Creative Manchester

Creative Manchester is one of the University's interdisciplinary research platforms. It promotes creativity and culture across all faculties and engages with city-based and national arts and cultural organisations. It supports research using creative methods and builds resources for researchers and students.

Their work sits under three research themes:

- **Creative Industries and Innovation**
- **Creativity, Health and Wellbeing**
- **Creative and Civic Futures**

Director: Prof John McAuliffe (john.mcauliffe@manchester.ac.uk)

Manager: Anne-Marie Nugnes

Creative Industries and Innovation

Lead: Dr Claudia E Henninger

Support: Nathalie Perl (nathalie.perl@manchester.ac.uk)

Focus: Innovative research in creative industries, cultural policy, and digital transformation.

Projects:

- **BBC Media Dataset for Research:** Over 10,000 BBC TV programmes for media analysis.
- **Beyond the Creative City:** Examines creative placemaking in small towns and suburbs.
- **CreaTech:** Explores digital technologies in arts, education, and heritage.
- **Understanding Displacement Aesthetics:** Investigates artistic responses to displacement.
- **MediaQuery:** Uses AI to analyse large audiovisual datasets.
- **Black British Music Archive:** Explores collective creativity and entrepreneurship.

Creativity, Health and Wellbeing

Lead: Dr. Stephen Hicks

Support: Kate Geller (kate.geller@manchester.ac.uk)

Focus: Investigates how creative practices can support mental and physical wellbeing.

Projects:

- **Music & Dementia:** Projects investigating the transformative power of music with Manchester Camerata
- **CARE Lab:**Three year project exploring care as a sensory
- **Air Lab:** Creating a Community-Integrated Network of Interdisciplinary Research on Socio-Atmospherics.
- **Organissations of Hope:** Addressing health inequalities and inequities in Greater Manchester

Creative and Civic Futures

Lead: Dr. Jenna Ashton

Support: Hazel Gardner (hazel.gardner@manchester.ac.uk)

Focus: Examines the role of creativity in notions of citizenship; community economies and development; place-making; modes of political leadership, collaboration and participation; city and town futures; regenerative design; social action and activisms; equality, justice and equity.

Projects:

- **British Pop Archive:** A National collection dedicated to the preservation of Pop Culture.
- **Cottonopolis :** A project examining the ecological legacy of Britain's Empire of Cotton.
- **The Engine Room:** A co-working digital hub for creatives.
- **Social and Cultural Inequalities :** A project exploring the experiences of ethnically diverse workers during the pandemic.

Digital Futures

Digital Futures is an interdisciplinary network that operates across the University's digital research, bringing together more than 1700 researchers from all three Faculties. The platform presents the University's digital research activity to external stakeholders and facilitates collaboration between our communities to explore new research areas and support Greater Manchester's ambition as a leading digital city.

The themes of the platform's work focus on societal challenges that have the potential to be transformed by digital technology:

- **Digital Health**
- **Digital Worlds**
- **Digital Society**
- **Digital Economy**
- **Digital Cultures**

Director: Prof Richard Kingston (richard.kingston@manchester.ac.uk)

Communications and Engagement Coordinator : Kitty Lo(kitty.lo@manchester.ac.uk)

Digital Health

This theme focuses on leveraging digital technologies to improve health and social care services and outcomes. It includes areas such as telemedicine, digital health records, wearable health devices, computational biology and AI-driven diagnostics.

The goal is to enhance patient care, streamline healthcare processes, and promote preventive health measures.

Networks:

- **Manchester Connected Health Ecosystem:** A collaborative network that brings together world leading academic expertise, industry partners from SMEs to major international digital & pharma companies, Health and Social Care professionals across the NHS, Public Health and local government, and patient and service user representatives.

- **The Christabel Pankhurst Institute:** The Institute is a £25m initiative to promote needs-led health technology research and innovation, providing end-to-end support for translation into practice, and acting as an external flagship for the University's rapidly expanding health technology portfolio.

