

Policy Design Workshop

Phase 3

Covid-19 and Creative Clusters

A real-time study of the impact of Covid-19 and associated support measures on the creative business community in Hackney Wick and the QE Olympic Park.

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#HWCRAIC

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1. Introduction

This report offers an account of the HWCRAIC research project's third phase: **Policy Design** (see Figure 1). This phase focused on co-designing potential interventions that could facilitate the realisation of the preferred futures envisioned in the previous phase (Design Futures). A series of activities, including dissemination presentations with local agencies and community members, was conducted to achieve this. These led to the facilitation of a co-creative workshop with diverse actors of the creative communities in HW/FI and the QEOP and policymakers and representatives of the local authorities and agencies¹ to produce preliminary policy ideas.

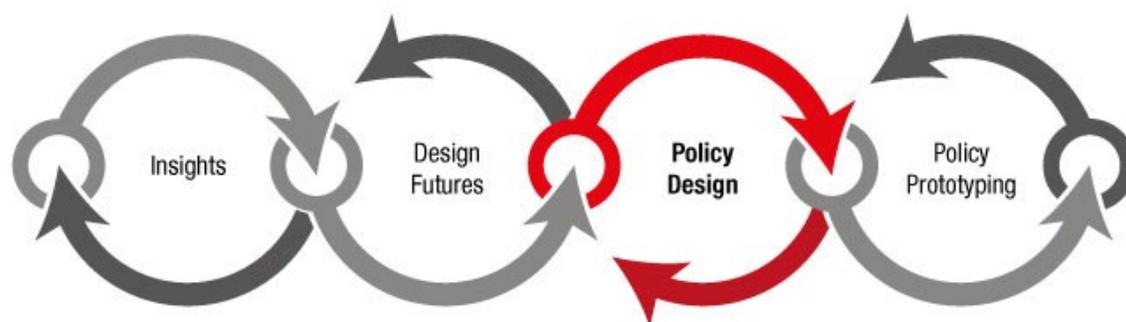


Figure 1: Four phases of the research approach

At this stage, a set of four themes (Change, Space, Knowledge, Networks) had been identified during the previous phases and were utilised to frame the challenges that the members of the local communities could co-creatively address. After validation, these provided guidance into the specific areas the design interventions should target. The co-design activities in this phase aimed to bring together diverse local actors to embed themselves and actively contribute to the policy design process.

The activities of Phase 3 can be divided into the workshop's preliminary dissemination activities and the workshop's four stages (see Figure 2). The researchers conducted the former in the runup to the policy co-design workshop and aimed at sharing some of the research insights generated in Phases 1 and 2; the latter took place in collaboration with 14 participants.

The rhomboids in Figure 2 borrow from the Design Council's Double Diamond² and symbolise the activities' divergent or convergent nature. For instance, the first stage (half-rhomboid), labelled 'Emerging themes & insights', is a converging stage in which the research insights from Phases 1 and 2 were distilled into the four themes. Conversely, the following stage involved engaging participants in interrogating these themes, re-opening, and re-interpreting them.

¹ London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), London Borough of Hackney (LBH), London Borough of Tower Hamlets, London Borough of Newham (LBN).

² Design Council 'The Double Diamond: A universally accepted depiction of the design process': <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/double-diamond-universally-accepted-depiction-design-process>

