

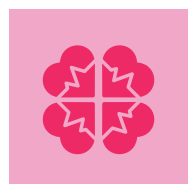
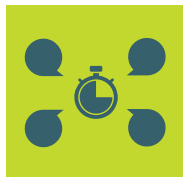
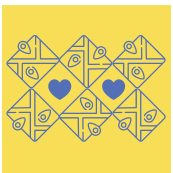
# Small arts organisations, social value and policy

A policy case study of the London School of Mosaic

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## Funder



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London School of Mosaic



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# Executive summary

This report for the ‘**Socially Engaged Art and Policy**’ project, funded by the British Academy, presents findings and recommendations from collaborative research with the London School of Mosaic (LSoM) and RESOLVE Collective. Through an in-depth case study of LSoM, we explore how socially engaged arts organisations work with local policymakers and how their value can be better understood and represented.

The report first introduces the **research context** for socially engaged arts organisations, addressing complexities in the funding landscape and issues regarding social value and impact evaluation. We then turn to our **case study, LSoM**, focusing on their relocation to Ludham and Waxham Estate in Gospel Oak, Camden, North London, and a key period of transition during the regeneration of the Ludham Undercroft and its development into independent artist studios. The report also outlines the **methods for creative collaboration** used in this project, including ethnographic research and a co-designed workshop on emotional mapping which piloted a creative approach to capturing the social value of arts organisations at a local level.

Our findings firstly address **connections and disconnections with policy**, including bottlenecks emerging in the School’s navigation of multiple layers of policy, meeting funder expectations, issues with burdensome evaluation practices and tensions in relationships with policymakers. We highlight both positive and productive examples of policy engagement to be nurtured. Secondly, we explore the potential for **creative methods for exploring and presenting social value**, highlighting key applications in organisational learning and development, policy processes and community consultation.

The conclusions and recommendations focus on **practical ideas for addressing identified policy bottlenecks** and highlighting fruitful areas for further research. We call for **greater flexibility** among funders; more **meaningful and consistent engagement** between policymakers, funders and the arts organisations they work with; and addressing **precarious rental arrangements**. We also present recommendations for further applications of **co-design and creative practices for evaluation**, highlighting their capacity for proactively identifying local opportunities and challenges, capturing different perspectives on value and engaging voices often excluded from formal consultation processes. Overall, the report aims to support the work of small-scale, socially engaged arts organisations, and to encourage more inclusive and collaborative partnerships between arts organisations, local policymakers and funders.

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# 1. Introduction

The 'Socially Engaged Art and Policy' project, funded by the British Academy as part of the 'Good Cities' programme (VSFoFGC1\100014), examines the broad policy landscape surrounding a small socially engaged arts organisation in North London: the London School of Mosaic (LSoM). As outlined in this report, our research investigates the potential impact of LSoM's current development on local urban, cultural and social policy as well as the frameworks that policy provides the School in order to help develop an inclusive and sustainable local urban environment. We also highlight the challenges and points of tension between the arts organisation and local policy.

Our research team drew together interdisciplinary academic knowledge and methodological practices, spanning anthropology, urban studies and cultural studies. The project involved ethnographic research and a co-designed creative workshop with LSoM and RESOLVE Collective, an interdisciplinary design collective that combines architecture, engineering, technology and art to address social challenges. These activities furthermore brought together a selection of arts practitioners, local community members and policy stakeholders, all with connections to LSoM.

The project's main guiding research questions were:

- How do socially engaged arts organisations work with local policymakers?
- How can the value of socially engaged arts organisations be better understood and represented?

Through a co-designed workshop, the project piloted a creative approach to capturing the social value of arts organisations at a local level. These activities drew on LSoM's existing strengths in community engagement through creative practice. They allowed us to capture everyday stories, uncover micro-assets of community value and better reflect the diverse priorities of different stakeholders who may otherwise be missing from standard consultation practices. Notably, these insights also challenge assumptions driving top-down audits of social and cultural institutions.

They instead prioritise collaborative, interactive modes for assessing the impact of small arts organisations on their surrounding environments and communities.



The research findings presented in this report offer examples of successful policy engagement at LSoM, while spotlighting some of the barriers that inhibit constructive collaboration between the organisation and policymakers in generating effective, sustainable contributions to place. The project's insights are intended to enhance the work of other small-scale and socially engaged arts organisations, particularly those considering or currently pursuing development within local authority assets. These findings will also be useful to cultural policymakers and funders, by highlighting some of the key policy bottlenecks and burdensome evaluation practices that inhibit the work of small arts organisations.

Alongside these critical observations, we offer up a model for more inclusive, collaborative partnerships between arts organisations, local policymakers and funders. In doing so, we seek to support the contributions made, and value generated, by socially engaged arts organisations in developing a good city. While focused on London, the findings presented in this report will resonate with other small arts organisations and regional urban policy makers addressing similar challenges in supporting the impactful work of socially engaged arts within local communities.



## 2. Research context

Here, we offer a brief background to several core areas of research and active debates which frame this project. We focus on the ways policy(making) intersects with ideas about the sustainability of socially engaged arts, the structure of funding landscapes and the mechanics of value and impact measurements for cultural initiatives.



### Sustaining socially engaged arts

As a practice, socially engaged arts are 'participatory in nature', typically acting as an 'intervention in the social and political sphere' (Belfiore, 2022: 2). Socially engaged artists and arts organisations are also usually deeply embedded in place (Olsen, 2019a). As a consequence, they are often committed to inclusive models of urban development, engaging with the funding bodies and policymakers that similarly support these approaches to citymaking.

In the UK, socially engaged arts continue to attract public funding. This funding has largely grown since the late 1990s, linked to 'a renewed focus from policy-makers on the societal benefits of active participation and the hope that they might support wider strategies of social cohesion and inclusion' (Belfiore, 2022: 2). LSoM is typical here, forging key policy 'attachments' (Grey, 2007) as part of their work with marginalised groups and as a diploma-level educator. Through their material investment in the School's site, including refurbishment of the building's undercroft, they also contribute to local urban regeneration and economic development. LSoM therefore reflects the way in which 'cultural, economic, and social value has become deeply embedded in the spatial networks of creative and cultural practice' (Moreton, 2013: 424).

Rimmer (2020) highlights that, since the 2008 global financial crisis, socially engaged arts practice now increasingly occurs under neoliberal policies promoting 'enterprise agendas'. This typically



involves more intensive forms of organisational management and governance (ibid). A combination of New Public Managerialism's (NPM) encouragement of cost reduction, conditions of austerity over the last decade (Newsinger and Green, 2016; Newsinger and Serafini, 2021; Rimmer, 2020) and the economic impact of Covid-19 (Walmsley et al., 2022) has placed even greater pressure on entrepreneurship and 'income diversification' (Ashton, 2023) in the arts. This can be read largely as a desire to increase earned income and reduce reliance on public funds. We see this in the business model and fundraising activities pursued by LSoM. These priorities include organisational expansion and formalisation; increased private and commercial income streams; and renewed funding from public bodies at different levels (local, regional and national) in addition to charitable sources and the public through crowdfunding (see Section 3).

The organisational efforts required to sustain these income streams constrain the extent to which arts organisations like LSoM are able to deliver on the social aims of their work. In particular, Rimmer (2020: 295) stresses how 'the effects of austerity and associated policy shifts have served to mitigate against organisations' ability to sustain arts-based work with disadvantaged groups, resist neoliberal 'enterprise' agendas or maintain a practical commitment to community development aims'. This creates tension with the societal benefit, inclusion and wellbeing agendas for the arts (Belfiore, 2020). Ashton (2023) refers specifically to 'organisational portfolio precarity' as an outcome of income diversification, while Walmsley et al. (2022) suggest that organisations heavily reliant on earned income were particularly hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. These examples demonstrate weaknesses in the 'feasibility of the income diversification solution' (Ashton, 2023: 403) for small arts organisations.



### Funding landscapes

The challenges noted above are, in part, the result of the complexities of the funding landscape for the arts in the UK. Indeed, Anheier et al. (2021: 32) identify three tiers of cultural policy governance at play in London: the national Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the arm's length Arts Council England; the Greater London Authority (GLA); and the local councils governing each of London's boroughs, all of which operate alongside private funders and stakeholders. This creates a complex funding ecosystem for arts and culture in the capital. While these three main tiers are conceived as operating largely in parallel, there are in fact considerable overlaps between them. This becomes especially apparent when it comes to funding socially engaged arts organisations who will often seek multiple sources of funding for large projects. A prime example of this approach is the Undercroft development pursued by LSoM (see Section 3).