Digital Worlds

This theme explores how digital technologies, from sensor networks through to digital twins, are transforming both real and virtual worlds, as well as the lives of those who inhabit them. For example, the rapid increase in large and complex data sets from diverse sources—such as environmental monitoring, remote sensing, transport, social media, and citizen science contributions—combined with advancements in methodologies and computational techniques, offers an extraordinary opportunity to deepen our understanding of the impacts of environmental change and to develop innovative solutions to environmentally related challenges. In parallel, companies are integrating digital twins into their operations to optimise management of systems that impact on the services and resources we interact with.

Projects:

- **NERC Digital Solutions Hub :**Developing a Digital Hub and set of Toolkits that exploits environmental and other data (social, economic & health) to create innovative digital services that deliver economic, societal and environmental benefits across the UK
- **CityVerve:** Project used Internet of Things (IoT) technologies to help Manchester City Council improve the way it designs and delivers services for the people who visit, live or work in Manchester.
- **Triangulum:** A €25 million Horizon 2020 project funded by The European Commission to demonstrate cutting-edge smart city technologies and roll them out across the world.

Digital Society

The digital economy is serving as an important a driver of new employment options and industrial innovation and renewal, particularly in urban centres. However, such developments also introduce significant threats to citizen security, privacy and equitable treatment. Instances of targeted cyberattacks, data breaches, and use of ransomware in the private and public sector are becoming more frequent. The growing reliance on AI and data-driven systems in public and commercial service provision risks entrenching existing inequalities, if not designed with transparency and accountability. Predictive policing, algorithmic welfare assessments and micro-targeted political messages may have a disproportionate and negative impact on disadvantaged communities. The spread of harmful content and misinformation on social media platforms can amplify extremist ideologies, polarise public opinion and undermine citizens faith in democratic processes. This theme draws together a wide range of disciplinary expertise within and beyond the social sciences, to address this core question. In doing so we combine a powerful expose and critique of contemporary digital society with a mission to help develop and design a more secure, equitable and resilient digital society of the future.

Digital Economy

This theme explores the evolving digital economy, focusing on how the development and adoption of digital technologies are reshaping global, national, and regional economies, as well as productive sectors, transforming employment patterns and redefining workplace practices. It examines how advanced digital technologies—such as AI, automation, industrial robots, virtual reality, advanced manufacturing, and fintech, among others—are being integrated into innovation processes and business models. This integration is central to developments such as Industry 5.0, smart manufacturing, and platform-based work, all of which are reshaping the structure and dynamics of modern economies. By focusing on how digital technologies can enhance efficiency, productivity, and innovation across various economic sectors, the theme also highlights significant challenges that must be addressed. These include the digital divide, where unequal access to digital infrastructure and connectivity limits participation, a responsible digitalization, including a transparent, accountable and ethical implementation of digital technologies, as well as technological barriers that prevent businesses and workers from fully adopting and integrating digital solutions. The theme also considers the enablers of digital adoption, such as supportive policy frameworks, investment in infrastructure, and public–private partnerships. It adopts a human-centric perspective, highlighting the changing skills landscape and the new demands placed on individuals in preparing for the future of work.

This theme effectively brings together the domains of employment, innovation and productivity, and Industry 5.0.

Digital Cultures

Digital technology enables new modes of intellectual pursuit, creative expression, and cultural production. Sitting at the intersection of the study of digital technology and culture, this theme advances interdisciplinary research involving the use of digital and computational methods and theoretically informed research across the humanities and social sciences. Digital Cultures brings together academics interested in the critique and creative use of digital technology with a particular focus on its cultural and societal implications. Our aim is to better understand how digital technology is reshaping our cultural landscapes, past, present and future.

Drawing on the University of Manchester's strengths across disciplines, examples of topics supported by this theme include:

- Power and Politics
- Identity and Representation
- Intimacy and Affect
- Resistance and Activism
- Place, Space and Temporalities
- Labour and Economy
- Digital Inequalities

- Digital Methods
- Digital Humanities
- Digital History
- Algorithm Studies
- Digital Literary Studies
- Data Visualisation and Storytelling
- Digital Heritage

- Digital Art
- Extended Reality
- Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

Healthier Futures

Health inequalities span the globe, affecting individuals, communities, and populations. From gender to geography, economics to ethnicity, all these factors and more affect the opportunities people have to lead healthy lives.