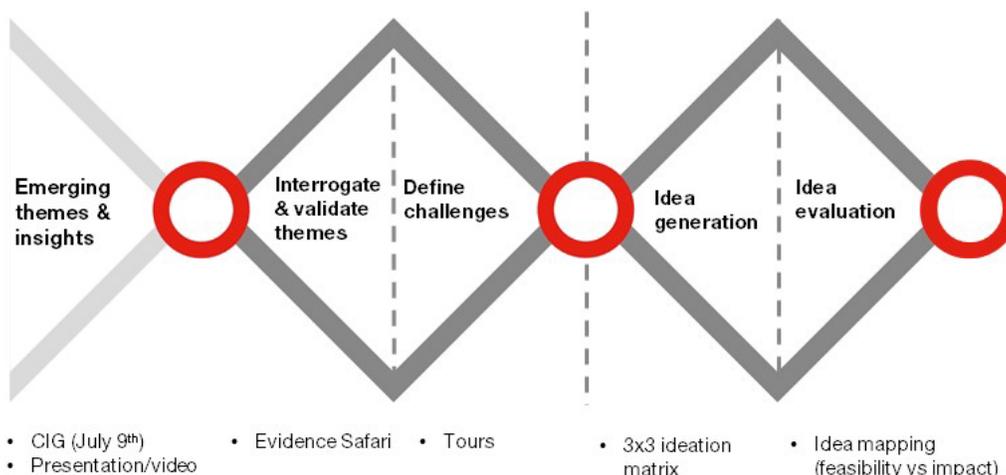


Figure 2: Workshop planning

This phase comprises a total of five stages, where the first one consists of the dissemination activities, and the remaining four are the activities undertaken in the policy design workshop.

1. Dissemination: Emerging themes & insights;
2. Interrogate & validate themes;
3. Define challenges;
4. Idea generation;
5. Idea evaluation.

The dissemination activities in stage 1 took place online, whilst stages 2 to 5 correspond to the in-person policy design workshop.

This report is structured in four sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 reports on the dissemination activities carried out during this phase in preparation for the policy design workshop. Then, section 3 delves into the co-design workshop conducted in Hackney Wick in July 2021, describing its organisation and activities. Lastly, Section 4 discusses the outcomes of this Phase and the next steps.

2. Dissemination: Emerging themes & insights

The iterative nature of this project allowed for the refinement of the insights generated as the investigation progressed. This meant reframing the research questions and revising the methods deployed to achieve the research objectives in an adaptive manner³.

The first interviews and observations offered several preliminary insights that the researchers used to refine the approach. These early insights included:

- HW/FI and the QEOP is **not** a ‘cluster’ so much as a community or group of communities;
- A large informal economy exists within the area;

³ See ‘HWCRAIC Covid-19 and Creative Clusters’ report.

- The natural (e.g., rivers and canals) and artificial (e.g., A12 road) environment offers a physical divide between some of the communities;
- There is an existing interplay between local and non-local actors;
- There has been a very uneven impact of Covid-19 amongst local creative sub-sectors;
- The effect of Covid-19 can be observed as much on living as working conditions;
- Some of the local creative communities are tired and financially stretched as a result of the Covid-10 pandemic;
- Many members of the local creative communities were unable to claim or make use of the available support measures;
- The local peer-to-peer networks were crucial in sustaining the communities.

These early insights from the pre-immersion stage informed the research methods, which in turn, offered a new set of preliminary thematics. Table 1 presents these themes organised by the method applied during the research’s Phases 1 and 2⁴.

Observations	Interviews	Group discussion	Citizen Science	Design Futures
Entrepreneurialism	Diverse and incohesive communities	Upskilling investment	Resilient and adaptive creative communities	Workspace
Resignification of outdoor and public spaces	Precarity and vulnerability	Physical space	Key role of peer support networks	Living space
Community identity	Tensions for physical space	Experience	Mistrust of the development sector and the area’s regeneration process	Public space
		Future of work	Low take-up of some of the formal support offers	
		Need for bespoke instruments and interventions	Lack of security of tenure and informal living arrangements	

Table 1: Themes obtained from activities in Phase 1 & 2.

These preliminary thematics were collated and further distilled into four themes:

⁴ For an account of the methods utilised at each phase, see ‘HWCRAIC Covid-19 and Creative Clusters’ report, HWCRAIC Report 1: Immersion Insights, and HWCRAIC Report 2: Design Futures.

CHANGE: *This theme relates to the seemingly constant changing nature of the area.*

- Creative people and businesses have been remarkably agile and resilient, able to adapt and change their business models and practices.
- In some respects, the last 15 months (March 2020 - June 2021) may not have been as challenging and destabilising as initially thought, with research suggesting creative community resilience and adaptability.
- HW/FI has always been a site of change.
- Change was happening all around and did not stop for the pandemic (building developments, people, interactions); change is a constant.



