

Everyday Cultural Participation: Why 'ordinary' culture should be a key pillar of inclusive growth

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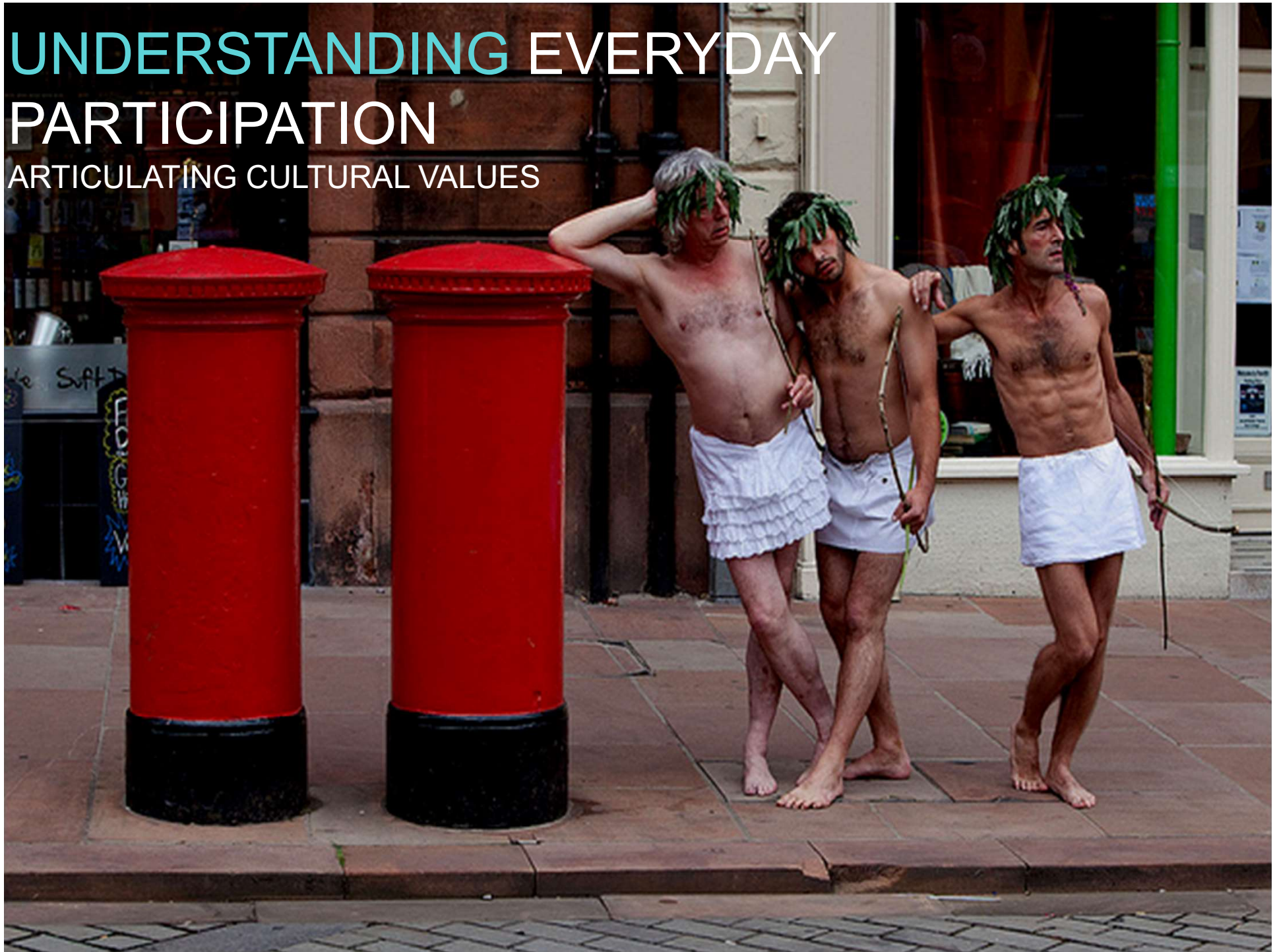


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Kader Attia
Untitled (Ghardaia) 2009

