor (funded)	(funded)	(funded)	£43,000	£45,000	£47,000	£135,000
Cultural work led by marginalised communities	£24,000	£42,000	£43,500	£45,000	£47,000	£201,500
Capital investment and development in local venues	£107,000	£580,000	£550,000	£100,000	£100,000	£1,437,000
Cultural Ecosystem						
Programming in green spaces, festivals, pop-ups etc.	£80,000	£83,000	£86,000	£89,000	£93,000	£431,000
Activities in neighbourhoods	£300,000	£312,000	£325,000	£338,000	£351,000	£1,626,000
Collective Imagination						
Imagination Infrastructures	£120,000	£125,000	£130,000	£140,000	£145,000	£650,000
<i>up to 50% of this annual budget could be offset by funding for a network approach</i>						
Long-term Thinking						
Co-designed Time Rebel cultural experiments and projects	£75,000	£100,000	£125,000	£150,00	£150,000	£600,000
Dudley People's School for Climate Justice peer learning and action platform	£200,000	£300,000	£400,000	£500,000	£500,000	£1,900,000
	£1,016,000	£1,659,000	£1,824,300	£1,528,700	1,559,700	£7,587,000

Dudley Creates: current and potential funding in relation to roles in cultural ecosystem

	Current and potential funding sources/partners	<u>Roles</u> in the cultural ecosystem located / evolved to lead
A Network Approach Convening Dudley's Cultural Collaborators	ACE Cultural Compact ACE Place Partnership	Ecosystem stewards <i>CoLab Dudley and Creative Black Country</i>
Cultural Democracy Micro community commissions Curation, production, creative advisor Cultural work led by marginalised communities Capital investment and development in local venues	ACE Creative People & Places, ACE National Portfolio, ACE Place Partnership, National Lottery, WMCA, UKSPF	Ecosystem stewards <i>CoLab Dudley and Creative Black Country</i> Guardians of cultural resources <i>Dudley CVS</i>
Cultural Ecosystem Programming in green spaces, festivals, pop-ups etc. Activities in neighbourhoods	UKSPF / Heritage Lottery / Tourism / Public Health / Regeneration programmes	Guardians, Co-creators, Connectors <i>Dudley MBC, local voluntary sector and community groups and networks, creatives, producers, local businesses</i>
Collective Imagination Imagination infrastructures	Joseph Rowntree Foundation, National Lottery, charitable trusts	Ecosystem stewards <i>CoLab Dudley, Dudley CVS</i>
Long-term Thinking Co-designed Time Rebel cultural experiments and projects Dudley People's School for Climate Justice peer learning and action platform	ACE Projects, National Lottery, charitable trusts, various future outcomes buyers re. climate transition, community wellbeing and resilience etc.	Time Rebels, Ecosystem Stewards <i>CoLab Dudley, Dudley CVS</i> <i>others likely to collaborate over time - we will go where the energy is.</i>

*In relation to the above we will apply the
Doughnut Economics Principle in Practice:*



Be strategic in practice

Go where the energy is – but always ask whose voice is left out.
 Balance openness with integrity, so that the work spreads without capture.
 Share back learning and innovation to unleash the power of peer-to-peer inspiration.

Learning resources

Knowledge, wisdom and learning we've drawn on



Gratitude to the knowledge commons

Through the process of our cultural sector research and the development of **Dudley Creates: a 100 year cultural strategy in action for Dudley Borough**, we have been grateful for the wealth of knowledge and wisdom generously shared by a diverse group of professional and lived experience experts.

Some are referenced in this evidence document, and linked below. We are continuing to add to a repository of a wide selection of cultural sector resources so that it can be an asset for use and addition to by anyone interested in growing and sharing the cultural sector knowledge commons in Dudley Borough.

You can find these resources at in the Cultural Collaborators Digital Allotment, where there are tabs to view them sorted by the 5 Key Ideas in Dudley Creates and other emerging themes. bit.ly/DudleyCreatesLearningResources.

Roam around our digital allotment



Introduction

The Long Time Project
thelongtimeproject.org

1. A Network Approach

Impact Networks: Create Connection, Spark Collaboration, and Catalyze Systemic Change, David Ehrlichman, 2021
converge.net/book

Making Sense of Meaning: How Creative Documentation Enhances Our Understanding of Community Development, Policy Link, 2020
policylink.org/sites/default/files/CDI_Creative_Doc_12-22-20.pdf

2. Cultural Democracy

Power Up, Chrissie Tiller, 2017
culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Power-Up-Final.pdf

64 Million Artists
64millionartists.com

Centre for Cultural Value, 2022
culturalvalue.org.uk

West Midlands Cultural Sector Research Project, 2021
wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/culture-and-digital/culture/west-midlands-cultural-sector-research-project/

The Guardian view on arts education: a creativity crisis, February 2023
theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/feb/07/the-guardian-view-on-arts-education-a-creativity-crisis

3. Cultural Ecosystem

The Intelligence of Ecological Design, David Orr, 2004
ecoliteracy.org/article/intelligence-ecological-design

Creating the Environment: The Cultural Eco-Systems of Creative People and Places, Jonathan Gross, Dr Nick Wilson, 2019
kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/11396209/1/Gross_Wilson_2019_Creating_the_Environment_FINAL_WEB.pdf

Cultural Democracy: An Ecological and Capabilities Approach, Dr Jonathan Gross, Dr Nick Wilson, 2018
kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/102127119/Cultural_Democracy_GROSS_Accepted16October2018_GREEN_AAM.pdf

The Ecology of Culture: A Report commissioned by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Cultural Value Project John Holden, 2015
lkca.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Holden-Ecology-of-Culture.pdf

4. Collective Imagination

Power Up, Chrissie Tiller, 2017
culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Power-Up-Final.pdf

Imagination Infrastructures
www.imaginationinfrastructures.com

What is Education For? Pamela Mang, 2005
regenesigroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Independent_School.pdf

Emerging Futures, a programme of work led by Jopseph Rowntree Foundation, dedicated to harnessing collective intelligence and imagination, collaborating in a way that society can reimagine the future.
jrf.org.uk/society/emerging-futures

5. Long-term Thinking

Regenerative action: Constructing a regenerative future, Daniel Christian Wahl, 2021
thersa.org/comment/2021/11/constructing-a-regenerative-future

Flourish: Design Paradigms for Our Planetary Emergency, Sarah Ichioka and Michael Pawlyn, 2021
triarchypress.net/flourish.html

Designing Regenerative Cultures, Daniel Christian Wahl, 2016
triarchypress.net/drc.html

Art/Work, Practice

The Good Ancestor: How to Think Long Term in a Short-Term World, Roman Krznaric, 2021
romankrznaric.com/good-ancestor

Culture and Economics

Cultural Cities Enquiry
corecities.com/cultural-cities-enquiry/read-report

Doughnut Economics
doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics

Doughnut Economics Principles in Practice
doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics#principles-of-practice



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Keep up to date with the strategy *in action*



dudleycreates.net



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[@colabdudley](https://www.instagram.com/colabdudley)



[@doingindudley](https://www.facebook.com/doingindudley)

Dudley Creates is stewarded by CoLab Dudley Network Guardians.

If you would like to know more about this work or our approach please get in touch with us.

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