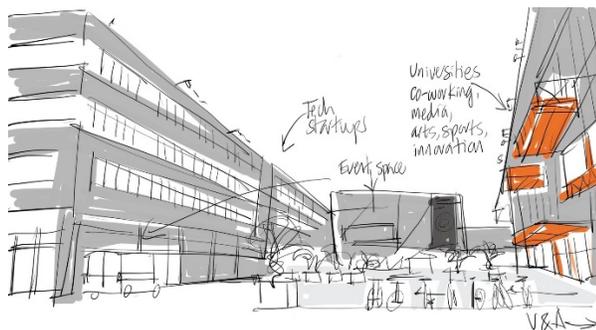
SPACE: *The notion of 'space' (its conditions, uses, resources, constraints) has been rendered central by interviewees and participants throughout the project.*



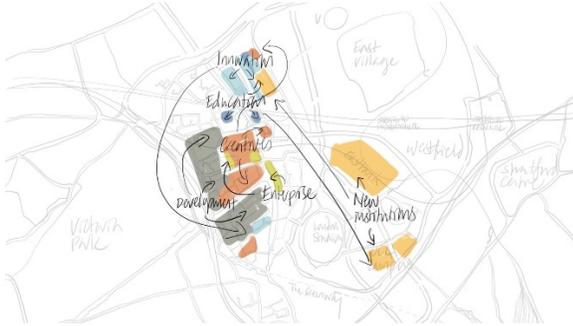
- Lack of dedicated play spaces
- HW/FI as one big play-space.
- Pressure on the (affordable) workspace.
- Demand for collaborative spaces.
- New spaces are required (post-pandemic), and an imaginative approach is needed. The issue is not simply about more affordable workspace; it is about different spaces, catering for changing communities and changing needs and the changing living and working patterns of all communities.

KNOWLEDGE: *The high concentration of creatives in a small footprint has implied the development and concentration of specific knowledge. In the last five years, this has increased significantly due to the arrival of several cultural and academic institutions.*

- A big pool of local history and community connection.
- Extant strong self-help knowledge networks were particularly valuable during the pandemic.
- Trust issues hinder the flow of knowledge and information within and across the local creative communities.
- Five HEIs established on the QEOP make up for an extraordinary knowledge hub.
- There is a need to ensure that the knowledge in these HEIs is generated with and for the local communities.



NETWORKS: *Despite not being treated as a ‘cluster’, local communities have over the years developed networks to exchange information, knowledge, and resources. These comprise both bottom-up (organic) and top-down (agency interventions) networks with a diverse scope, legitimacy, and effectiveness.*



- Most effective support interventions during the pandemic have been locally oriented and locally delivered.
- There is a proliferation of successful ‘self-help’ networks, such as ECHO, the CIG, the Exchange, the Wick Newspaper, and now Library of Things.
- New cross-Park networks are needed (connecting HW/FI and the rest of the QEOP).

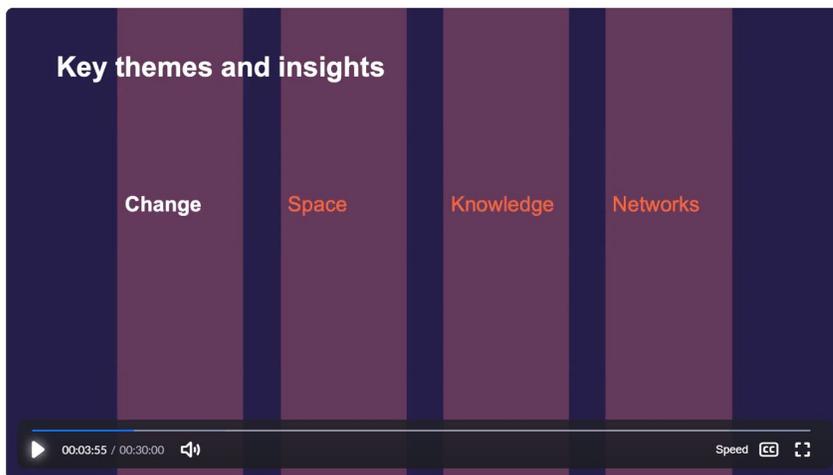
These four themes framed the challenges to be addressed during this phase, and in particular, during the policy design workshop. To ensure participants and other stakeholders knew about these prior to the workshop, the researchers opted for presenting the themes in advance and disseminating material online: a slide deck was created and presented to the HW/FI Cultural Interest Group’s (CIG) July meeting, and in addition, a video presentation was made and circulated to workshop participants and others.