Once funding is obtained, this multilayered funding landscape can place competing and sometimes conflicting demands on small arts organisations. These points of tension emerge in relation to several core issues raised, notably, when managing (sometimes speculative) project deliverables, adhering to projected timeframes for completion and demonstrating the impact of funded activities. Many times the requirements imposed by separate funding bodies do not align or create impediments to the successful completion of other parallel requirements. Yet all are still expected to be delivered by a single organisation, independent of this broader picture. We discuss the disjointed nature of such evaluation requirements further below.





## Social value and impact measurement

In connection with these conditions of socially engaged arts practice, organisations are increasingly required to evaluate their performance against a growing number of key performance indicators (KPIs). This is to demonstrate their economic and social value contributions in ways that show a 'return on investment' (Belfiore, 2020; Newsinger and Green, 2016). There has been considerable critique of evaluation and impact measurement for creating and perpetuating a hierarchy of values: 'economic value' often overshadows other forms of value in policy discussion (Belfiore, 2020). While hotly debated, many issues, methodological and ideological, remain unresolved (Belfiore, 2020; Newsinger and Green, 2016). Such research has, however, typically emphasised audience/participant perspectives and been limited in consideration of organisational and practitioner perspectives (Newsinger and Serafini, 2021). This arguably presents a 'blind spot' (Newsinger and Green, 2016) in understanding the relationship between the work of arts organisations (and their leaders) and policy(makers).

To illuminate this oversight, in this project we embraced co-design principles to work collaboratively with LSoM and arts practitioners from the outset. We also deliberately adopted a range of creative methods. In our workshop, we pursued a form of emotional mapping, which utilised the creative skills of the participants. We also incorporated filmmaking and photography in the research process and in the production of outputs. These participatory, creative methods amplified insights garnered from more traditional ethnographic research methods and formal interviews (see Section 4). Our project design follows calls for more humanities-led approaches to arts impact assessment and policy advocacy; this offers an alternative to quantitative evaluation, 'toolkits' and metrics for socioeconomic impact which demand oversimplification (Belfiore and Bennet, 2010). While creative and arts-based evaluation practices have been recognised for their communicative and expressive value (Charlton, 2016), and are used in informal evaluation, they are less likely to contribute to formal reporting (Daykin, 2015). Despite greater recognition of the value of qualitative data (Neelands et al., 2022), standardised metrics remain prolific in the arts (and wider public sector) in relation to funding.

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that socially engaged arts organisations - and the UK arts sector more broadly - 'operate in a landscape fraught with tensions and contradictions, as they negotiate a course between their principles, the requirements of their funders and the expectations of those with whom they work' (Rimmer, 2020: 296). While we recognise this critique, in this project we adopt a pragmatic approach, drawing on the work of Olsen (2019b), to avoid 'stalemates' between socially engaged arts organisations and policy(makers). Instead, we '[shift our] attention to new avenues where productive change can be brought about' (Olsen, 2019b: 990).

In particular, we consider how some of the notable policy bottlenecks and challenges experienced by small community arts initiatives like LSoM could be addressed in order to ease both tensions and workload for organisations working within similar multilayered policy frameworks. Keeping this pragmatic objective in mind, one of the key areas that we identify and aim to intervene in making such a change relates to how we can use creative, co-designed methods to better sense and capture the social value of small arts organisations within the material and community fabrics of the urban landscape.





### 3. Situating the London School of Mosaic

We turn now to look at the case study at the heart of this project: the London School of Mosaic (LSoM), an expanding but relatively small (5 core staff) arts organisation. Its premises are found in the undercroft of the Ludham and Waxham Estate, located in the Gospel Oak ward of Camden, a Borough in North London.

The timing of our project coincided with a period of intense transition for the organisation. Starting from April 2021 until August 2023, we accompanied LSoM's policy engagement with the local council and a range of funding bodies as the School navigated emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, continued a process of formalisation and embarked on redeveloping an adjoining area of Ludham Undercroft into artist studios. In this section, we introduce LSoM and its development within this wider context.

#### London School of Mosaic

Established originally in 2004 as Southbank Mosaics (then based in Waterloo), the London School of Mosaic opened its doors in 2017. The new School repurposed a site - previously fitted for construction training - at the far end of a disused parking garage situated beneath one of two buildings that comprises a post-war housing estate called Ludham and Waxham. The estate is run and managed by Camden Council and it predominantly features social housing tenancies. Prior to the arrival of LSoM, this large space under the estate had remained mostly empty for 40+ years and, over time, it had become associated with criminal activity. The introduction of a socially engaged arts organisation at this site aimed to change these negative associations and reinvigorate the area. LSoM's relocation and formalisation in the Ludham Undercroft was enabled by investment (an unsecured repayable loan) from NESTA through the Arts Impact Fund in 2017.

LSoM teaches mosaic studies to professional standards with short courses and accredited qualifications. Beyond this formal training, they work with their local communities by running free sessions in mosaic-making and other arts activities for vulnerable groups and those at risk of marginalisation (including programming for children and young people, older residents, ex-offenders, and individuals with different abilities). They also offer sessions specifically for residents of the Ludham and Waxham Estate and host a Summer School for children in their community garden.

These activities contribute to LSoM's social mission to use mosaic practice to increase access to the arts, create civic space, improve neighbourhoods and transform the public realm for all to enjoy. This mission has been retained as the School has formalised from Southbank Mosaics into LSoM. They have installed over 360 public realm installations (mosaics), working with volunteers and short and accredited course participants on these projects and on private commissions.

Beyond mosaic production and teaching provision, since 2017 LSoM has been home to a number of resident artists with studio spaces on site (8 initially, now expanding to 30), alongside the Gospel Oak Clay Cooperative and a screen printing group. Two charities also rent space on the site and bring their own groups to the space for creative workshops. A community canteen, Mother@Mosaic, opened in 2019



Figure 1.2. London School of Mosaic exterior. Source: Chandra Morrison



in connection with LSoM. It shares access to the small communal garden and public seating area at the School's entrance. With an active events programme of its own, the Mother canteen has since become a key focal point and space of diverse social interaction on the estate. In sum, LSoM takes on a role as a creative hub (Gill, Pratt and Virani, 2019) in Camden, a feature which is being cemented with the new development of artist studios and community spaces in an adjacent section of the Ludham Undercroft.

## Ludham Undercroft

The Ludham Undercroft development can be seen as part of a wider move in London (and beyond) to invest in affordable artist studios. This follows a city-wide review in 2014 (GLA, 2014) which highlighted the disappearing and at-risk nature of this vital supportive creative infrastructure (Moreton, 2013). It also connects with the establishment of the Creative Land Trust, positioned as a solution to the lack of affordable working space for arts practitioners. Affordable artist studios are seen to offer a cross-section of cultural, economic and social benefit for artists and their wider community (ibid). Such developments often take place within the context of commercial and real-estate plans for 'left behind' urban and post-industrial spaces (Mommaas, 2004). They are, as such, instrumentally tied to creative/culture-led 'place making' and urban development agendas (Moreton, 2013) and, as we explore in this research, multiple layers of urban governance (Catungal and Leslie, 2009).

The Ludham Undercroft is an example of an independent artist studio development (not part of the Creative Land Trust or other existing studio providers such as Space Studios, Bow Arts or ACME). LSoM received capital funding (£766k) from the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund (Greater London Authority - GLA) to bring back into use 1690 sqm of empty space - the Ludham Undercroft (the building's garages) - as affordable workshops and artist studios. Match funding (£720k) was provided by Camden Borough Council, with a grant covering 10 years rent-free for the new workshops. Additional funding was raised from Arts Council England (£53k), Garfield Weston and a community crowd funder.