Healthier Futures is bringing together academics, policymakers, campaign groups and businesses to act upon the causes and consequences of health inequalities around the world. The Platform is mobilising research from across disciplines at The University of Manchester, building capacity and communities, and developing solutions in partnership with practitioners, policymakers and publics.

Challenges:

- **Healthier Lives**
- **Healthier Places**
- **Healthier Systems**

Director: Prof Dame Nicky Cullum (nicky.cullum@manchester.ac.uk)

Strategy and Engagement Manager : Laura Dawson (laura.dawson@manchester.ac.uk)

Healthier Lives

Every person has the right to live a healthy life, yet this is sadly still far from a reality. For many people, age, race, and class are barriers to good health and wellbeing.

An individual's health is not solely determined by their personal behaviours. External factors such as socioeconomic status, location, and characteristics such as race, sex or disability can also influence health outcomes. These factors can lead to disparities in life expectancy, years spent in good health, the quality of health and care, employment opportunities, and access to safe and affordable housing. Health inequalities are avoidable, but require long-term, systematic action and collaboration between services and sectors. Tackling health inequalities at regional, national, and international levels is a priority for The University of Manchester, where we are investigating the root cause of these inequalities and applying effective solutions to resolve these challenges.

Case studies:

- **Inequalities in Mental Health**
- **Bringing proton beam therapy to the UK**
- **Getting gender on the devolution agenda**

Healthier Places

Our health is dependent on the quality of the environment we live in, and although the climate and biodiversity crises are global problems, some countries are being impacted more than others. The communities in these countries are more likely to be affected by pollution, poor water quality and availability, reduced food production, and extreme weather. Inequalities persist within countries too, with communities in some cities and regions more likely to be living in poverty and deprivation than others. Consequences of this include homelessness or unsafe housing, malnutrition, and lack of access to adequate healthcare. It's not just where you live that can impact your health and wellbeing. Many of us spend most of our time in the workplace, and the quality of our jobs can affect our physical and mental health. Those in poor-quality jobs or unemployment can suffer worse health than those in good quality work. Our Healthier Places challenge looks deeper into these issues and more. We are also exploring how other factors such as ageing and ethnicity can interact with these challenges and exacerbate health inequalities.

Case Studies:

- **Incorporating Health into housing development**
- **The toll of 'Deaths of Despair' in England**
- **Racism at Work**

Healthier Systems

Everyone should have access to quality health care, yet it is still not a reality with many people unable to receive diagnosis and treatment due to lack of availability, affordability, or barriers such as racism, digital illiteracy, or language. As a result, people are left struggling with poor health or dying from preventable illnesses.

This also has a knock on effect for society, with those living in poor health at risk of unemployment or lower productivity at work. Improving the health of communities would bring economic benefits through improved employment rates, wages, and more productive employees.

Our Healthier Systems challenge is focusing on researching:

- how to improve the access, delivery and resourcing of health and social care.
- how secure, safe employment can improve health and wellbeing.
- how the health of individuals and communities can impact the productivity in cities and regions.

Policy@Manchester

Policy@Manchester makes an impact on local, national and international politics by ensuring our research is used to inform legislation in the areas that matter.

As the sector-leading policy engagement institute, Policy@Manchester connects our world-leading researchers with policymakers, nurtures long-term policy engagement relationships, and enhances stakeholder understanding of pressing policy challenges.

Co-Director : Professor Cecilia Wong (cecilia.wong@manchester.ac.uk)

Co-Director: Professor Maria Sharmina (maria.sharmina@manchester.ac.uk)

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Event and Partnership Manager: Laura Jack (Laura.jack@manchester.ac.uk)

Sustainable Futures

Sustainable Futures brings together the depth and breadth of our internationally leading research communities to create truly sustainable solutions to urgent environmental challenges.

The platform works to align, connect, celebrate and grow our social, economic and environmental sustainability research across six challenges to explore opportunities, contestations, solutions and unintended consequences across key global issues including climate change, circular economy, food and water security, biodiversity, and future energy systems.

Co-Director: Professor Alice Larkin (alice.larkin@manchester.ac.uk)

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