

Impact Case Study - II



School of Geography & Archaeology

The Creative Edge Project

Impact Description

The project set out to develop a better understanding of the presence, scope and needs of creative industries located in peripheral European regions. Over the course of its two years the project was responsible for the development of the first ever inventory of creative industries located in non-urban areas. The Creative Edge was a €1.1 million project was led by NUI Galway. Its primary goal was to achieve societal impacts by:

- Gaining a suitable recognition for the Creative Sector in peripheral regions in Europe.
- Developing a **policy toolkit** to better enable the development of creatives in peripheral areas. **This was the first of its kind to directly seek support for the development of the creative economy in peripheral areas.** The report, which made clear the policy needs highlighted by the sector, was sent directly to every local council and state representatives in each region.
- Supporting the **networking of creative industries** through a variety of means, both inter- and intra-regional.
- Developing an **online export platform** to support creative industries in their access of international markets.
- Piloting the development of **creative hubs**, shared work spaces for creative industries in peripheral areas. Four creative hubs, established in Armagh, Banbridge, Lurgan and Newry, **became home to 11 businesses supporting 27 employees.**
- **Talent vouchers** of up to €2,000 were awarded to 10 Creative Edge affiliated businesses to *promote employment of creative talent* in Ireland (6), Sweden (2) and Finland (2).

The above were achieved as is evidenced by the funder's final audit of the project as well as the Northern Periphery programme's continued support of the project through the recently funded €2 million Creative Momentum project. This project acts as a follow on to Creative Edge and features all but one of the previous partners (replaced by new partners from Iceland) and is led by the Western Development Commission. This project will form a major part of the Action Plan for *Jobs in the West*, published by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in 2015.

Effects of the Impact

Research emanating from the Creative Edge project placed Dr Collins and other members of the School at the centre of the evolving debate on the economic and social well-being of the west of Ireland. The following projects arose as a result of research carried out under the Creative Edge project (year: research funding):

- Economic Impact of the Volvo Ocean race finale 2012 (2012: €27,000)
- Galway's bid for UNESCO city of film (2013: €15,000)
- The Creative Education Infrastructure of Ireland (2013 – 2015: €7,000)
- Galway's bid for European Capital of Culture (2014 – 2015: €76,000)
- Social Network Analysis of Galway's Cultural Sector (2015: €20,000)
- The Creative Momentum Project (2015 – 2018: €2,000,000; €368,000 to NUI Galway)

An assessment of the economic impact of the **Volvo Ocean Race** was carried out during the initial data gathering phase of Creative Edge. This was the first attempt to value cultural celebration as part of Creative Edge. The research found that the event generated €60.2 million for the local economy over the course of the 10-day event. The research was widely reported in local and national media, and the

report has been used by race organisers as part of their efforts to bid for a return of the Volvo Ocean Race to Galway in 2019-2020. It has also been cited in the planning case taken on behalf of the Galway Harbour Company to extend the harbour.

In 2013, Galway city and county council invited Dr Collins to sit on the board responsible for developing Galway's bid for **UNESCO City of Film**. As part of this work an economic impact assessment of the audio visual sector was carried out. This acted as the backbone for Galway's successful bid to become a UNESCO City of Film. Galway is now part of the prestigious **UNESCO Creative Cities Network** of 75 cities across the globe. The designation has shone a light on the sector in Galway. In the past year, local and national governmental support for the sector has increased, and in late 2015 the audio visual sector was highlighted as one area of high growth in the publication of the jobs strategy for the west of Ireland, *Jobs in the West*. Galway now has a UNESCO City of Film Director, a full time position that is tasked with supporting the development of the sector and growing its international links.

Research carried out as part of Creative Edge placed NUI Galway in an ideal position to contribute to Galway's bid for the title of **European Capital of Culture in 2020**. In response to an open call from Galway city council, members of the School and other colleagues were brought on board to develop Galway's bid to the European Commission (submitted in October 2015). Dr Collins acted as lead researcher for the bid. The bid was deemed successful, and has seen Galway advance to the final round of the competition.

The societal impacts over the course of **a year of unparalleled public engagement** are difficult to gauge. The bid itself involved an initial research phase of **145 face-to-face interviews** with cultural practitioners, social workers, academics and those from the government and commercial sectors. **48 group meetings** were also held with key stakeholders. This was complemented by the rolling out of widespread public engagement through a 'Speak Out' platform. This invited members of the public to share their thoughts on the future of Galway and granted everyone authorship of what would ultimately be a highly democratic document. **28 'Speak Out' sessions** were held across the city and county (also in Dublin and London) and altogether saw the submission of **348 project ideas**. A social media campaign ran alongside this, it garnered over **30,000 followers** across a number of platforms. **834 volunteers** signed up to be part of the process. Through **weekly slots in the local media**, an extremely successful campaign of engaging with the local community was launched. One immediate impact has been the *adaptation by the local authority of the 'Speak Out' model*. Such was the perceived success under the Capital of Culture bid process, Galway city council now uses it as a way to engage the public.

The Creative Momentum project was launched in October 2015. Though in its early stages it is picking up from where Creative Edge left off. It will be opening its first **Creative Hub** in 2016, and has a number of exchange events for creative industries already in train. Ultimately, the Creative Momentum is proof of the impact of the Creative Edge project. The Northern Periphery and Arctic programme have funded both and doubled the funding given to the most recent project.

For his part in the Creative Edge project and the promotion of small and micro enterprise in the West of Ireland, the Junior Chamber International awarded Dr Collins the accolade of Top Outstanding Young Person of the Year for 2015. His research was also recognized in a nomination for a NUI Galway President's Award of Research Excellence. The Creative Edge project received local, national and international media attention. Highlights included a dedicated slot on national radio with Dr Collins and coverage on Swedish national television for a 2012 conference organised as part of the project. To date a total of 23 print media articles have referred to events associated with the Creative Edge.



CREATIVE **EDGE**

Database of Creative Economy in peripheral areas
 Supported 500 individuals and businesses
 Developed 4 Creative Hubs Housing 11 businesses and 27 employees
 10 Talent Vouchers
 30 third level students working on international projects

23 print media articles national and international
 8 research publications linked directly to the project
 6 project reports / newsletters
 1 Policy Toolkit
 6 follow projects funded in excess of 500,000 euros.

Case Study on Impact:

In the first level analysis of the sector, research highlighted the need expressed by creative for shared working spaces. The Creative Edge project supported the development of 4 Creative Hubs, collective co-working areas for new creative industries. This involved renovating previously vacant areas and subsidising the rent for new tenants. The experiences were logged as part of the project and a creative hubs toolkit was developed. Copies of the toolkit were sent to local councils and political representatives in each region. Since the project ended, the Economic Development Council in Northern Ireland has made use of this model and opened up a further 6 creative hubs in the region. In the west of Ireland, the Western Development Commission is supporting the development of a further 3. On average each creative hub supports 12 jobs, it is estimated that with an employment multiplier of 1.6 a further eight jobs are supported indirectly.