The redevelopment proposed to safeguard a public asset and bring it back into use as a multifaceted enterprise. The Undercroft will expand LSoM's capacity as a creative hub by providing 30 affordable artist studios for a variety of individuals and organisations, specifically those working with local communities in Gospel Oak. The spaces will be used for a range of activities that continue ongoing work in mosaics and ceramics while adding other expressive media (including radio production) and community/youth activities (including boxing). The extant resident artists, groups and charities based at LSoM have retained spaces in the new development. More than expanding the types of activities on offer, the Undercroft development enables LSoM to improve business model resilience through further income diversification (Ashton, 2023) by moving towards a more commercial (rent) model as opposed to reliance on public/charitable funding. The intent is for the School to generate sustainable income from hiring out units in the newly developed space. This income, in turn, would allow LSoM to secure their long-term future at the site and to repay the NESTA loan. The development also generates opportunities for extended and novel forms of community/resident engagement, enhanced through a restructuring of the School's governance model to ensure representation of multiple stakeholders (Public Works, 2019).

Working with not-for-profit design practice and architecture collective Public Works from 2019, the School first sought to understand local needs for creative and community spaces. This input informed the design of the new development. The process involved a number of community consultations, open days, workshops and the establishment of a local artist steering committee. In parallel, they mapped out existing social infrastructure in Gospel Oak which highlighted a lack of social infrastructure to support the high density of residents. Key challenges relating to the organisation's development and expansion (in employees and footprint) were also identified in advance. These

included ensuring the financial and social sustainability of the organisation (goals set prior to the financial challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent cost of living crisis) and ensuring positive relations with local residents (LSoM and Public Works, 2019).

While initially planned for completion in Autumn 2021, works were significantly delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and building/facilities infrastructure problems. LSoM's ability to address these challenges, however, was greatly hindered by a series of policy bottlenecks (see Section 5). The space was finally cleared and building repairs were undertaken by Camden Council in 2021-22 and the main building works started in November 2023. The new studios opened in June 2023. Spaces are allocated by a panel of local artists based on the type of creative practice, need for space, potential social impact and how connected the person/group is to the local area.



Figure 3. Undercroft studios under development. Image by: Stephen Norman Young



## Gospel Oak

LSoM is located in Gospel Oak, an inner-city multicultural neighbourhood in the London Borough of Camden. Gospel Oak is the most deprived ward in Camden and among the 15% most deprived wards in England as a whole (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019). It was identified within the Camden Local Plan 2017 (Camden Council, 2017) as a priority area for community investment and regeneration due to high levels of relative deprivation relating to health, income and employability.

Curiously, however, the neighbourhood is positioned at a geographic and demographic intersection with some of the city's wealthiest wards: Hampstead to the northwest, Dartmouth Park to the northeast, Kentish Town to the southeast and Belsize Park to the southwest. Indeed, a wealth divide is tangibly visible between the buildings lining the north and south sides of Mansfield Road, a major thoroughfare that divides Hampstead and Gospel Oak and runs adjacent to the Ludham and Waxham Estate. As such, the basic inequality in the part of the city where the School sits couldn't be more stark. This also generates a considerable diversity in the demographics of users of LSoM and engagement with different parts of its formal education and social programmes, which poses both opportunities and challenges for the organisation.

Ludham and Waxham Estate itself is home to 500+ tenants, including a considerable number of young and teenage children but also elderly tenants living alone. There is a long-standing and strong Tenants and Residents Association (TRA), who enjoy a good relationship with LSoM. Initial community consultation as part of the Undercroft development revealed that Ludham and Waxham Estate residents often feel overlooked in terms of regeneration schemes taking place across the Borough. Long term issues with waste management were also raised. While predating the arrival of LSoM, these challenges inevitably impact the relationship between the School and estate residents.

Overall, LSoM is considered to be in a strategic position to bridge the socioeconomic divisions of the area. The School's expansion within the Ludham Undercroft offers an 'accessible piece of civic infrastructure which responds to the needs of all of the surrounding communities, and connects to, values and builds on the existing infrastructure' (LSOM and Public Works, 2019: 8).

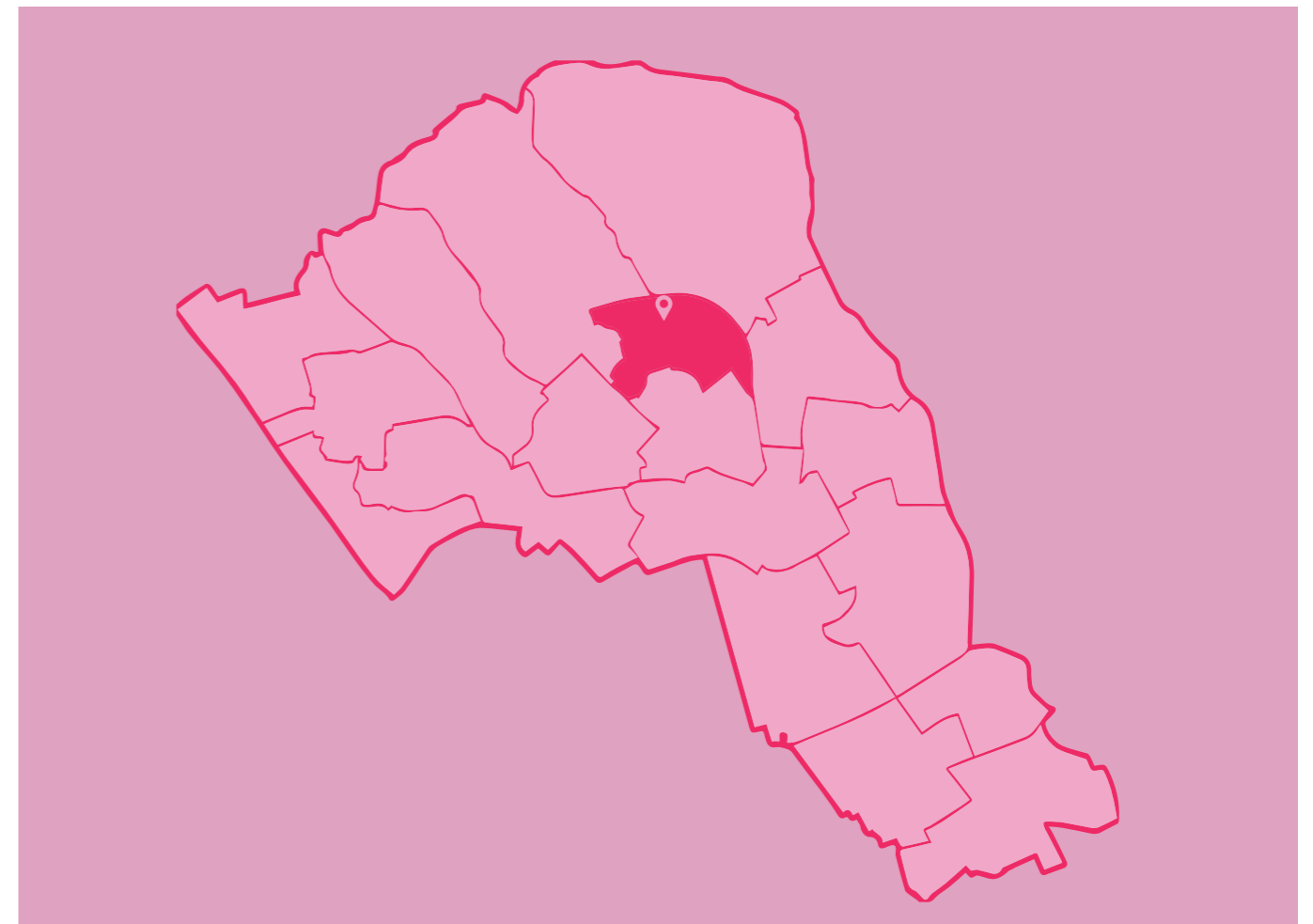
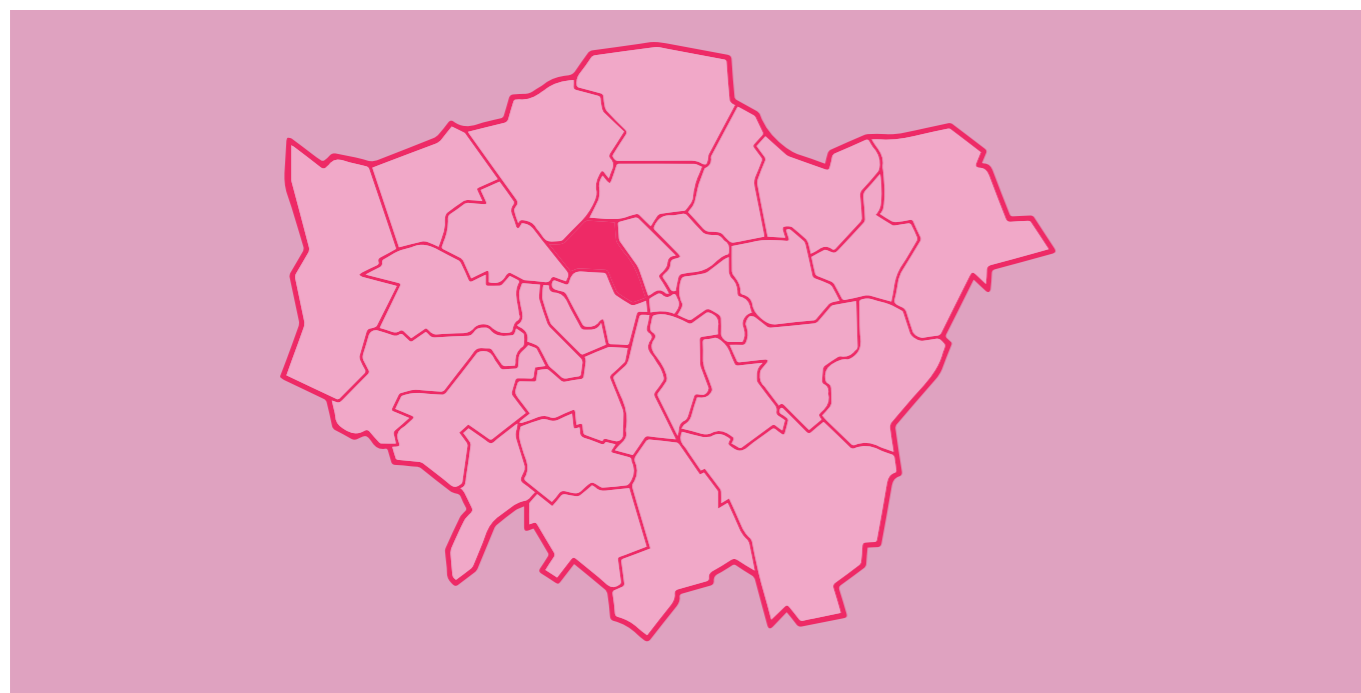


