



ACTION LEARNING DAY

12 MARCH 2025

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**

Centre for
Regional Economic
and Social Research



National
Co-ordinating
Centre for
Public Engagement

AIMS OF THE DAY

- Opportunity for partnership and individual reflection and forward planning.
- Showcase sector-wide learning from the programme,
- Test out resources and share learning from innovation funding.
- Set the scene for the future of civic work.



AGENDA



Time	Activity
10:00	Arrival and networking
10:30	Welcome and aims for the day
10:45	The future of an engaged university; facilitated workshop
12:10	Reflections from the action learning programme; table discussions
12:45	Lunch
13:45	Outputs from the Action Learning Programme; interactive activity
14:25	Break and Open Space setup
14:35	Open Space
15:30	Moving forward; Presentation and questions in plenary
16:00	Close



INNOVATION FUNDING POSTERS

ACTION LEARNING SUMMARIES



Lancaster District Community Dialogue Project

Lancaster University and the University of Plymouth are working together to develop new ways for anchor institutions, including universities, to meaningfully engage with communities. Lancaster University is leading the creation of a flexible toolkit for place-based engagement, while University of Plymouth will use this toolkit to inform the development of an online community hub for its website- ensuring that community voices help shape decisions and drive real change.

Objectives

- To gain a deeper understanding of our community's needs.
- To create a toolkit that supports better, more engaging conversations with these communities.
- To use the insights from the project to inform local policymaking.

A table showing the comic book activity at a community conversation workshop

Approach

A mix of methods, including:

- Research based on existing data sets from previous community conversations.
- Collaborative toolkit development sessions.
- Community engagement conversations to test out the tools created and listen to communities more effectively.
- An evaluation session with an external civic organisation.
- Findings will be presented in a report.

Dot voting grid showing reasons for attending community conversation.

Progress and Early Findings

- Feedback about the tools created and how they might be iterated and adapted.
- The need to develop guidance that will sit around the tools as part of the toolkit.
- How to engage with specific communities in particular areas of the district.
- How these techniques and methods could be used in other locations/for other demographics.

The visual agenda for the community conversation activity

Intended Impact

- Individual community members will benefit from this process, by having the opportunity to share their thoughts and be heard, and in the insights that will be shared with anchor organisations to influence and change strategies for the region.
- In addition to community benefits, the collective results of the project will be used to work with HEI based researchers and students to ensure, there is a deep understanding of how to engage with community organisations.

An example comic book from a community conversation activity.

Next Steps

- Launch the toolkit.
- Evaluate the project.
- Share learnings with local policymakers and the wider HE sector via NCIA.
- Support other community conversations in the future, and potentially share insights with anchor organisations across the wider region.

Contact Abi Lucy-Lloyd for more information: a.lucy-lloyd@lancaster.ac.uk

VALUING & EMBEDDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY: GROUP 1 AND 2

REMIT OF THE GROUP

Strategies to embed civic activity within Higher Education by:

- Leveraging** existing knowledge about **culture change in public engagement**.
- Securing institutional buy-in.
- Shaping** the **narrative** on **civic work** as **essential**.
- Approaches to **building alliances** across **departments, faculties** and **partnerships**.
- Training** and supporting **staff** to undertake **civic work**.
- How to **embed civic** activity in **staff** roles.
- Ensuring **meaningful implementation** of strategic commitments.
- Develop** and **operationalise** high level **civic agreements**.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Keeping **civic** activity on the **priority** list in times of **change**, e.g. senior leadership transition, restructuring programmes.
- Determining **what** qualifies as a **civic** activity e.g. a check list
- Establishing processes for **prioritising civic** activities.
- Translating **enthusiasm** into strategic **delivery** plans.
- Finding **allies** across departments and **uniting approaches** to create a **whole-university commitment** to civic activity.
- Managing expectations** around what the university or partnership can deliver.
- Translating **strategic** commitments into meaningful **actions** through coordination and accountability.

<https://bit.ly/NCIA-AL-Day>





Engaged Futures NCIA

12 March 2025

What are we trying to do?

NCCPE Vision

A higher education sector which purposefully engages with, and is inclusive of, the communities and society it serves, in a context of major social and environmental challenges and change.

Engaged Futures' Aim

To effect change in how universities and research organisations support inclusive knowledge creation and use. We will do this by exploring viable futures, identify existing promising practice and developing and enacting an action plan to take us towards these futures.

How will we do it?