2.1 Video presentation

In advance of the policy design workshop, and in order to allow for as much time as possible for discussion and exploration of new policy ideas during it, a 30-minute video was shared with stakeholders from the local agencies (see Figure 3). This video consisted of an update of the research conducted, the main insights obtained to date, and the four themes that would guide the policy design workshop⁵.



Graham/Fede - HWCRAIC presentation recording - Shared screen



Audio Transcript

Q Search transcript

03:34 and design futures workshops that we ran with Community and participants and policy advisors and so on, we are going to run through four themes that have emerged out of our research.

03:49 In reverse order networks knowledge space and the one that we're going to look at first is the concept of change and we're going to start actually by looking at a map we ask Lydia to.

04:07 draw identify a man for a
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⁵ The password-protected (!7GM1gRT) [video presentation is available online](#).

Figure 3: Screenshot from the video presentation.

2.2 Cultural Interest Group presentation

To engage with the local creative communities, on July 9 2021, the researchers, together with Cultural Interest Group's (CIG) chair, William Chamberlain, presented the preliminary research findings at the CIG monthly meeting.

The CIG meetings bring together diverse members of the local communities and allow for direct exchange on various topics related to the cultural scene in HW/FI⁶. Notably, the CIG is recognised by many local actors as a legitimate, open forum to discuss issues and find out about local news and developments (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Sketch of Design Future workshop's participant commenting on the value of the CIG.

On this occasion, more than 30 participants were involved in the meeting, and the researchers were allocated a 15-minute slot to share an update of the investigation, the main insights obtained to date, and the four themes guiding the policy design workshop. This live presentation allowed for comments and feedback from the participants who acknowledged and echoed some of the findings presented and even offered to contribute with policy ideas⁷.

"of course it's about space. Ownership versus precarity etc. The ability to plan versus insecurity etc. Landlords putting up rent 80-100% during a pandemic? It's affecting not just artists and residents, but small businesses too".

CIG meeting participant comment.

⁶ See HWCRAIC Report 1: Immersion Insights

⁷ A summary of the presentation is available on [July's CIG meeting online minutes](#).

Although at that point, invitations to participate in the policy design workshop had already been sent out, members of the communities at the CIG meeting were encouraged to get in touch with the researchers to join the workshop.

3. Policy design workshop

The policy design workshop aimed at bringing together different actors from the local creative communities and agencies to co-produce preliminary policy ideas that responded to the outcomes of phases 1 and 2, and which could begin to support the development of thriving creative communities in HW/FI and the QEOP, as they emerged out of the pandemic.

The workshop took place at the Colour Factory, a venue in Hackney Wick's Queen's Yard (see Figure 5), on July 13 from 11 AM to 1 PM. Fourteen participants, including local creatives, artists, designers, and representatives from the local councils and planning authorities⁸ joined the session.



Figure 5: The Colour Factory, April 2021.

As shown in Figure 2, the workshop was planned to follow four stages:

1. **Interrogate & validate themes:** Exhibition;
2. **Define challenges:** Talking Tours & Two-stages definition;
3. **Idea generation:** Ideating 3x3x3;
4. **Idea evaluation:** Categorisation and prioritisation of ideas.

The following sub-sections describe the activities carried out at each workshop stage.

3.1 Interrogate & validate themes

The first activity aimed at unpacking, interrogating and validating the evidence shaping the four themes arising out of the first two phases of the research, which had been presented in the slide

⁸ London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the London Borough of Hackney, and the London Legacy Development Corporation.

deck presentation and video. The reason for doing this was to verify that the themes constructed from the research resonated with the participants, that the evidence was unambiguous, and that no major omissions had occurred.

Prior to welcoming participants, the researchers organised images, photos, excerpts, and quotes collected during Phases 1 and 2 in ‘evidence walls’ around the venue (see Figure 6).



Figure 6: Part of evidence wall.