Figure 4.5. Map of London/Camden area with LSoM marked in Gospel Oak

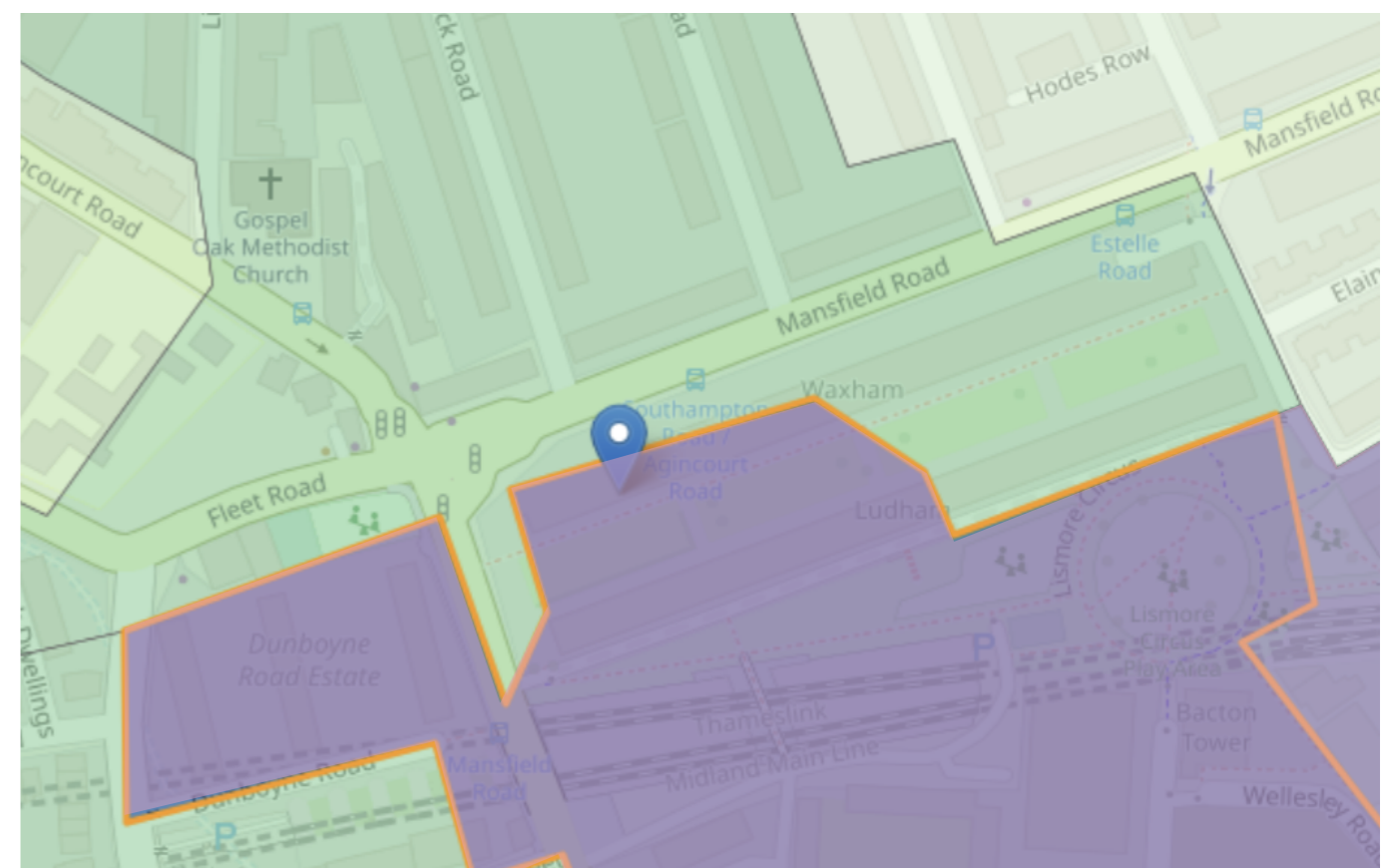
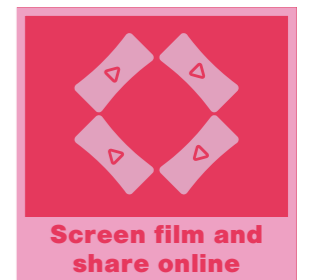
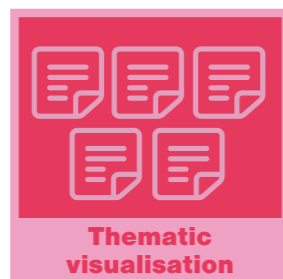
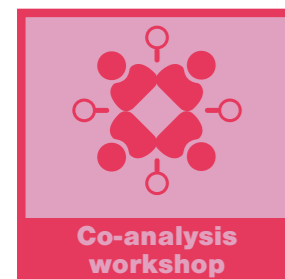


Figure 6. Indices of Multiple Deprivation map for Gospel Oak section with LSoM marked at the intersection of areas of high and lower deprivation. Source: [English IMD 2019 \(Gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811117/english IMD 2019 (Gov.uk).pdf)

# Methods for creative collaboration





## 4. Methods for creative collaboration

This interdisciplinary project pursues a multi-method, in-depth case study of a small arts organisation - LSoM - to explore their relationship with layers of policy governance from the practitioner perspective. Working closely with our project partners LSoM and RESOLVE Collective, our research process embraced two defining features: co-design and creative/arts-based methods. We outline our implementation of these complementary research methods in this section, highlighting how they shaped the project design, objectives and outputs.



### Co-design

Co-design is a form of participatory research. It involves using 'creative and participatory principles and tools to engage different kinds of people and knowledge in public problem solving' (Blomkamp, 2018: 731). As a design-led process, co-design functions as 'a methodology for innovation' because 'it requires wide input into problem definition and the development of solutions' (Blomkamp, 2018: 732). This approach to doing research incorporates the local knowledge and experiential expertise of people/organisations directly connected to the issues at hand, who become active participants in designing the research project itself, not simply contributing their views and experiences (ibid: 733). This integrated participation across the lifespan of a project shapes the potential insights obtained through research, as 'the time invested in creating and co-creating with others offers a different, and often deeper access to understanding their experiences and values' (MacGregor et al., 2022: 228).