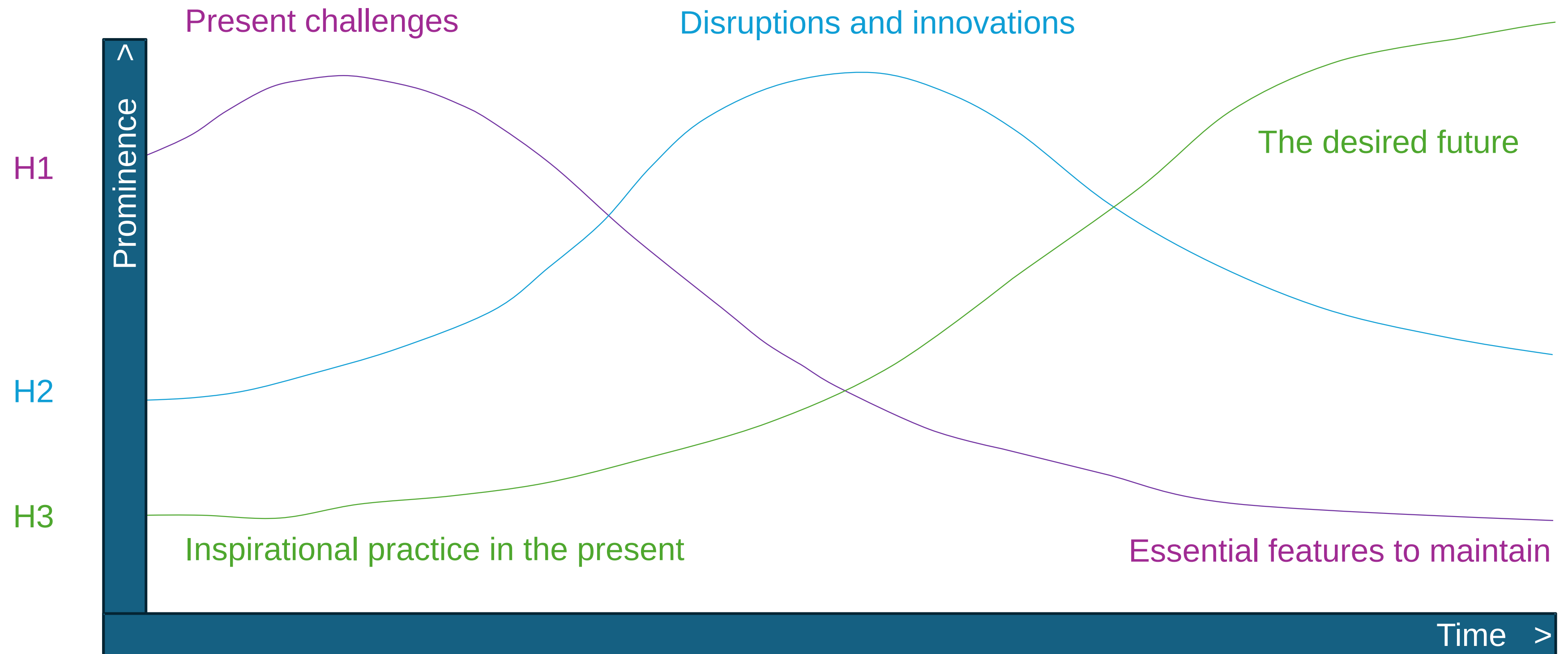
Using a 'Three Horizons' methodology.

This is a futures approach designed to enable transformational systems change.

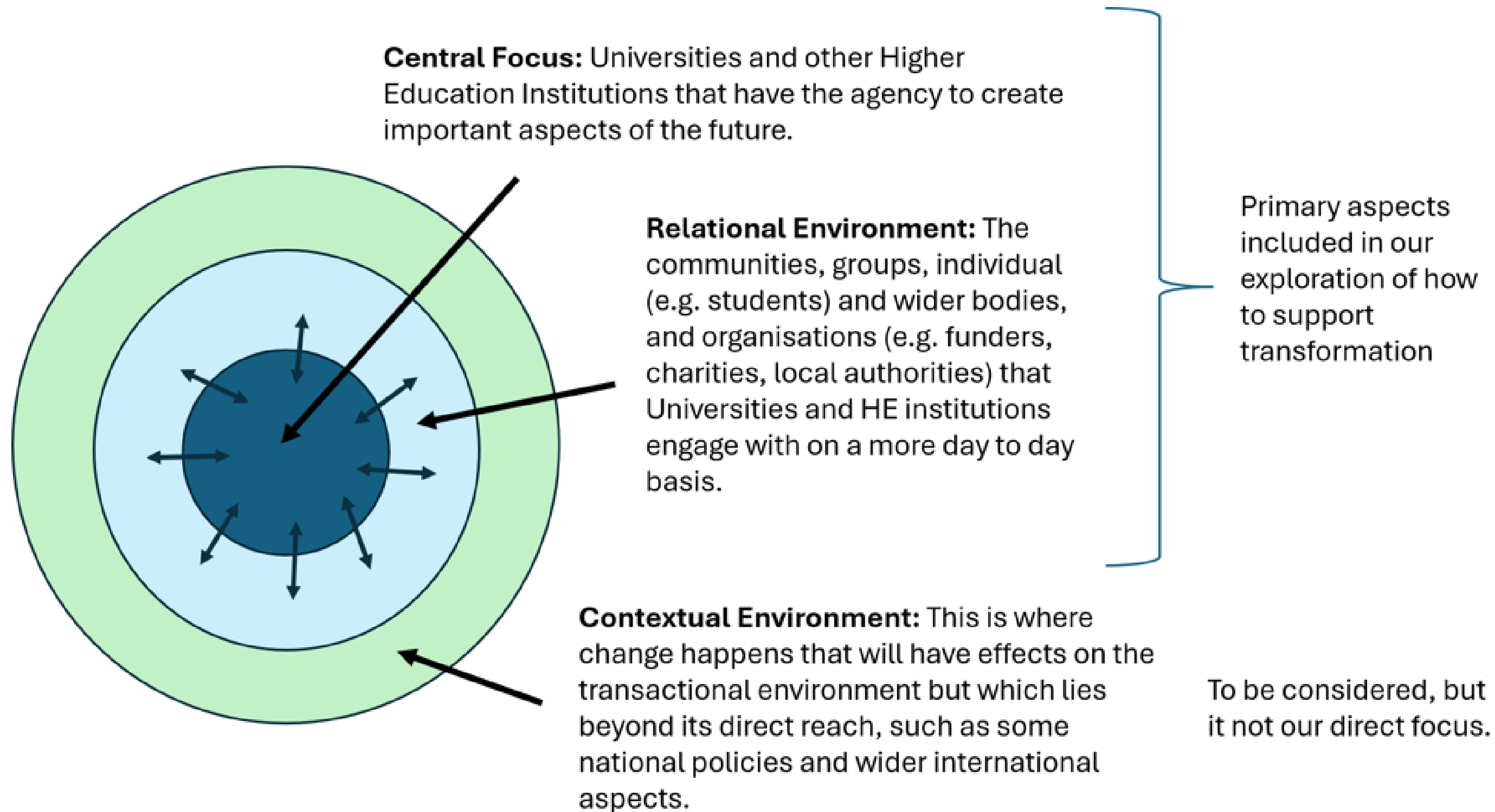
In this participants will:

- Identify challenges of the current engagement and knowledge production system.
- Explore our visions of an engaged and inclusive knowledge production system
- Contrast the current and future systems
- **Use this to identify actors and programmes happening today that are most suitable for bringing about system change (rather than the many well-meaning actions that can risk reinforcing a status quo).**
- **Consult with others with a vested interest in the future of HE**
- Produce and enact a co-created strategy and delivery plan for effective action.

Three Horizons

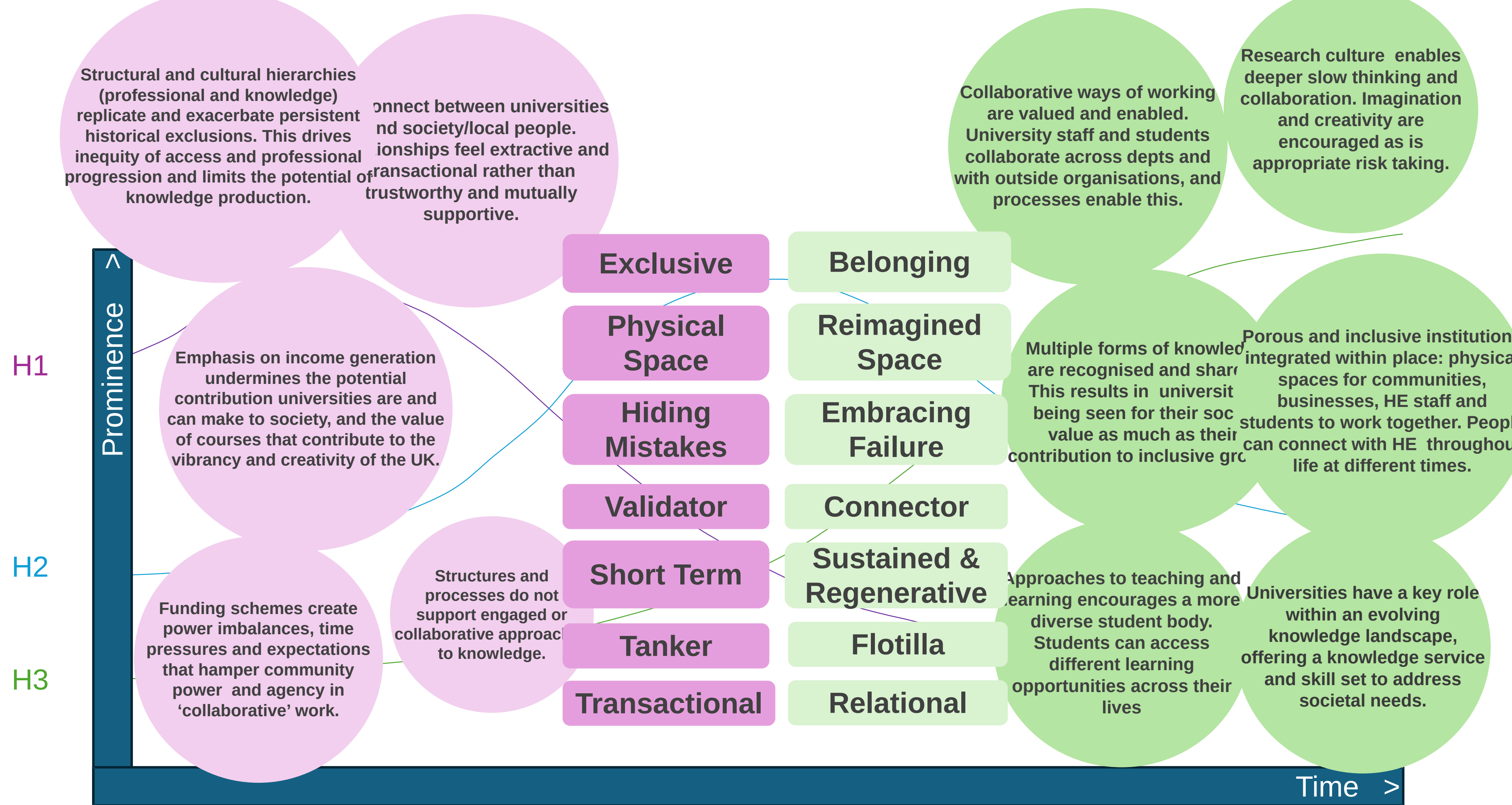


System scope



Civic futures

- Refine Horizon 1 (H1) and 3 (H3) map with focus on civic....
- Deepen understanding of principles underpinning H1 and H3
- Identify catalytic activity (H2+ and H3 activity that is already happening) from the action learning partnerships, and other experiences