After a brief round of introductions, the participants were invited to examine and move through the venue, spending about five minutes with each theme, in a dynamic loosely inspired by UK Policy Lab’s ‘Evidence Safari’⁹. Noting that participants had been previously briefed about these themes, this activity’s main objective was not to inform but to allow participants to have a first-hand look at some of the evidence shaping and provide some challenge to or validation of the four themes.

To help participants interrogate the evidence, the researchers posed questions such as:

- Are there any unexploited opportunities in this area?
- Are there any barriers to supporting creative industries around this theme?
- What are the current policies in the different areas?
- What is the current experience of the policy?
- Who are the people that experience this policy?

⁹ Evidence Safari: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-policy-making-toolkit/understanding-policy-problems-and-user-needs>

- What are people’s views on this policy?

While moving around the evidence, participants collected their findings, views, and thoughts and left them on the worksheet of each theme on post-it notes (see Figure 7).



Figure 7: Participants examining the evidence and adding their comments

This activity yielded a number of comments and reflections from the participants that were instrumental in the workshop’s following stage.

3.2 Define challenges

Having discussed the evidence, participants allocated themselves into four groups with the condition that at least one representative from the local agencies should be in each one. This decision was made to ensure local creatives would have the chance to interact with participants from the local agencies and vice-versa, thus fostering the emergence of diverse views and ideas. Then, focussing on a single theme (Change, Space, Knowledge, Networks), each of the four groups was asked to define specific challenges that could be tackled with a policy instrument. A three-stage process guided this process:

1. Validation tours;
2. Classified ad; and
3. ‘How might we?’

3.2.1 Validation Tours:

In the first of the three stages, participants were asked to list their assumptions regarding their specific themes. These could be based on the answers given to the question list or embedded in the evidence presented. Once completed, each group was invited to walk around the local area - looking, taking in and engaging with people, buildings, activities - and discuss with their group members whether those assumptions had solid grounds or required more evidence to be sustained.

In case some of their assumptions needed validation, the groups were asked to find evidence (pictures, testimonies, or other sources of information) to support them.

This activity lasted 30 minutes, after which the groups returned to the workshop’s venue.

3.2.2 Classified Ad

Once back, participants were asked to define between three and five policy challenges for their theme following the format of a classified ad:

The (user) needs (requirements) because (insight/reason).

In doing this, participants were asked to

- Characterise their users;
- Describe what needed to be fixed without considering the means (using verbs, not nouns); and
- Explain the user’s reasons to fix that issue.

To illustrate, the researchers provided the following example:

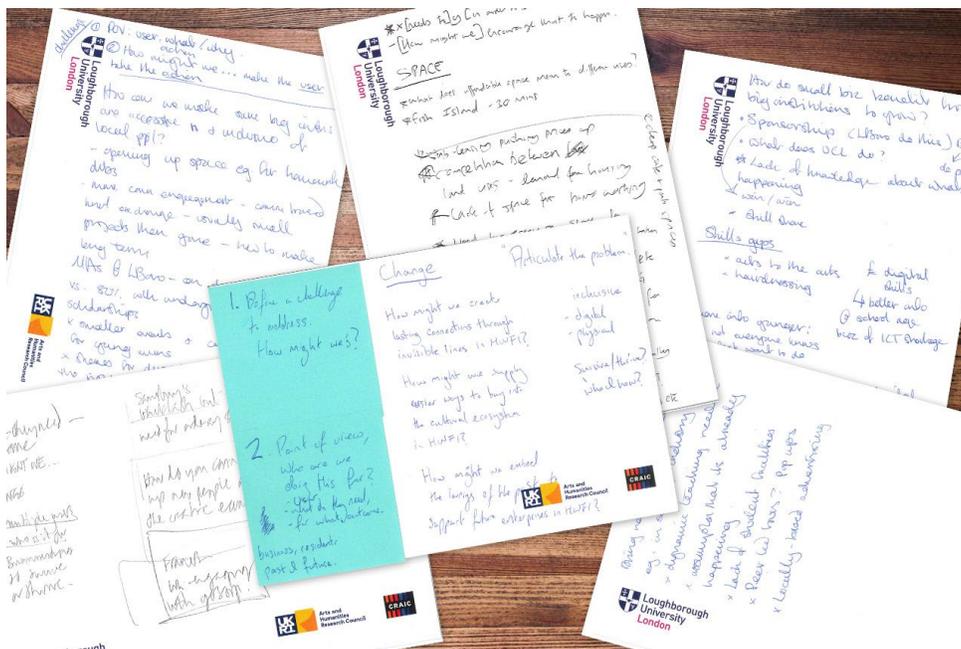
Chloe, a Fish Island 28yo pottery maker, needs an alternative way to showcase her work because the market where they usually sell their products remains closed.