Adopting co-design principles allowed us to take on board the needs and priorities of our primary project partner, LSoM, and we refined the focus of our research questions and objectives in dialogue with their input. Likewise, our workshop activities took shape through direct input from RESOLVE and their wealth of experience running community-led, action-oriented projects. Co-design was implemented using a variety of methods and activities to generate this type of knowledge exchange and engagement throughout the project.

Year 1 was dedicated to establishing organisational familiarity: getting to know our project partners, their activities and the spaces they work in. A specific objective was to map LSoM within a wider policy landscape and, in particular, to grasp the complexities of their funding engagements and reporting obligations. We achieved this by conducting semi-structured and scoping interviews with LSoM leadership (both outgoing and incoming Directors) and RESOLVE Collective; sitting in on meetings between LSoM and funding bodies (GLA, Camden Council); and conducting site visits to the studio premises and the local area. We also reviewed LSoM's funding applications/agreements, evaluation requirements and policy documents regarding the Undercroft development. Through these ongoing conversations, we established key themes and problem areas relating to policy which would be most beneficial for LSoM to address through our research.

These complementary modes of engagement laid the groundwork for developing meaningful co-designed activities, run during Year 2. We organised a creative workshop - discussed in further detail

below - to explore how to better capture the social value of LSoM. Facilitated by RESOLVE, the one day workshop incorporated a participatory mapping activity, a group reflection session, and rapid response interviews. Notably, the workshop broadened the participatory dimensions of our project by including participants representative of some of the diverse communities found at LSoM and the local estate, with participants invited on the School's recommendation. We later engaged in co-analysis of the maps alongside the Director of LSoM and a local councillor, where we used a thematic clustering activity to assess its visual contents. Transcripts from all of the interviews, mapping workshop and co-analysis session were coded thematically in Nvivo. Finally, the project's written outputs received feedback from project partners.

Given our investigation of arts organisations' relation to policy, this research approach served a further purpose as a way to model how co-design could benefit policy itself. Our work contributes to growing interest in this method's 'radical potential to transform the process and outcomes of policy making' (Blomkamp, 2018: 739). It also aligns with emerging ideas about place-based policymaking which relates to 'the development of deep understanding of how policy issues are experienced in different places, and collaboratively designing policies to increase their adaptability to and effectiveness in local contexts' (Norman, 2022). By centering community and stakeholder experiences, co-design offers an approach to reinvigorate the relationship between arts organisations, local communities and policymakers, such as local councils. Co-design embraces citizen involvement in thinking about policy implementation by 'empowering the people affected by a policy issue to actively contribute to developing a solution for it' (Blomkamp, 2018: 732). In practical terms, as we highlight in this report, this underscores a need to think critically about the modes of evaluation and reporting requirements stipulated by policymakers and funding bodies in order to ensure these processes support, rather than overburden or hinder, socially engaged arts organisations.



### Creative methods

An effective way to enable the levels of participation advocated by co-design is through creative, arts-based activities (for examples, see Kara, 2020; Von Benzon et al., 2021). These types of qualitative methods excel at bringing into view lived experiences and a diversity of voices that are often flattened within quantitative approaches (Norman, 2020). Creative practices can also play a valuable role in engaging different communities in the implementation of research into practice and policy (Langley et al., 2022: 202). When collaborating with stakeholders, arts-informed approaches generate 'new ways of thinking about research topics' which, in turn, can lead to development of 'more relevant and useful research and evaluation findings' (MacGregor et al., 2022: 206). In particular, creative and arts-based methods are well suited to 'address context specificity and sensitivity' in ways that can 'broaden thinking about [social] impact' (MacGregor et al., 2022: 206). They offer techniques to access 'tacit knowledge that is ingrained in people's everyday experiences' by 'reveal[ing] knowledge that is non-verbal, holistic, non-linear, emotional, or intuitive' (Blomkamp, 2018: 733). These are precisely the types of insights that arise from the creative, participatory methods employed in our research to think about the social value of LSoM.

For this project, we piloted a participatory mapping exercise - called emotional mapping - as a useful way to surface the School's latent value, particularly as experienced by some of its users. Emotional mapping is an interactive activity developed by RESOLVE Collective through their own community-based practice across multiple UK cities. It is designed to be open-ended and allow for relatively unplanned interactions on a map. We worked closely with LSoM leadership and RESOLVE to tailor the mapping process to the School's local context and our research interests.



We held a one-day workshop at LSoM in October 2022. It was attended by 7 participants who represented a mix of the School's community stakeholders, including staff members, resident artists, community leaders, and a local councillor (representatives from GLA were unfortunately unable to attend). Facilitated by Akil Scafe-Smith of RESOLVE Collective, the workshop began with an interactive mapping activity run over 2.5 hours. Participants worked across large, A0 sized maps depicting two scales: one zoomed into architectural plans of the Ludham and Waxham Estate and the streets immediately surrounding the School; a second encompassed the full Gospel Oak ward (see figure 7). With Sharpie pens in hand, they marked the maps guided by a series of prompts:

- Where do you currently stay?
- What areas do you find yourself being familiar with?
- What is your understanding of these areas?
- What/Where are your regular routes around the area?
- Indicate any memories and intangible markers associated with LSoM
- List 3 key experiences within LSoM

Participants were encouraged to annotate, scribble, draw, doodle and engage with the map to project their lived experience in any way they chose. The facilitator highlighted that, while a collective activity, the aim was not to achieve consensus or 'agreed truth', but for the map to situate contested knowledges on the same page. Marking up the map sparked parallel conversations and recounting of stories amongst the participants, verbal exchanges of equal importance to this process. The mapping intervention was followed by a guided whole-group reflection session and short individual interviews to capture both collective and individual views on the workshop experience.

Extending our use of creative methods, all workshop activities were visually documented by a professional filmmaker, Pablo Aravena, and the footage was later edited into a short film 'Mapping Social Value' available on Vimeo. In addition, all activities were audio recorded (using portable devices) and the research team took still photographs and notes throughout the workshop. Permission for all forms of recording were obtained from participants in advance.

As we detail later in this report, our embrace of creative methods - like participatory mapping, filmmaking and photography - aims to explore innovative ways to challenge top-down approaches to policy design and content. Put into practice using co-design principles, these arts-based approaches to research address important questions about power and inclusion by asking 'whose knowledge counts, how different forms of knowledge are accounted for, and by whom' (Langley et al., 2022: 202). Co-design and creative methods, therefore, encourage us to look at issues and ideas that do not necessarily show up on policy documents and formal agreements, but which impact the everyday realities of small arts organisations like LSoM.



Figure 7. Maps at two scales for the emotional mapping workshop. Source: Chandra Morrison



# 5. Connections & disconnections with policy

The findings presented in this section aim to spotlight some of the key bottlenecks we observed that inhibit constructive collaboration between the organisation and policymakers in generating effective, sustainable contributions to place. Specifically, we identify challenges in navigating multiple layers of policy, meeting funder expectations, burdensome evaluation practices and tensions in policymaker relationships. Alongside these, we offer examples of successful policy engagement at LSoM, to demonstrate where positive and productive relationships can be achieved, if nurtured.

## Navigating layers of policy



As indicated in the case study introduction (Section 3), LSoM engages simultaneously with multiple levels and areas of policy in London as well as other private funders and stakeholders. On an everyday level, the School navigates between cultural, educational and social policy, each of which have their own priorities and complex evaluation criteria. This is challenging for a small organisation to audit, requiring ongoing innovation and adaptation in their planning and reporting.



“One of the key indicators and impacts that they [Camden Council] had is economic impact [...] bringing jobs to the local community or opportunities for training. So we will definitely be able to fulfil that by having arts organisations and community groups coming and moving in here and providing local artists a creative space for work. And then, obviously, improving the local environment. So a project like this has a lot of impact in solving issues with crime [...] We are improving some of the blind spots and putting lights in and improving the environment [...] so that it’s safer. And there are other things such as the sense of place and social cohesion [...] We do engage local people to be also more politically engaged and take care of their estate or local environment. And we are in a priority area, because it’s one of the most deprived areas of Camden here.” (Director of LSoM)



In considering their proposal for the Ludham Undercroft development, the GLA and Camden Council prioritised its potential contribution to urban regeneration and economic development strategies for the area. In addition, the project received funding from Arts Council England to assist with further infrastructural works. A public crowdfunder was later needed to secure additional funds. In pursuing these multiple avenues of financial support, LSoM was required to navigate education, social and cultural policy frameworks while, at the same time, considering construction issues and health and safety legislation in relation to the use and development of the site. Here, the knowledge and expertise of LSoM’s board of trustees, alongside additional pro-bono legal counsel, was key to the organisation being able to interpret and respond to situations which stalled the physical redevelopment of the site. These delays considerably impacted the organisation’s income generating capacity.