Horizons 1 and 3 Summary

H1

Structural and cultural hierarchies (professional and knowledge) replicate and exacerbate persistent historical exclusions. This drives inequity of access and professional progression and limits the potential of knowledge production.

Disconnect between universities and society/local people. Relationships feel extractive and transactional rather than trustworthy and mutually supportive.

Funding schemes create power imbalances, time pressures and expectations that hamper community power and agency in 'collaborative' work.

Emphasis on income generation undermines the potential contribution universities are and can make to society, and the value of courses that contribute to the vibrancy and creativity of the UK.

Structures and processes do not support engaged or collaborative approaches to knowledge.

H3

Collaborative ways of working are valued and enabled. University staff and students collaborate across depts and with outside organisations, and processes enable this.

Porous and inclusive institutions integrated within place: physical spaces for communities, businesses, HE staff and students to work together. People can connect with HE throughout life at different times.

Multiple forms of knowledge are recognised and shared. This results in universities being seen for their social value as much as their contribution to inclusive growth

Research culture enables deeper slow thinking and collaboration. Imagination and creativity are encouraged as is appropriate risk taking.

Approaches to teaching and learning encourages a more diverse student body. Students can access different learning opportunities across their lives

Universities have a key role within an evolving knowledge landscape, offering a knowledge service and skill set to address societal needs.

Horizons 1 and 3 Summary

H1

Contrasting assumptions/principles

H3

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Exclusive

Belonging

Physical Space

Reimagined Space

Hiding Mistakes

Embracing Failure

Validator

Connector

Short Term

Sustained & Regenerative

Tanker

Flotilla

Transactional

Relational

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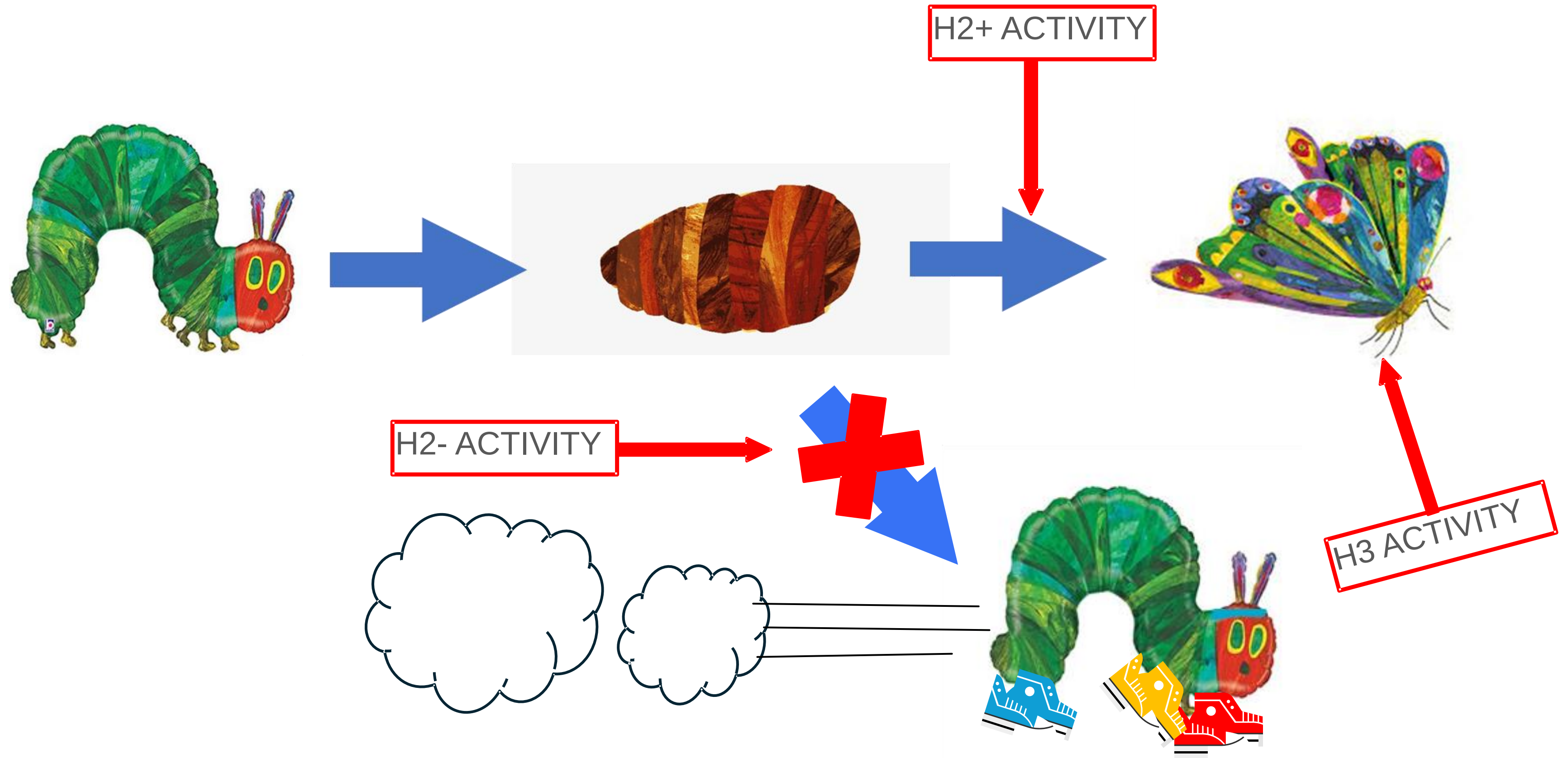
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H2-, H2+ and existing pockets of
H3

