Make/Shift Phase 1 Evaluation Report

Case study 1: Flows

Exploring how money flows around a local area as a result of an asset-based investment approach.

About

This case study reports on RMR's exploration of money flows around the Amber Valley as a result of Make/Shift's testing alternative ways of distributing funding in local communities. It considers other types of social value generated.

The focus was to explore what happens when small amounts of funding are given directly to local people with barriers to involvement reduced, for example, and without strict rules or criteria, and through alternative funding platforms and new model awards approaches[1].

This links into the aspirations of the programme to shift from top-down to bottom-up decision making, with, in this case, financial flows being a proxy for decision making flows. As a key delivery partner puts it:

> **Helping the money to do more and get to more – and to the 'right' – people, to strengthen our people and place.**
>
> Jodie, Platform Thirty1

Alongside social and cultural value, we consider the local economic benefits of this approach. When small payments, such as awards, are made to someone who lives in a community, this money typically circulates further within this community. These funds often support local suppliers, markets and services, helping to keep wealth within the area. This spending can create small but meaningful boosts to local economies, supporting not only individual makers but the places where they live and work.

Previous national modelling suggests that of the GVA (gross value added) generated by the arts sector as a whole, each pound supports an additional £1.06 elsewhere in the national economy via supply-chain activity and household spending[2]. This research recognises this, and also that keeping the spend even more hyperlocal would in fact provide even more additional economic value.

Connecting

This research builds on relationship mapping and collective reflection on how connections work – part of a four-year partnership Make/Shift has with Understory (run by Onion Collective and Parlour)[3]. The work allowed Make/Shift to visualise the flow of resources, learning and sharing between hundreds of community groups, activists and organisations across Amber Valley.

This work was also able to identify the key themes that associated organisations held in common, recognising that 'community connectedness' was the second-most common link. Also on this social capital list were topics related to financial capital: 'economic prosperity' and 'circular / regenerative economics'. Through their relationship with Understory, Make/Shift are part of a wider conversation around connectedness as a means to mobilise community action.

We're not used to seeing data contextualised in this way. But making this complex web of relationships more visible felt really powerful – like spraying water on a spider's web, helping us to see the complex systems and structures that are shaping what is and isn't possible for us as individuals, organisations and communities.[4]

Make/Shift Team

Flowing 1: Money

The graphic on the next page maps income and expenditure through the Make/Shift programme, noting income (on the LHS), and then levels of spend at each point where a transfer occurs. The size of the ribbons represents the proportion of money, with colours matching the ribbons to the economic level they come from, or flow into (such as green ribbons showing flow into the local economy). Each vertical band represents the different stages in the distribution. Thus, the graphic allows us to visualise the flows of finance through the Make/Shift network.

As funds are distributed to the numerous project strands, and then out to grassroots community members, this money is eventually 'spent' out of the network, and into the economy (RHS).[5]

What we notice:

- The majority of money 'in' comes from national sources. From around half way through the process, a substantial proportion of the money was circulating within the local economy.
- The complexity of the middle-right of the graphic demonstrates the spread of funding, as lots of different partners, collaborators and projects are being supported and are delegating funds into their communities.
- The largest end category 'regional spend' (57%) is primarily accounted for by team costs (Salaries, Infrastructure and Overheads categories). Currently the main office of the lead organisation (University of Derby) and the majority of staff are in Derby, a few miles outside the Amber Valley district, and thus 'regional' in our definition. This shows how a move to an Amber Valley base and more local staff (which is the model Make/Shift are moving to) could significantly increase local impact. It also shows how the limitations of definition as being one or two miles 'over the border' excludes some spend.
- The 'Local Economy' category is where the next largest proportion of spend ends up (39%), with no 'local' funds coming in (see far LHS), meaning that generally the Make/Shift model has to a large degree involved national funding being redistributed to the people and places (individuals, businesses and services) of Amber Valley.
- Focussing only on programme spend (as opposed to 'core costs'), then increases the Local Economy share to 63%.
- All funds enter the system through Make/Shift, and the largest portion of programming funds were distributed via Open Collective (21%). It is these funds that move most directly to local people, via programme strands, to the diverse range of community projects.