By focussing on the problem space, participants put their minds to clearly define the problematic situation from the user’s perspective avoiding jumping to perceived solutions or fixes.

This activity lasted 15 minutes, after which each group was asked to select one ad to move to the third and last stage of the challenge definition process.

3.2.3 How Might We

The last step to defining the policy challenge utilised a method known as ‘How Might We’¹⁰. In this activity, participants were invited to transform their previously defined ads into opportunities for intervention (see Figure 8). The idea behind it is that framing the problematic situation as a ‘How Might We’ question suggests that it is indeed solvable, and many possible solutions could exist.



¹⁰ Design Consultancy IDEO’s How Might We: <https://www.designkit.org/methods/3>

Figure 8: Cards with 'How Might We' framings.

Following from the previous example, a potential phrasing could be

How might we help young makers in Fish Island reach their customers in a contact-less way?

Alternatively, Chloe's ad could be reframed as

How might we improve the visibility of local potters to reach new markets?

The aim in framing the challenge in this way was to enable certain solutions while deterring others. To help participants define a challenge that might lead to more substantial policy ideas, the groups were asked to come up with three to five alternatives 'How Might We'. In this way, the groups could discuss which phrasing would lend itself to a less constrained solution space. This activity also lasted 15 minutes.

3.3 Idea generation

Once each group had defined their policy challenges, the workshop moved toward the preliminary idea generation stage. This stage lasted 30 minutes, in which each group

1. Generated at least nine policy ideas per challenge;
2. Categorised and prioritised them according to two axes; and
3. Shared them with the rest of the participants.

3.4.1 Ideating 3x3x3

For the first part of the ideation process, each participant was given a worksheet with a 3x3x3 idea generation matrix (See Figure 9). This ideation technique allows groups to collectively generate ideas in a short period.

CHANGE

	<p>Idea 1</p> <p>Community welcome groups for businesses in the area. help with community buy-in.</p>	<p>Idea 2</p> <p>Digital learning tools which capture knowledge & are decentralised / owned by all.</p>	<p>Idea 3</p> <p>More inclusive & segmented groups of peer-2-peer support for past & future business ecosystem.</p>
	<p>Idea 1</p> <p>An outreach team who targets new businesses (local) local could be volunteers supported by The CDT.</p>	<p>Idea 2</p> <p>A digital "library" of case studies on HW site. ↓ CET</p>	<p>Idea 3</p> <p>specific support for residential community entrepreneurs (eg. North Hockney Wick / Nickwood estates)</p>
	<p>Idea 1</p> <p>funding to support outreach team? → Greater need for cross-borough collaboration to bring ↑ increased awareness of change/growth.</p>	<p>Idea 2</p> <p>Need from all ^{diverse communities} to have responsibility to feed into the design of the library → Who is the area are the different audiences?</p>	<p>Idea 3</p> <p>Peer to peer learning is key for business (big + small) residents - old + new.</p>

Figure 9: 'Change' theme group 3x3x3 idea generation matrix.

This simple technique was completed in ten minutes by following four steps:

1. Each person on the group will have a 3x3x3 worksheet, post its, and pencils;
2. Based on the challenge to be tackled, each person will have three minutes to write three ideas in the first row of the matrix;
3. Once the ideas have been written, each person will exchange their worksheet with their partner on the side, again having another three minutes to generate three new ideas that should be different from those written in the first row. Each participant will be able to create three ideas that are totally different or that complement the previous ones;
4. Then this action will be repeated one more time until the worksheet is completed.

Once all participants completed their worksheets, the ideas were shared within their groups.