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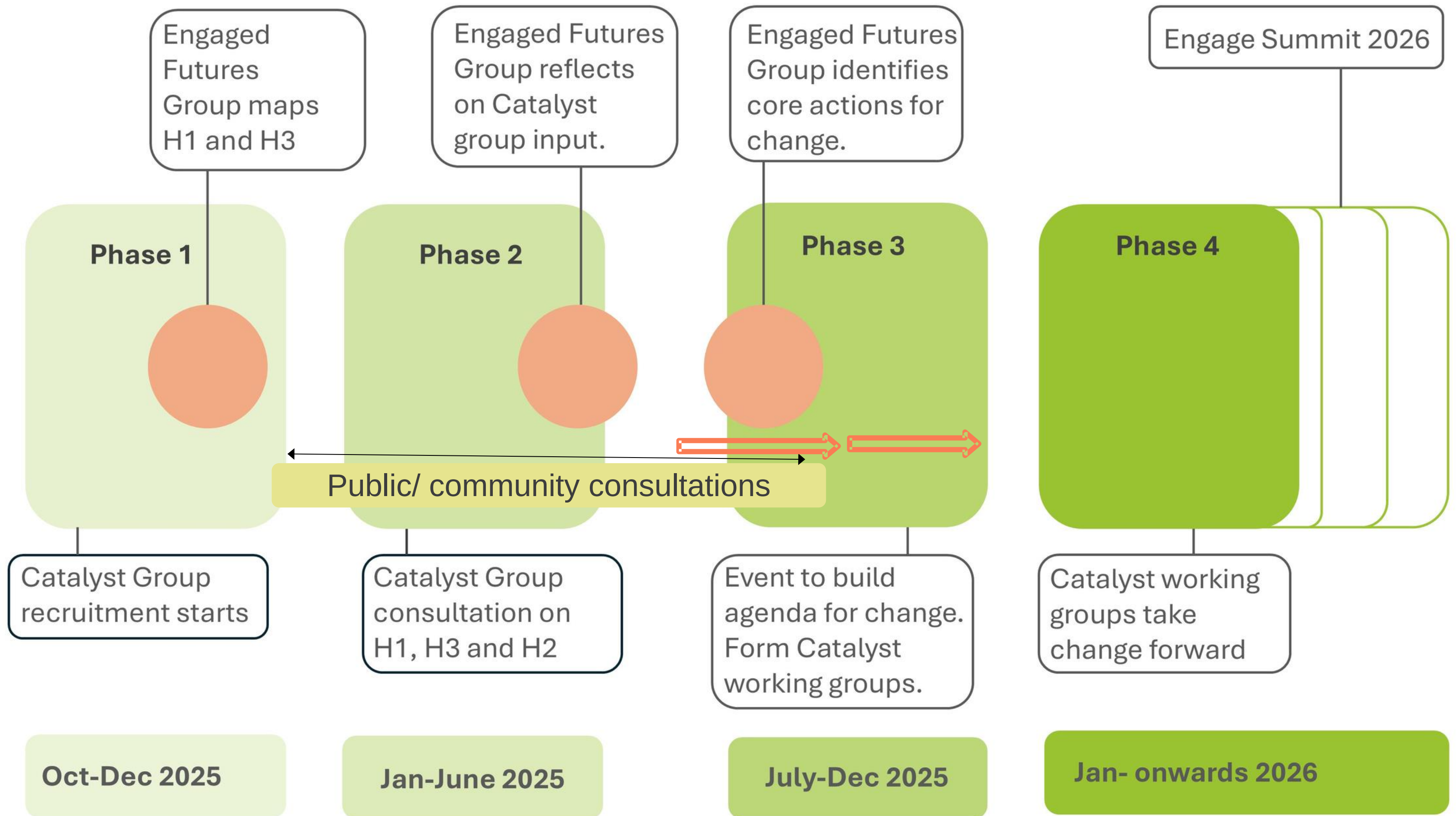


Worked example

Project/ Org Name	Actor type	Main activities	Why H2+ or H3?	URL and/or Catalyst contact?