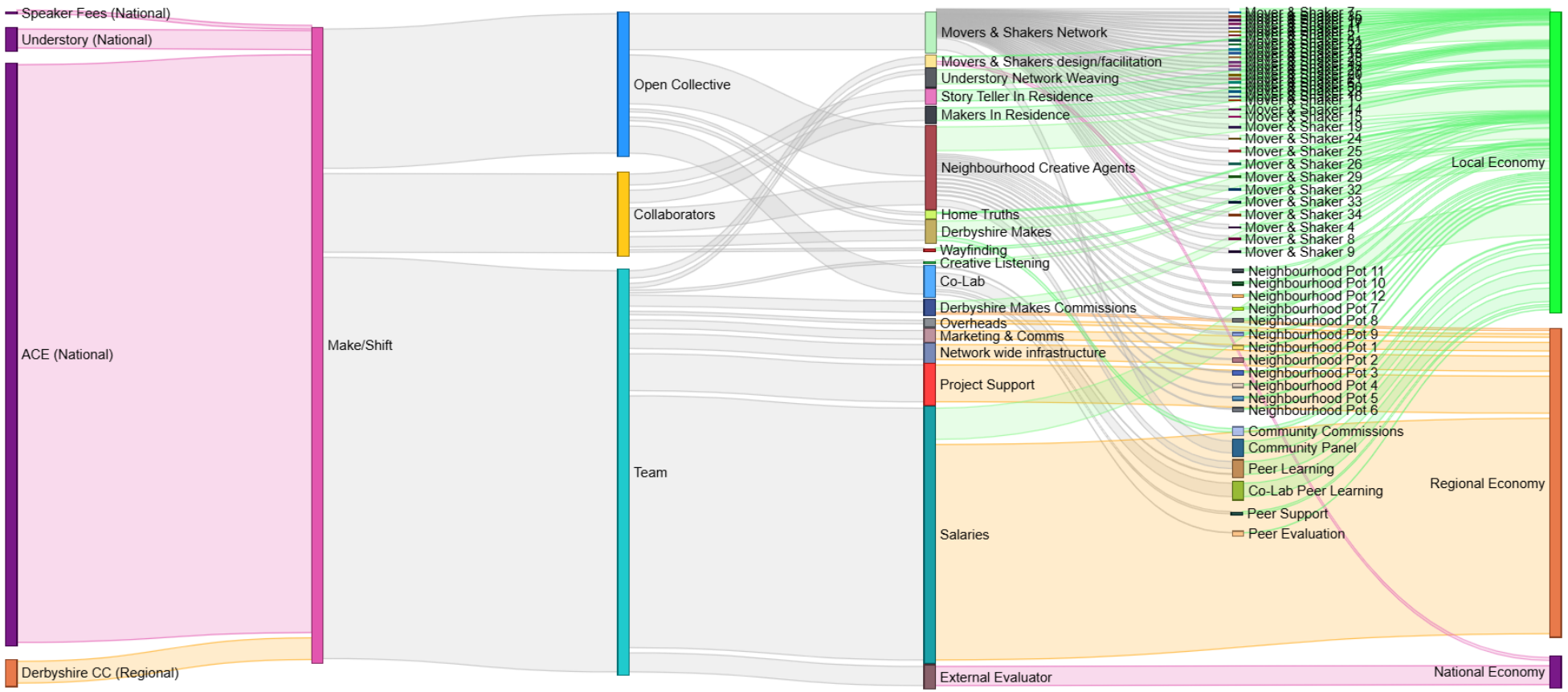

Figure 1: Flows of money from income sources to expenditure across 2024-2026, through national/regional/local lens for Make/Shift CPP

