

## CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: SERIES RATIONALE



**Series Editors:** Keri Facer, University of Bristol and George McKay,  
University of East Anglia

### Background:

Connected Communities is a £30m+ RCUK programme, led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, that explicitly seeks to bring together arts, humanities and social sciences with the expertise and insights of communities themselves, to understand the changing nature of communities and their role in addressing contemporary individual, societal and global concerns. Over 300 projects have been funded since 2010, and research on the programme will continue until at least 2019-2020. Research areas are intentionally wide ranging, reflecting the diversity of roles that 'communities' (physical, virtual, interest, professional) play in contemporary life. Core themes include:

- Environment and Sustainability
- Civil Society and Social Innovation
- Creative Economies and Digital Cultures
- Health and Wellbeing
- Culture and Heritage
- Participatory Arts in Community
- Co-production Theory and Methodology
- Communities at Work and Play.

Projects range from £2.5m five-year studies of the relationship between marginalised communities and public policy; to eight-month £100k projects on food systems; on angling; on craft communities; on disability and environmental change.

At the heart of the programme is a commitment to methodological innovation, in particular, to finding ways to research community 'with, by and for' communities; and to reconnecting arts, humanities and social sciences research. This means that the programme is characterised by significant innovation in research methods – from engaging civil society organisations at the heart of research design processes; to using performance, arts, historical and philosophical inquiry alongside more traditional sociological analysis. From an arts and humanities perspective, its key innovation lies in its insistence on collaborative research activity with non-academic partners.

The Connected Communities programme is unique internationally in its scale and commitment to interdisciplinary and collaborative research methods. At present, there is no comparable research programme anywhere in the world, and presentations on the programme in Europe, the US, Canada and Brazil have identified a significant interest in a book series that brings together the insights from the programme for use by scholars, activists and policy makers elsewhere.

### **Series Aims and Policy:**

The overarching aim of the Connected Communities: Creating a New Knowledge Landscape series is to make a substantive contribution in three areas:

1. to the theoretical and empirical understanding of the role of communities (in contrast to, for example, individuals, policy makers, 'societies') in addressing contemporary individual, societal and global concerns.
2. to the theory and practice of interdisciplinarity – in particular, to the bringing together of arts, humanities and social sciences perspectives and methods
3. to the theory and practice of collaborative research with communities - in particular, to the use of interdisciplinary methods with communities who have previously often been excluded from formal research processes

The series is strongly and reflexively interdisciplinary, and consequently will draw in and contribute to a wide range of disciplines. 'Core' disciplinary areas include cultural and social geography; participatory and community arts; design (social innovation); sociology; history; policy studies; economics (social innovation, asset based development, creative industries); urban planning; community development; philosophy (studies of time in particular); new materialist studies; environmental studies; media and cultural studies; performing arts; representation (literature, film).

The series comprises a core of pre-commissioned books as well as books that are identified from the emerging research. The series also encourages contributions from scholars working in the same field from outside the programme and the UK.

It is not necessary that books are tied too closely tied to individual projects – as series editors we want to encourage proposals for books that address clearly defined issues, themes and areas that demonstrably move forward thinking in an area related to Connected Communities. If it is a project book, it needs to be demonstrably more than, for example, a description of work packages in the single project: authors and editors need to make the case for how their work will bring in new audiences and ideas, how it will **address** challenging issues and the contentious debates in the field of co-production and collaborative research.

The series, in this way, fulfils the following needs: within the Connected Communities programme it acts as an important 'one-stop shop' for the research emerging from its over 1000 participants, and enables those groups and individuals to easily find each other's research. Within the international interdisciplinary and collaborative research field, it is intended to act as a flagship series that offers theoretically robust and empirically sound research that pushes forward thinking beyond the current reliance on small case studies and short term, single discipline interventions. The series also actively encourages honest, critical reflection upon the limitations as well as the strengths of such work, and the nature of the ongoing political and methodological tensions and dilemmas involved in both individual projects and in a broader move toward engaged and collaborative research. It explores the competing values and aspirations that underpin such work, and seeks to move the field towards a mature repertoire of theoretical and methodological resources for reflecting upon and working with tensions between these values. The interdisciplinary and methodologically pluralistic nature of the research, that is nonetheless oriented toward contemporary social and policy issues, also acts to reinvigorate the theoretical and methodological debates in policy studies and sociology.

### **Submission process:**

- Open invitation to all Connected Communities projects and teams to submit ideas directly to the series; information available on Connected Communities and Policy Press websites
- Specific invitations to all Connected Communities large grant projects to submit interdisciplinary proposal to the series
- Specific invitations to individuals or groups thought likely to produce books of particular interest to the series
- Guidelines issued to all potential authors and editors, to ensure coherence with the series goals
- All publications will have a foreword from the series editors that will be standard to all publications.

### **Target audience:**

The key features of Connected Communities: Creating a New Knowledge Landscape series publications are: theoretical rigour, novel empirical insights produced through methodological innovation, interdisciplinarity, communicated accessibly and engagingly for a broad audience.

The audience for the series is academic, policy, arts and civil society groups. The methodological innovations of the research are relevant in particular to those groups who are looking to build new relationships between 'publics' and 'policy' groups, and to mobilising citizen and community participation in democratic decision-making. The substantive topics of the books are of interest to policy makers and civil society groups in areas ranging from local government, to health, to urban policy, as well as arts leaders and practitioners.

The practical contribution of the books draws on leading-edge community and participatory arts/media/performance to include a how-to element that will be attractive to practitioners. This is particularly important to enhance the innovative identity of the series. The theoretical contribution of the books includes their rigorous reflection on the nature of interdisciplinary and collaborative research for the substantive contributions to conceptions of 'community'.

### **Innovation in Publishing formats:**

To reflect the programme's commitment to community-engaged research, we also actively encourage development of proposals for shorter publications, within the Policy Press Shorts series and Policy Bites series, to run alongside each publication. Those submitting proposals are also encouraged to explain how they complement their publications with online and other publicly accessible materials. We encourage authors to innovate in terms of links with digital platforms (most projects already have online materials) and we also connect the book series with the CC Fellows Website (<https://connected-communities.org/index.php/book-series-2/>). A limited number of publications may require high numbers of images and figures –which would be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. We expect publications, as a rule, not to exceed 80,000 words per volume, but will negotiate this on an ongoing basis with authors.

### **Contact regarding proposals:**

If you would like to submit a proposal, or to discuss ideas, then please contact in the first instance:

Prof George McKay, University of East Anglia ([george.mckay@uea.ac.uk](mailto:george.mckay@uea.ac.uk)) or programme administrator Jessica Knights ([jessica.knights@uea.ac.uk](mailto:jessica.knights@uea.ac.uk)).