Worked example

Project/ Org Name	Actor type	Main activities	Why H2+ or H3?	URL and/or Catalyst contact?
Co(L)laboratory	University partnership project, funded RE	Engaged PhD programme; civic projects	Opening space to reflect on nature of PhD and need to make it more collaborative	Web/ contact





Thank you!



ACTION LEARNING REFLECTION



- What did I gain, learn or do differently because of the action learning, for myself and/or my work?
- What did we gain as a group?
- How can we use the momentum and connections from the action learning programme to propel the civic agenda forward?

TOOLS AND RESOURCES: CIVIC OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK



Purpose:

A tool that describes outcomes measures and data sets that can inform activity in the civic impact domains.

Content:

Anchored in the Civic Impact Domains, the Outcomes Framework will support individuals to better plan and evaluate their civic activity by providing examples of

- Indicator Areas
- Outputs
- Outcomes (Short and Long Term)
- Indicators
- Wider Impacts

Audience:

Anyone working in or outside Higher Education who would like to better articulate the impact and value of their civic activity.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES: PLACE NAVIGATOR



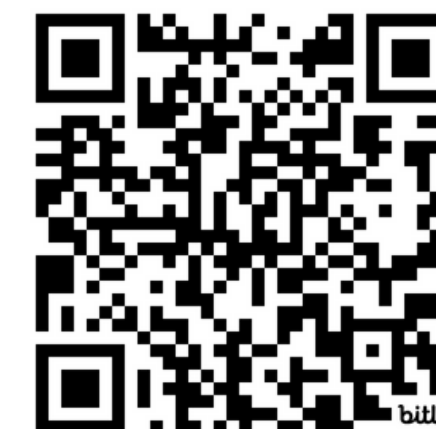
Purpose:

A tool to support individuals to understand how best to work in a place; the key types of organisations and sectors to work with, their key agendas and ways to build connections with them.

Content:

The Place Navigator will be arranged around the following key sectors;

- Local Government
- Economic Development
- Health and Social Care
- Education and Skills
- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Community and Voluntary Sector
- Public Services



<https://bit.ly/NCIA-PN>

Audience: anyone working in or outside Higher Education who would like to map the key organisations and agendas in their 'Place'.

OPEN SPACE

OPEN SPACE PROPOSAL

Name:

Partnership:

Topic:

Because....

Whoever comes are
the right people

Whenever it starts
is the right time



Whatever happens
is the only thing
that can happen

When it is
over it is over

OPEN SPACE

- Why is this topic or question important? For who?
- What do we want to talk about?
- Are there any quick wins?
- What things really challenge us?
- What 3 things do we want to feedback to the main space?
- What are our next steps?

National Civic Impact Accelerator

Action Learning: NCIA's Next Steps

Adam Leach
NCIA Programme Director



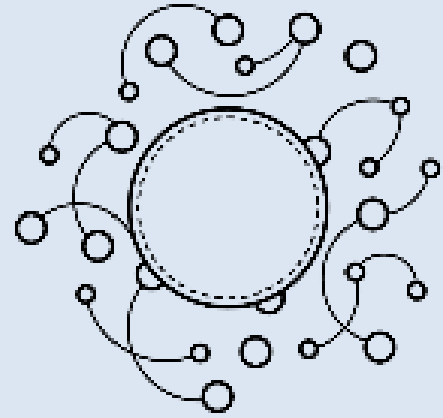
National Civic
Impact Accelerator



Thank you
for your energy, time
enthusiasm, expertise,
openness, and insights

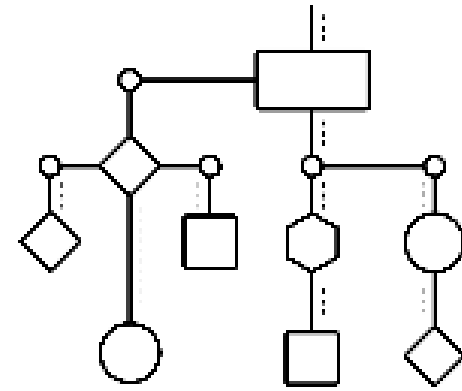


The value of your learning and insights



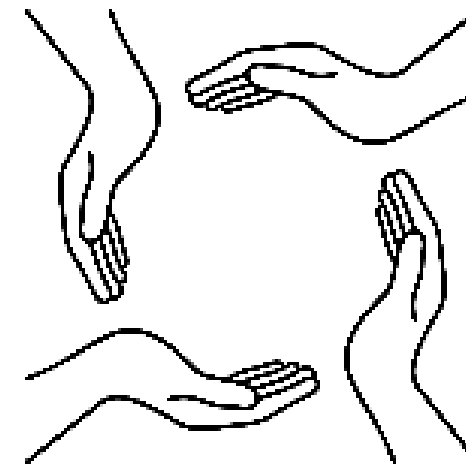
Action Learning Partnerships

14 university partnerships across the country piloting innovative civic approaches and working together to address challenges in civic working.