UNDERSTANDING EVERYDAY PARTICIPATION

ARTICULATING CULTURAL VALUES



Major 5-year (2012-17) interdisciplinary research project

- Funded by the AHRC and in Scotland by Creative Scotland
- 4 universities – Manchester (lead), Leicester, Exeter, Warwick
- 10 core researchers, 3 PhD students, multiple casual staff
- Sociology, History, Museum Studies, Drama, English Literature, Arts Management, Cultural Policy Studies
- 16 national stakeholders and many local partners
- Additional 'impact' funding 2017-present



Project aims

- Discover how people participate in culture in their everyday lives and what this participation means to them
- Understand how communities are negotiated through culture
- Develop new articulations and measures of 'cultural value'
- Explore the relationship between participation in different cultural contexts – institutional, voluntary, informal
- Reconnect cultural policy and practice with the everyday

Researching participation

Linked up, mixed-methods design:

- histories
- secondary data analysis
- primary data collection in 6 contrasting 'cultural ecosystems' using a range of primarily qualitative methods
- application and engagement work with local and national stakeholders
- Inductive, multi-method, 'dialogic' approach

Fieldwork sites:



Core empirical data collected:

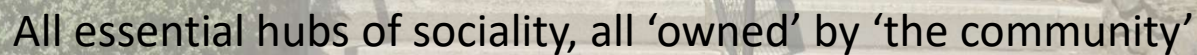
- 323 in-depth longitudinal participation and life history interviews; 500 hours of 'tape'; 4.5 million words
- Ethnographies: young people in care; parks; charity shops; local performers carnival; social clubs and village halls; university of the 3rd age; community land trusts; music performers, and band social networks
- 12,000 assets, using Google Maps, Google search, Yelp, Yell, 118, alongside GIS Ordnance Survey datasets e.g. Green Spaces