“We had identified that there are gas pipes that were previously unknown to the Council. [...] And that’s why it’s a major issue. Because there’s many [...] health and safety rules around that and legislation about what needs to be done with these gas pipes. [...] Policies are also around building regulations that we need to think about often. And then we need experts like our architects to advise us and we have a surveyor on our board of trustees who’s been very helpful.” (Director of LSoM)



“The Arts Impact Fund was intended to be quite risky for certain projects to scale up. So we massively scaled up to become London School of Mosaic, but the business plan was written around establishing a BA programme. And then we didn’t deliver this on time, because the time frame was to do it within one or two years. And that’s what was actually unrealistic. [...] Suddenly, we had like this meeting where they said [...] ‘we’re cutting your funding’. [...] And we muddle through this because they actually thought we would fail and have to close immediately. But we didn’t. [...] [We] defended our position and explained that we were disappointed. [...] I think they shifted the blame onto us solely, which wasn’t right. They should have shared that. [...] Slowly, we’ve started to build a much better relationship with the Arts Impact Fund. And they actually now really appreciate the hard work we’re doing.” (Director of LSoM)



Overall, these interview excerpts present a picture of an extremely complex funding and policy environment which this small arts organisation has to navigate. The situation additionally requires regular reactions to changes in policy. Key issues identified, and points of both tension and positive connection across these multiple areas of policy, are discussed in greater detail below.



## Funder expectations

The School highlighted a number of occasions where strong negotiation had been required with funders regarding the need for flexibility in funded projects when faced with unforeseeable events and policy changes (such as the announcement of higher education reforms preventing the establishment of the BA Mosaics programme, the impact of COVID-19, high levels inflation and the cost of living crisis in the UK) as well as the unexpected building maintenance delays and associated costs noted earlier.

An organisation’s relationship with funders is not predetermined; it is shaped by the attitude, effort and level of engagement of each party. The quote below demonstrates how misaligned expectations quickly deteriorated the School’s initial relationship with the large (loan-based) arts and innovation funder, NESTA, regarding the delivery of an Arts Impact Fund project. It also highlights the potential for that relationship to be improved through targeted consultation and open discussion, and for funding arrangements to be renegotiated.

A further example is found in the organisation’s relationship with the GLA, which did not account for fluctuations in the economic climate (specifically high rates of inflation and rising energy costs) when costing the planned development works for the Undercroft. Top-up funding was not available and the School was required to fundraise once more to deliver necessary public realm improvements:

“The GLA, they want us to implement the public space strategy. We’ve



already expanded. We had a design review for this entire building. To expand into this part [of the Undercroft], we had to stretch our budget with massive amounts of inflation. [...] So our budget just shrinks and dwindles. And now we were pulled up and they said to us, you didn’t do the public realm strategy. [...] So some of these things are really muddled up. And the responsibility sits with people that [...] have the least capital and power to deliver something, but we’re expected to do that [...] [Now] we say, actually, that’s not right.” (Director of LSoM)



These circumstances have put additional pressure on the affordability of the new artist studios. As there is very little flexibility or contingency within the funding received, the additional costs must be recouped for the School to remain solvent. The School's only supplementary income comes from their commercial activity: rental of studio spaces and provision of mosaic courses. This solution, however, creates conflict between accessibility and affordability. And it generates a point of tension between the local community and both Camden Borough Council and the GLA as funders. In particular, the prices set for the new studio spaces in the Undercroft (£682/month for a private double space and £432/month for a single space, including service charges) has received criticism from prospective tenants. To maintain their commitment to a socially engaged ethos would put the School in a financially precarious position:



"We've been accused of being gentrifiers. We were asked by some of our artists, and we had a conversation with them and said 'we can either close the space, or we continue'. We decided to continue. But you need to speak to your politicians to tell them what's happening. [...] Because we want to survive, the people in the estate want to survive, and we all want to still have the same access to culture. So it's not strategic if we go under. But some people kind of think that we are the bad people then." (Director of LSoM)



## Evaluation practices

Beyond financial challenges, navigating multiple funders and policy areas requires the management of diverse, often complicated funder evaluation requests. For example, the School was originally given a list of 173 indicators by the GLA to evaluate the project funded by the Good Growth Fund. They subsequently negotiated a much narrower set of indicators for final reporting (initially refined to 33 indicators across 8 core themes but with the aim to achieve further consolidation of indicators). In an attempt to handle these extensive monitoring requirements, the School is considering the potential for digital evaluation tools across LSoM and the Undercroft expansion in order to reduce the burden on staff to collect and analyse data for reporting.



"I think it's also difficult for us to streamline the various different categories of information that we need to measure and knowing statistically how you do that or how the volume of data can be processed. And different organisations that we work with, funders or the council or different authorities, do require different information which is then difficult to separate or bring together." (Director of LSoM)



Both the burden of reporting and the lack of joined up thinking between different organisations regarding reporting requirements emerged as key issues in need of better solutions. Yet, the emphasis on quantitative measurement (partially to enable economic value approximations) was also viewed as limiting the ways in which LSoM could effectively capture and communicate their value and work with the community. It was noted, however, that some arts funders are moving towards more narrative/creative forms of evaluation, and this was seen as a welcome shift.



"A qualitative representation of social value would be so much more effective as a way of communicating the impact that we have as an organisation. And because we do visual arts on a daily basis. So highlighting some of these impacts cannot be understood and seen in quantitative data. And I think more organisations and funders are moving towards kind of visual and audiovisual representations of their impact [...] that's what we want to increase openness towards through the project that we do here as well." (Director of LSoM)



What appears to be missing in these conversations with funders about reporting and deliverables is a way to recognise the many smaller, cumulative impacts that LSoM has on the local environment and community. This is where co-designed approaches and creative methods can excel, especially when it comes to revealing the micro-assets of value that animate people's daily lives (see Section 6).





## Relationships with policy makers

Among the different levels of policy and governance LSoM engaged with, their relationship with the local council (Camden) appeared to generate the greatest source of tension. Negotiations over site management and the terms of the lease created almost daily challenges and highlighted considerable power imbalances (Belfiore, 2022) as well as bureaucratic issues.



“The lease that we signed [prior to my Directorship] had many loopholes and was actually quite, very, very, very much in favour of the Council. And I’ve reviewed that lease recently and it actually said that, if there are any leaks or gas issues or anything from the residence flats on top of us, that’s our problem. But we are unable to get into flats because we’re not the police and we’re not the Council. [...] So what is written there has actually not been implemented. [...] And because of this confusion, there’s never a clarity of whose responsibility it is to fix things.” (Director of LSoM)



Combined with the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living, these confusions and delays drove up the costs of redeveloping the School and the Undercroft. Considerable financial flexibility and adaptability on both sides has been needed to sustain the organisation and ensure the feasibility of the redevelopment work as there is no contingency for such price rises within public funding.

In some cases, the School’s multiple connections, especially with large funders, has been leveraged to the organisation’s advantage, using the demands of the most powerful funder to drive forward work that may be stalled by a lower level of governance:



“We’re working with the Greater London Authority and they are just amazing [...] But we find that they often have to push the Council to actually deliver on those promises [made] in partnership with the organisations that they fund. Because I think at the Council level, things stall quite a bit on the intentions that were set out by the Mayor [of London].” (Director of LSoM)



There are also examples of positive relationships between the School and local councillors, and with senior members of Camden Council. By contrast, challenges are perceived to occur more frequently at lower levels of policy implementation:



“Talking to local councillors, talking to the senior management, they are extremely good and are very much aware of [...] economic [...] and social impact. [...] And they’re trying to do their very best. But I think [...] that message doesn’t necessarily get down to the officers or the people who need to implement things, because either they might be understaffed, or they’re not able to understand the concepts that are being discussed.” (Director of LSoM)



Other positive examples of collaboration with local councillors were found in their joint engagement with residents of the Ludham and Waxham Estate in order to communicate the purpose of the proposed Undercroft development and the prospective benefits to the wider community. This outreach was largely supported by establishing a good relationship between LSoM and key community leaders, notably the Chair of the Tenants and Residents Association.