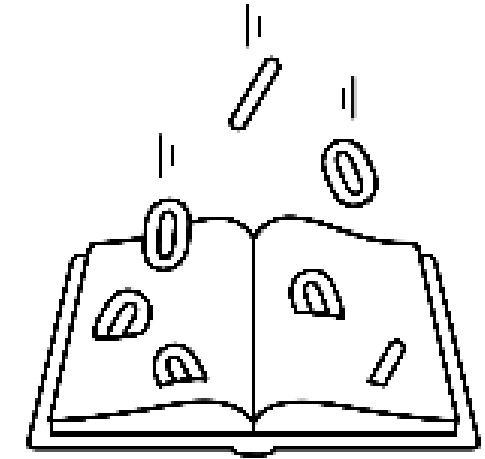
Theory of Civic Change

Your insights are helping to support universities to navigate their civic journey & the steps they should take to work effectively with local partners



Equitable Partnership Working

Your work is helping us develop resources about equitable civic partnerships, providing tools for others to deepen their civic impact



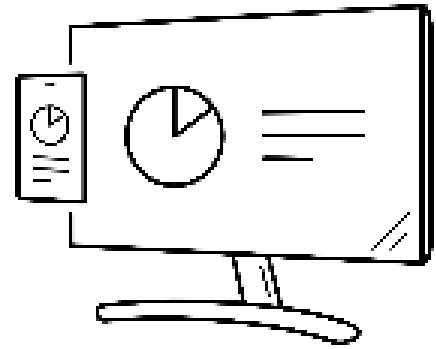
Capturing Evidence of What Works

The research from our evidence strand is being brought to life by real world insights from your work on a range of topics such as sustainability, culture and economic placemaking

+ Much more

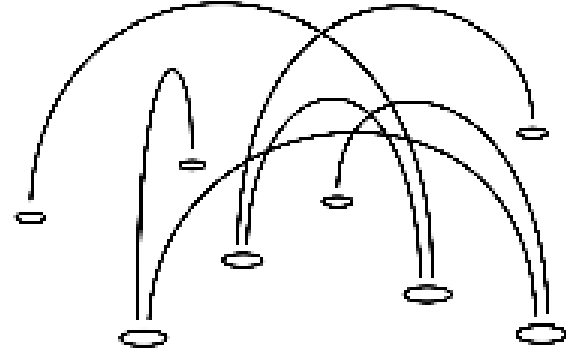
Including CiviCast, Debate Stage blog series, CiviCon24 sessions and a range of other outputs.

Upcoming plans from the NCIA



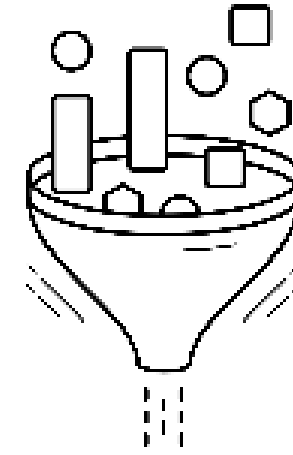
Civic Impact Dashboard

A data visualisation tool to support universities understand and explore the civic contribution of their university to their local area and communities.



Digital *Place Navigator* Tool

A highly visual resource to help users navigate their locality, providing a very simple, high-level mapping of the core components of different infrastructures that exist in a 'place'



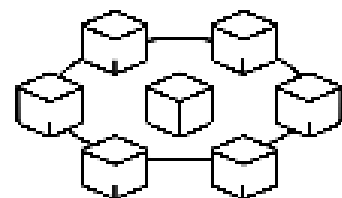
A series of What Works Guides

A collection of essential guides designed to empower universities in amplifying their civic impact and fostering positive change in their communities, based on evidence and real-world insights gathered across the NCIA programme.



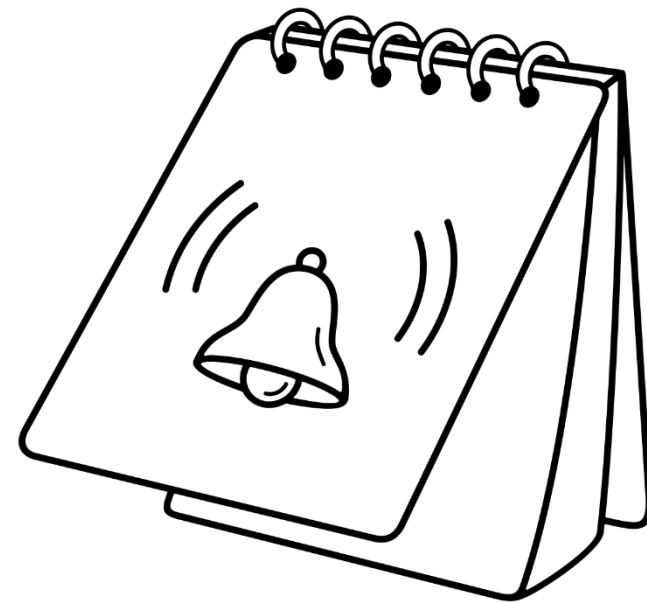
CiviCon25 Annual Conference

A two-day event (14-15 Oct) highlighting exemplary civic initiatives, providing institutions with practical tools to develop and expand their civic involvement, and building a community of practice to support civic engagement



+ Many more tools and resources in development!

Events



Events

A range of new events throughout the rest of 2025 are being planned, including to launch and share outputs of the NCIA and to continue conversations on the most pressing civic topics.