Communities on the edge - Peterculter

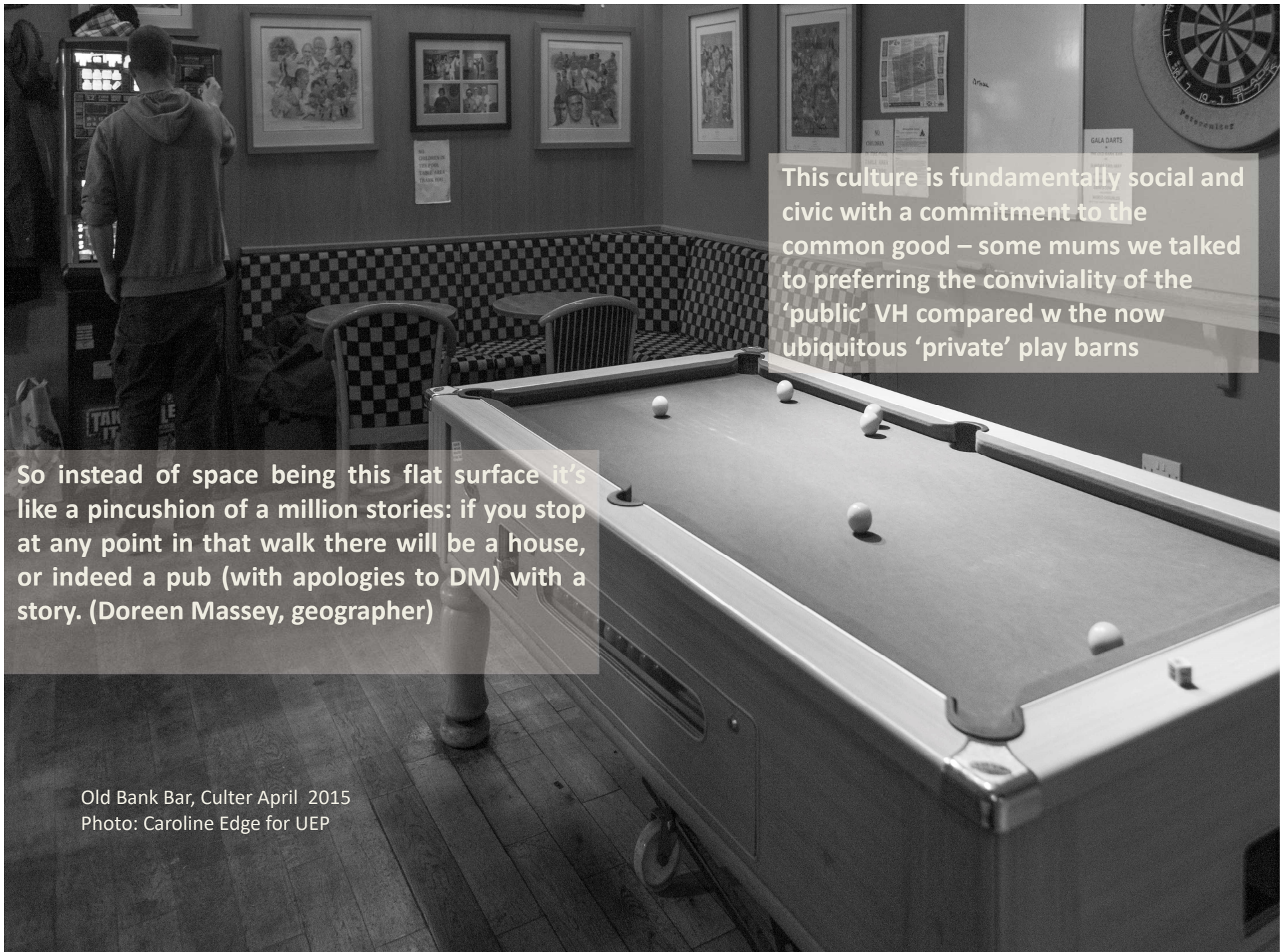


Culter Village

Photo: Andrew Miles
for UEP



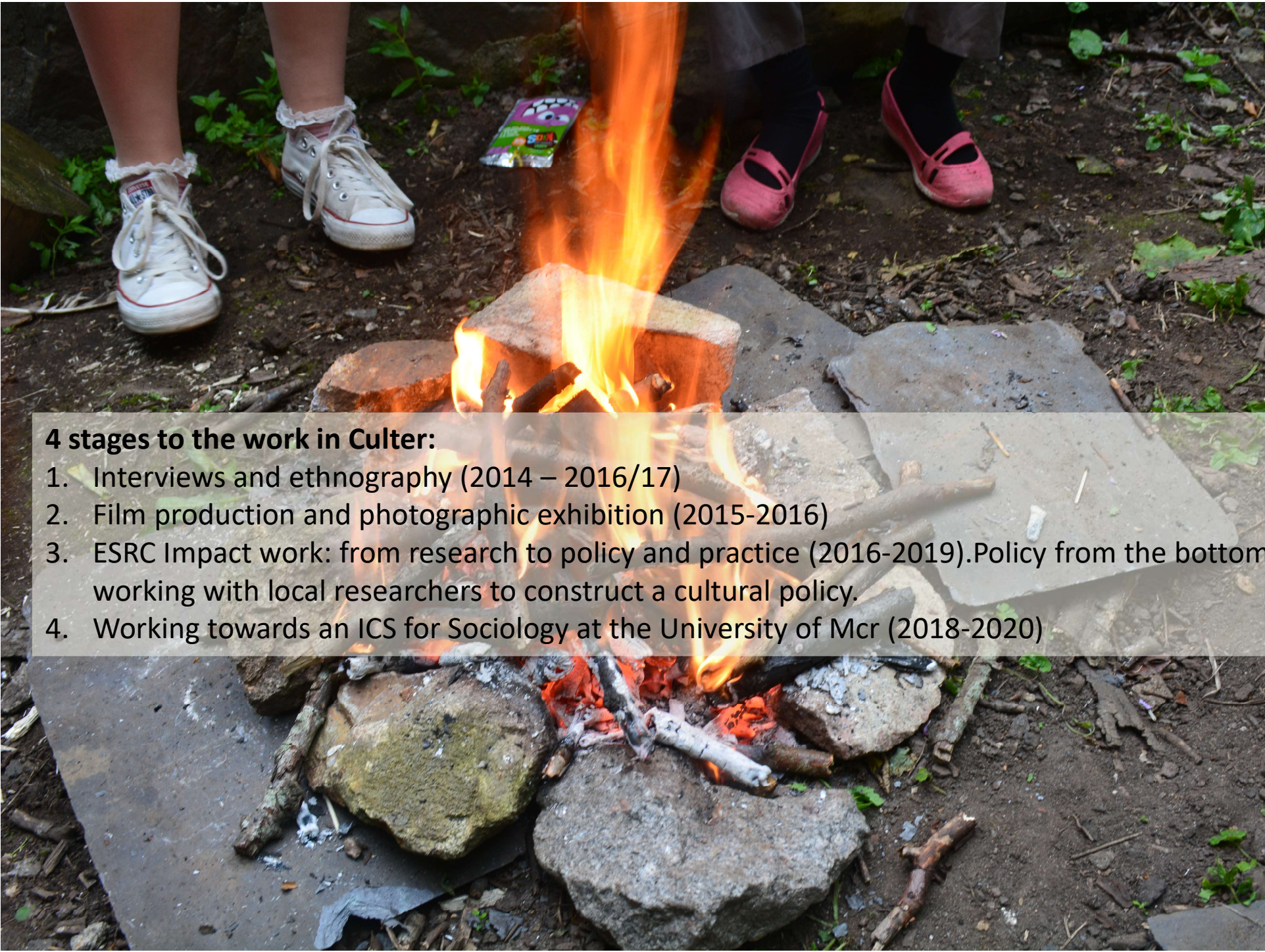
CULTER
VILLAGE
HALL



This culture is fundamentally social and civic with a commitment to the common good – some mums we talked to preferring the conviviality of the ‘public’ VH compared w the now ubiquitous ‘private’ play barns

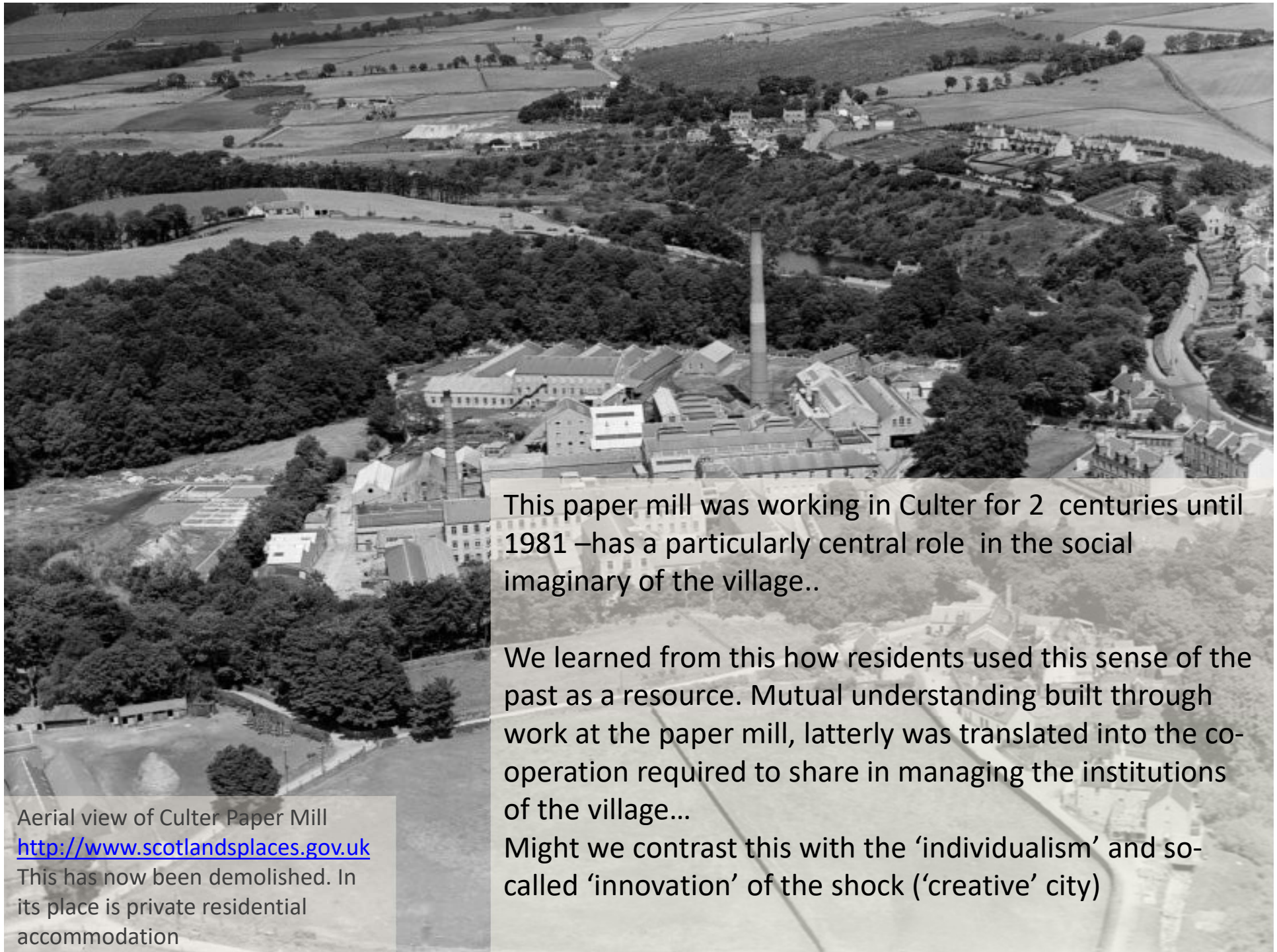
So instead of space being this flat surface it's like a pincushion of a million stories: if you stop at any point in that walk there will be a house, or indeed a pub (with apologies to DM) with a story. (Doreen Massey, geographer)