## 6. Mapping social value and community micro-assets

As emerges through a review of LSoM's relationships with a range of policymakers and funding bodies, a major challenge facing the School relates to difficulties in complying with reporting requirements to show that they are achieving the outcomes of defined deliverables. In particular, this reflects pressures from onerous and excessive reporting structures in combination with a lack of opportunities to communicate other forms of social value generated by the organisation. It is in this arena that our project's co-designed workshop on emotional mapping aimed to intervene, so as to demonstrate alternative approaches for capturing the impact and value of LSoM in ways more suited to their activities and capacity.

Accordingly, this section focuses on the outcomes and potential application of creative methods for sensing the social value of socially engaged arts organisations. Focusing on the participatory mapping exercise pursued in this project, we highlight its contributions to organisational learning, future development, policy processes (such as community asset mapping), and the work of local borough council participation strategies. We also address the value of creative, arts-based methods for enabling community members to explore and expand their engagement with specific organisations in the local area.

### Organisational learning

From the School's perspective, our mapping process provided them with a useful tool to reflect on the reach of the organisation, the use and value of the space, and the diversity of its activity. In particular, it highlighted key areas of engagement and connections between the School and other community groups in an area, including businesses on the estate. The maps highlighted existing links between the School and the activities of local tenants. It also pointed to connections that may be strengthened in order to further embed the work of LSoM in the community.

“

“For me, it's interesting - as a director and helping the research team to facilitate this - to see how some of the organisational decisions we make and the way we function as a team, what impact that has on people. And that gives us the kind of reassurance that we're on the right track, but also seeing what we can improve, who we're not reaching out to. [...] It's also seeing what we're not doing so well and being quite straight about that and having that openness as well, which this kind of exercise can achieve.” (Director of LSoM)

”

The maps likewise highlighted points of tension to be addressed. This is illustrated in annotations on the map such as 'A bit of a mystery who are these mosaic people? Where are they from? Are they part of the community?' and 'Are poor/BAME welcome?' (see figure 8).



Figure 8. Close up of emotional mapping. Source: Lauren England

Few of the metrics found in standard evaluations - number of jobs, income generated, number of activities, number of workspaces - are directly mappable. Nonetheless, the maps did generate insights that could support reporting on more qualitative place-based indicators, on such themes as community assets, sense of belonging, perception of place, and neighbourhood cohesion.





## Micro-assets of value



Figure 9. Close up of emotional mapping. Source: Lauren England

A primary feature of these participatory maps is their hyper-local perspective. They are effective at identifying what we call 'micro-assets' (see figure 9), including soft infrastructure, which is often unrepresented on other forms of asset mapping used by local councils (Camden Council, 2018, n.d.). Both the marks on the map and the surrounding discussions highlighted a number of small, daily use assets and community resources such as Mother Canteen, community gardens, a food co-op, local arts spaces, benches, and places to rest. The annotations on the map also identified some of the impacts such spaces had on participants and local residents. For example, a participant described another local arts organisation, HvH Arts, as helping their children 'develop an artistic sense and a sense of community'. This collaborative process may feed into local borough council participation strategies, helping to address gaps between the knowledge of policy makers and residents.



"I feel like what you've got here is a big old map of local knowledge, right, a big old map of local insights. And that's something that councillors as policymakers have, in a sense, but you know, there's a few of us from this ward and then there's like 52 other councillors who don't know this. [...] And that's often a gap in policy making [...] Even if you lived in Camden for 20 years, you won't know this level [...] unless you live here [in Gospel Oak], and you really involve the community in this way." (Local Councillor)



Furthermore, the discursive nature of the mapping activity enabled longitudinal reflection, highlighting changes over time to historical assets, including those long since demolished. For example, early on in the workshop a participant marked out an area of what they referred to as 'slum clearance' in the 1970's, marking out the site of a family home destroyed in the process. Another participant identified a city farm that their children have visited throughout their lives. These deeper points of reference, alongside present-day physical and emotional features, reflect the layered sense of experience that emotional mapping is designed to capture.

The micro-assets identified on our maps are very different to the information typically featured on 'community asset maps' generated by local councils, Camden included. For example, an online initiative run by Camden Council to identify places of 'community value' within the Borough primarily highlighted listings at the scale of individual buildings and featured primarily pubs alongside libraries, sports and leisure facilities, a community centre and a small number of well-established arts centres, as well as several open spaces (Camden Council, n.d.). The distribution of items marked on the council-led asset map also, quite starkly, reproduced the significant levels of socioeconomic disparity found across Camden. All sites identified of value were located almost exclusively in the Borough's wealthy areas; no community assets were recognised in Gospel Oak. By contrast, our emotional mapping process drew attention to the accumulation of small sites and moments that individuals encounter during their daily movements in the local neighbourhood. It reveals the richness, and contradicting perceptions, of social value as measured on a hyperlocal scale, thus visualising important contributions to the community dynamics that so often end up missing from institutional imaginings of lower income neighbourhoods and fail to appear in standard consultation practices.





## Creative community consultation

Creative, participatory mapping of this sort can act as a form of community engagement and consultation, helping to identify possible improvements both to the public realm or the organisation. It can also help to identify potential risks in advance of developments and contingency needs. In particular, creative mapping has potential to capture local knowledge that may otherwise escape formal consultations by borough councils. It may provide an alternative to existing digital asset mapping (Camden Council, n.d.) and community consultation tools (Camden Council, 2018), connecting with a much wider range of target groups and local voices. When it comes to questions of value, the diversity of local perspectives is key:



“Very rarely does anyone ask me these sorts of questions, but they’re so important for defining the future. If you see the value of something [...] you can invest, [...] enhance and build upon it. Whereas if you don’t have that information, then projects easily close [...] It’s partly because no one’s really [focussed on] how valuable they were. It’s sort of like an economic decision rather than [...] a blueprint for a social, almost spiritual value within a community.” (Community teacher at LSoM)



Reflecting on their experience of the workshop, participants highlighted the value of the collective activity and opportunities to learn about each others’ subjective experiences of the School and its surrounding area. This was fostered both by the group mapping exercise and the use of a group reflection session. In this way, the workshop provided an opportunity for community building among residents of the School who, while working in the same building, did not always find opportunities to interact and engage with each other in this way.



Figure 10. Participants working together on the map



“[This was] a really nice [...] sort of human centred way to talk about the area together and, yeah, and the place.” (Studio tenant at LSoM)

“I found emotional mapping, first of all, community building. That would be the main theme, it brought us all together. [...] We don’t interact usually on one project like we did today. So I found that was a good thing. [...] We’re kind of collectively learning more about ourselves and the environment and what’s happening here. And to have different people’s [...] views. It’s very important to understand others and the way they think, that’s where the learning process takes place.” (Community teacher at LSoM)





The use of such practices may, however, be more effective if led by community organisations and neighbourhood associations, rather than by policy bodies. As we outline further in Section 7, policy makers and representatives of funders should co-design activities, rather than setting the terms of measurement and reporting. By enabling people to develop informal ‘consultation’ and planning activities, this bottom-up approach would further strengthen the legitimacy of policy interventions. As such, socially engaged arts organisations have an important, and mutually beneficial role, connecting policy makers to the community.



“The mapping exercise kind of taught me [...] how policy can be shaped to help the School of Mosaic. I think the connections they have with the local community, and the potential to build more connections, is something we shouldn’t underestimate. Because we quite often try to come up with policy [...] but it’s hard to reach out and get residents in. So perhaps the School of Mosaic could be hosting policy workshops [...] doing things through the arts to help make policy. [...] Because I think, the arts and mosaic, [...] creative writing, working with arts with young children, all of that has a lot of potential as a way of making policy and collaborative co-design.” (Local Councillor)



Overall, the emotional mapping workshop revealed the potential for more community engagement through creative practice. This exercise was particularly effective at capturing everyday stories and micro-assets of community value. It also reflected the diverse priorities of different stakeholders of socially engaged arts organisations. As a community engagement practice for both arts organisations and policymakers, it is an effective means of connecting with members of a community who may otherwise be missing from other consultation practices. Likewise, it challenges some of the assumptions driving quantitative, top-down audits of social and cultural institutions.