Stay updated:

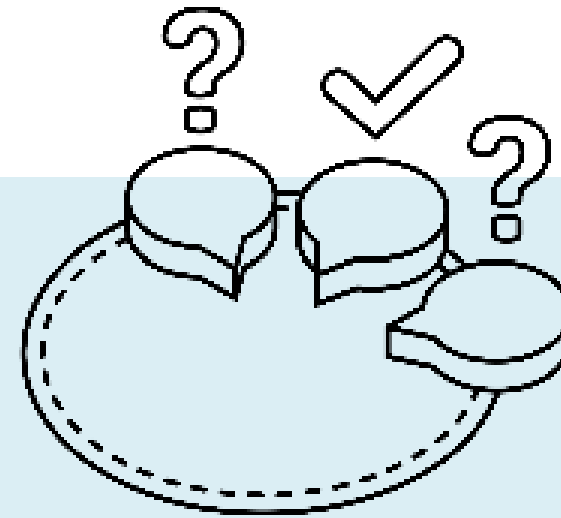
civicuniversitynetwork.co.uk

Policy Engagement



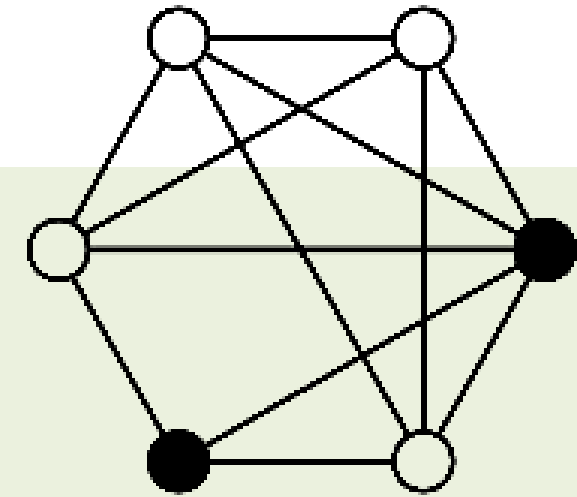
Discussions with Policymakers

- How universities can develop specialist **skills pathways** in places, working with other education providers, and open opportunities for wider demographics.
- How the civic university agenda interacts with **access, participation and outreach** programmes.
- How Civic University Agreements (CUAs) can help create collaborations in **devolution cold-spots**, to support local priorities and joined-up working.



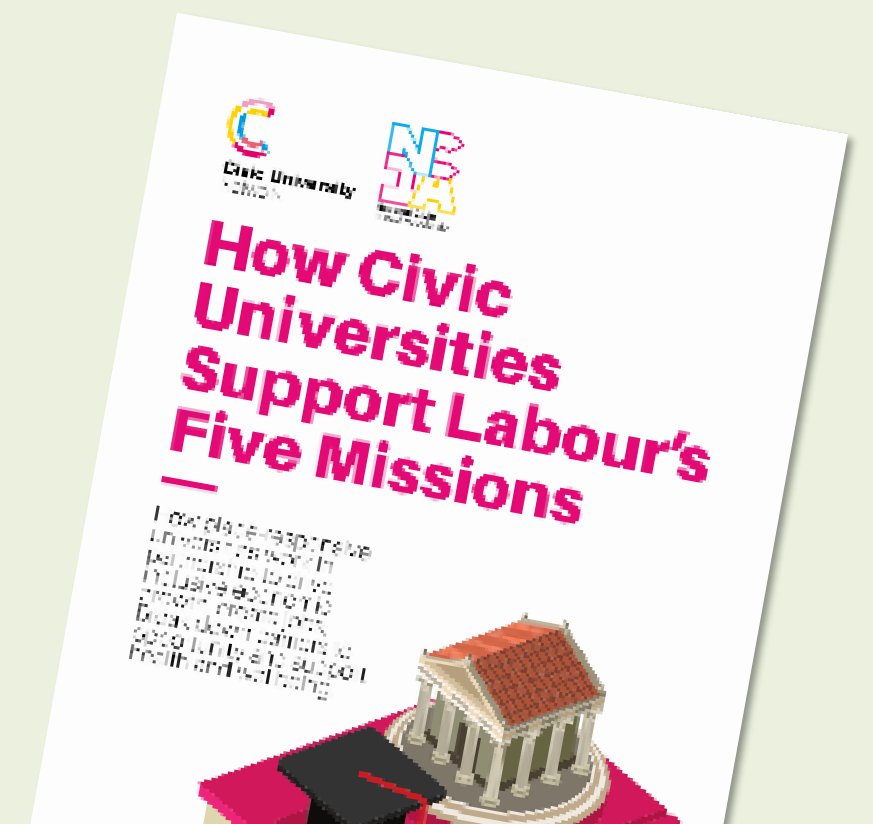
Advocacy & Influence

- Supported an OECD review of the UK's civic university movement, as part of their work to compare international approaches to the [Geography of Higher Education](#).
- Worked with the British Academy on their work to understand [universities as social and cultural infrastructure](#).
- Developing work to help universities embed civic throughout their core functions, rather than being seen as a *nice-to-have*.



Joining dots

- Identifying complementarities across policy priorities, funders and other agendas to ensure we're working effectively together for similar goals.





National Civic
Impact Accelerator

Adam Leach
NCIA Programme Director
a.leach@shu.ac.uk
civicuniversitynetwork.com/ncia

THANK YOU!