3.4.2 Categorisation and prioritisation of ideas

In the penultimate step of the process, each group collected, sorted, refined, and selected their preliminary policy ideas based on two criteria: the potential impact and feasibility. The researchers defined the axes ex-ante to take advantage of the mix of participants. In this case, having a varied group of local creatives meant that their first-hand experiences could help assess the potential impact of the policy ideas. Similarly, having representatives from the local agencies and authorities meant they would be able to evaluate the ideas' potential of being translated into actionable policies.

Given a flipchart paper sheet with a drawn 2x2 matrix, the participants in each group wrote the policy ideas on their 3x3x3 idea generation matrix onto post-it notes and arranged them according to the two axes (see Figure 10).



Figure 10: 'Change' theme group 2x2 matrix.

Once all ideas were on the matrix, the groups clustered them according to similarity whilst discussing their positions. Through a process of testing and review, a total of 18 ideas were left on the matrices.

3.4.3 Policy idea definition

The last stage of the process and final activity of the workshop consisted of presenting the policy idea that each group deemed the most feasible and impactful to the rest of the participants.

In guiding these short presentations, the researchers asked participants a set of questions based on Policy Lab’s idea development sheet¹¹ (see Figure 11):

- What is the challenge?
- What policy idea have you come up with?
- How will it be delivered?
- What are the risks and barriers?
- What does success look like?
- Who will love it? And who will hate it?

Policy LAB Idea development

What is the challenge?

How will you develop your idea further??

What are your major pieces of insight and evidence?

What policy decision or design change will that insight deliver?

1. → 1.

2. → 2.

3. → 3.

4. → 4.

5. → 5.

How would you announce it?

Draw or describe your idea
Drawing an idea can help explain it in a more easy to understand and simple manner.

Who will help deliver it?

How will you test and scale your idea?
Testing and scaling are really important to make sure an idea will work in the real world. Start very small and then grow and iterate from there.

What does success look like?

... how will you measure that success?

What are the risks and barriers ?	Actions to avoid
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

What would a key user say?

Who will love it? and who will hate it? Place them on the line.

Hate ←-----→ Love

Figure 11: Policy Lab’s idea development sheet.

4. Outcomes

Several policy ideas were co-created from this phase, ranging from designing and delivering a peer-to-peer digital skills training programme for local creatives to a local HEI charter committing to studentships for residents.

¹¹ Policy Lab, 2016: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-policy-making-toolkit/testing-and-improving-policy-ideas>

Some of the main ideas included:

- **Space:** Utilise monies from the Community Infrastructure Levy¹² on new developments in HW/FI and the QEOP to build multipurpose creative spaces (e.g. workshops, studios, stages) that local creatives can utilise on-demand.
- **Networks:** Develop an online hyperlocal creative directory supported by HW/FI CEZ and the big new players in the area (e.g., Here East, V&A, Sadler's Wells) to increase their visibility and reach.
- **Change:** Rise the profile, diversify funding streams, and provide official support to Hackney Wick Town Hall as a civic forum to exchange ideas on a rapidly changing community.
- **Knowledge:** Develop a programme of collaboration with new local HEI to develop affordable evening courses for residents that includes mentorship and traineeships in local creative businesses and the possibility of lending equipment and space to local creatives.

Although naturally, the above are high-level preliminary policy ideas, the project's Phase 3 managed to bring together diverse members of the local creative communities and representatives of the local agencies to jointly define a set of challenges and co-create potential solutions. Besides the value of the ideas and their potential to be carried forward, this is relevant because the project aims to affect change and not only describe the current situation. During the workshop, the representatives of the local agencies experienced first-hand and for the first time how a design for policy approach could help in tackling some of the policy issues they currently face. From this perspective, this phase contributed to sensitising both the local agencies and members of the local communities toward the use of co-creative practices to enhance the area's resilience.

Furthermore, in the spirit of a design-led process, the policy ideas generated at this stage ought to be tested before committing resources to their development. To that effect, this project's fourth and last phase presents a prototyping framework for policy initiatives aimed at supporting the creative communities in HW/FI and the QEOP¹³.

¹² Gov.UK Community Infrastructure Levy's guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>

¹³ See HWCRAIC Report 4: Policy Prototyping Framework.