Old Bank Bar, Culter April 2015
Photo: Caroline Edge for UEP

A photograph of a campfire at night. The fire is burning brightly in a stone fire pit. Several people's feet are visible around the fire: on the left, a pair of white sneakers with white socks; on the right, a pair of pink shoes with black socks. A small, colorful packet lies on the ground near the fire. The background is dark, suggesting a nighttime outdoor setting.

4 stages to the work in Culter:

1. Interviews and ethnography (2014 – 2016/17)
2. Film production and photographic exhibition (2015-2016)
3. ESRC Impact work: from research to policy and practice (2016-2019). Policy from the bottom working with local researchers to construct a cultural policy.
4. Working towards an ICS for Sociology at the University of Mcr (2018-2020)



This paper mill was working in Culter for 2 centuries until 1981 –has a particularly central role in the social imaginary of the village..

We learned from this how residents used this sense of the past as a resource. Mutual understanding built through work at the paper mill, latterly was translated into the co-operation required to share in managing the institutions of the village...

Might we contrast this with the ‘individualism’ and so-called ‘innovation’ of the shock (‘creative’ city)

Aerial view of Culter Paper Mill

<http://www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk>

This has now been demolished. In its place is private residential accommodation



• ***Mundane buildings and institutions matter*** – the nondescript and shabby CVH and CMSC held within them such a rich network of history, associations, participation.

• Village institutions and activities are kept alive both through significant donations of free labour (volunteering) and redistribution of personal income (or we could also call it a voluntary tax) through the purchase of significant numbers of raffle tickets, necessary to keep things going. ***Could this kind of micro-economy figure in Inclusive Growth***, with events such as the annual pantomime selling 300 seats a night for 3 nights in Culter Village Hall? How can this be included? **Could this form an alternative economic base?**

Younger people (16-25) are to a large extent invisible in this associational culture since it tends to be old fashioned and because there is a reluctance of the part of older people to share 'their' institutions. There is evidence to suggest this is the situation in many parts of the UK. How will young people be a part of IG?



Culture should lie at the centre of inclusive growth, acting as the crucible for decisions and innovation in areas that impact everyday lives, the cultural infrastructure of libraries, village halls and social clubs being the venues for decision making, at the same time being palaces of pleasure where citizens exercise their creativity or perhaps just have fun!

Culter cashpoint graffitied during the 2015 referendum re Scottish Independence

Cultural infrastructure: key pillar of IG?

Everyday cultural participation and the cultural infrastructure needs recognition as a *key pillar* of any inclusive growth strategy, taken seriously, rather than a fragmented entry in policy documents, often seen in instrumental terms, at one end of the spectrum as an attraction for visitors and businesses and at the other as providing a sticking plaster for 'problems' such as addiction, unemployment, aiming to make things better



In conclusion:

The RSA in their Commission for Inclusive Growth argue that:

- The *economy* should be made to work for everyone . We argue that our *society* should be made to work for everyone
- They argue for investment in the *social* infrastructure. We suggest that this investment should be extended to the *cultural* infrastructure

...