We acknowledge, however, that our workshop was conducted with only a small number of participants who were already involved with LSoM. While it contained a range of perspectives and stakeholders, the group was not fully representative of the diversity found in the LSoM and Gospel Oak communities. And, by and large, participants’ responses reflected their (largely positive) engagement with and in-depth knowledge of the School.

Nonetheless, following our workshop, the mapping activity was adapted by LSoM as a form of community consultation. The School used the same maps and an adapted set of prompts during a community event organised to share information about the new artist studio development in advance of building works taking place. This involved a much wider group of contributors, a number of whom were visiting the School for the first time. The markings on this second set of maps, while less in-depth, highlighted several additional assets of community value to those present on our original maps, emphasising the importance of engaging different groups. It also points to the

adaptability of these types of creative methods for evaluative purposes, depending on the target group and aims.

Beyond the immediate communal value of the exercise, these participatory maps enable longer term reflection. As part of this project, we engaged in a follow-up session with LSoM staff and a local councillor to co-analyse insights observed on the maps. During this exchange, we mutually collated themes and local insights visualised on the maps, and we identified opportunities for organisational change and policy improvements. As a shared enterprise, these types of co-designed creative activities can help to mitigate existing hierarchies of authority, encouraging greater collaboration between organisations and policy makers over time.



Figure 11. Mapping as community consultation. Source: Lauren England



# 7. Conclusion and recommendations

In this final section of the report, we present our concluding comments and recommendations from the research. We present specific considerations for arts organisations and for policy makers and arts funders, addressing the issues raised in the report. Here, we include possible directions for future research which could usefully extend the discussion on socially engaged arts organisations and their relationship with policy. We additionally explore further opportunities for the application of creative methods and emotional mapping in different contexts.

While our research project was based on a single in-depth case study of LSoM, it is nevertheless a valuable example of the ways in which small arts organisations must work across multiple layers of policy, pursuing income diversification strategies in response to the current arts funding and policy landscape. LSoM's experiences may well inform the work of other socially engaged arts organisations. They are particularly relevant to those considering or currently based in local authority property and seeking to grow. In order to enhance this relationship, we recommend **greater flexibility** in funding arrangements, **improved communication** between policy makers and arts organisations, and the implementation of **fairer, long-term, social value leases**. Finally, we encourage much greater use of **co-design and creative methods as part of evaluation and community consultation practices**. Highlighting their potential to capture different perspectives on value, identify micro-level assets and capture the voices of diverse stakeholders, these methods help to drive productive local change by addressing bottlenecks and avoiding 'stalemates' (Olsen, 2019b) arising between organisations and policymakers.



## Flexibility and relationship building

In Section 5, we highlighted some key areas of tension between LSoM and policy makers. We also set out opportunities for more mutually beneficial relationships - particularly with local councillors, senior figures at Camden Borough Council and the GLA, and NESTA - to ensure that procedural bottlenecks do not lead to stalemates between arts organisations and policy makers/funders that would hinder future social, economic and urban policy objectives.

- Our primary recommendation focuses on the need for **funders** (at all levels) to **allow for greater flexibility** in the delivery of proposed outcomes, especially in the face of unpredictable or uncontrollable economic circumstances. Allowing **greater levels of contingency** to be built into budgets in funding applications could relieve pressure and ensure project delivery when unexpected costs arise.
- **Enhancing channels of communication** between funders and recipients throughout the lifespan of a project, especially during key development periods, is imperative to build trust and understanding between both parties. To achieve this, it is important for policy makers and administrators to engage meaningfully with their partners and funded organisations in order to build cross-organisational knowledge and facilitate effective working relationships. We strongly encourage **site visits** and **greater interaction** with people on the ground as, at present, a remote perspective and a lack of consistent communication reinforces the disconnect between the organisation and policy makers or funders.

- There is also a need to address **transactional relationships** between arts organisations and policy makers or funders. For example, there is a need for **fair lease agreements** and clarity over legal responsibility for infrastructure and large maintenance issues, especially when small arts organisations contribute to the redevelopment of local authority assets. Furthermore, while time-limited rent reductions offer clear benefits, the return to full market rates poses a significant threat to the ongoing viability of small arts organisations. Their commerciality is limited and cannot be compared with larger development projects. Pressing arts organisations to expand their commercial revenue streams threatens their sustainability and undermines their capacity for community engagement and collaboration.
- Instead, we recommend the implementation of **long-term social-value leases** which recognise and further encourage the specific contribution of socially engaged arts organisations to the local area. There are promising examples of social value leases in operation: Haringey Council's Community Wealth Building Lease is being piloted (maximum 35% reduction) (Haringey Council, 2020); and while Camden do not currently have a similar scheme, discussions between LSoM and Camden Council are ongoing.
- There are, however, considerable ideological and methodological challenges that emerge when using economic proxies to value arts activities (Newsinger and Green, 2016; Belfiore, 2020). When it comes to social impact, we have noted the **blindspots of quantitative methods of evaluation** in comparison to insights generated by qualitative and creative methods (as we expand below). Further research is therefore needed into social-value lease pilots. This must **prioritise the practitioner perspective** (Newsinger and Serafini, 2021) of these initiatives. It must also explore how the public benefits of these schemes can be evaluated and shared effectively.







## Using co-design and creative practices for evaluation

In Section 6, we highlighted how qualitative and creative methods can generate rich data on aspects of social value which cannot be quantified. Our project piloted emotional mapping (described in Section 4) as a co-designed activity to encourage wider community and practitioner participation in the research process and in rethinking policy needs. Insights from this process inspire a further set of recommendations to improve policy support for socially engaged arts.

- We advocate for **greater use of co-design** principles and a **wide range of participatory creative methods** - such as photography/photovoice, filmmaking, drawing or mapmaking - to capture the **value of small arts organisations**. These research approaches tap into deep local knowledge, showcase diverse voices and encourage community building. Their use would improve understanding of organisational strategy, community engagement and policy consultation.
- There is great potential for **creative and qualitative methods to enhance policy making** in support of community arts initiatives and development projects. They excel at **identifying community tensions and policy bottlenecks**, as well as revealing **micro-level assets of value** and more **mundane social impacts**. These insights can assist arts organisations and policy makers to proactively identify and address the small changes, opportunities and challenges that accumulate and impact (positively and negatively) communities in concrete ways, but which often get overlooked as they are not 'big ticket' items for delivery. Further research could explore the application of other creative methods, beyond mapping, in developing more inclusive approaches to policy making.
- Above all, we advocate for **co-designed forms of community consultation**. This will enable arts organisations and policy makers to **engage with wider visions of community** and to **access voices typically excluded** from these types of decision making processes. We stress the importance of co-design - between researchers, arts organisations, policy makers and funders - to avoid the instrumentalisation and institutionalisation of community consultation. This is particularly critical where engagement with institutional frameworks may be hindered by a lack of trust or a lack of access to (digital) platforms and public forums. We suggest that by enabling local stakeholders to make meaningful connections with policy makers and funders through creative activities, this **bottom-up approach** can **strengthen participation** in planning processes and, ultimately, lead to **better policy design**. Arts organisations are in a prime position to facilitate these connections and activities, further enhancing their value to the local area.
- Similarly, when it comes to evaluation processes, we recommend that arts organisations and community members **collaborate in the design of evaluation procedures and reporting requirements**. This approach would avoid burdensome and often blunt top-down metrics. Developing more **creative methods of evaluation** may also enhance the work of arts organisations, showcasing further their own artistic and cultural value. If funders are able to harness these modes of evaluation, this would **support the core outputs of arts organisations** and reduce their administrative workflows. Creative evaluation outputs could feed directly into arts organisations' marketing activities and support wider community development and engagement, thereby achieving additional value for the organisation.

These recommendations are all designed to support the idea of the good city, one in which all members of the urban community may thrive. Moreover, they affirm the essential value of socially engaged arts organisations to enable processes for more equitable and sustainable urban growth. Their capacity for creativity and collaboration make them important sites for developing inclusive community engagement and the implementation of fair policy.





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# Project Film

A short documentary film from this project- "Mapping Social Value" - is available to watch at: <https://vimeo.com/812051987>

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