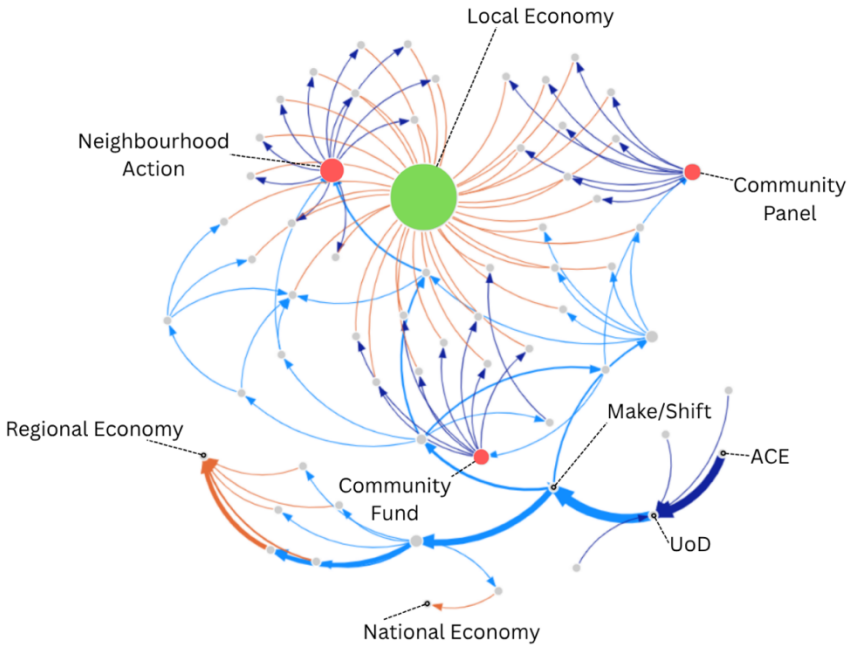

Figure 2: Financial flows through Make/Shift CPP – relational model

This additional graphic then presents the same data in a non-linear format and now includes extra steps in the 'flows' – such as ACE funding moving through the University of Derby, and money for Creative Agents via the project strand 'Neighbourhood Action' – making the overall financial flows more apparent.

This shows how funding (dark blue) is distributed in the network, and how it moves (light blue) from one 'stage' to another, with the last stage (orange) showing the concentrations of money 'spent' into the economies. The size of arrows represents proportion of money (to a minimum scale), while the size of 'nodes' is based on the number of *connections* that each has.

Notably, the National and Regional Economies (see orange arrows at the bottom) sit outside the main network, organised as such as they have fewer connecting arrows. They also flow in a more linear fashion, as funding reaches Make/Shift, and is then paid out to organisational costs (such as salaries and external evaluation) that feed Regional and National economies.

Once funds are given to collaborators and decision makers to spend at key distributions points (red nodes), the funding then spreads widely, generating a dispersed and diverse network of connections. The concentration of arrows 'feeding into' the Local Economy (green node) causes it to be positioned more centrally.

> **[T]he space we occupy is not just on the edge in the sense of being marginal to the national economy, it's also liminal in the sense of sitting between one economy and the next – at a threshold and caught between two worlds, the one we know (which doesn't work) and the one to come (which must work better).[6]**
>
> Onion Collective, Lead partner, Understory

This 'web' also demonstrates how Make/Shift themselves are neither 'outside' nor in the centre of the funding flows, sitting closer to the incoming funding (the largest dark blue arrow representing Arts Council England) and then distributing the funds into and around the network.

Flowing 2: Decisions

Decision-making flows are, to a large degree, the causal reason for the shape of the financial flows.

The graphic on the next page then maps decision-making through the Make/Shift programme, again noting income (on the LHS), and then levels of spend at each delegated decision-making level. The size of the ribbons represents the proportion of money, this time with colours matching the ribbons to the types of conditions they flow into (such as green ribbons showing flow into community-led action). Each vertical band represents the different stages where decisions are made about the financial distribution. Thus, this alternate graphic allows us to visualise the flows of finance *in relation to decision-making power* through the Make/Shift network. [7]

As decision-making itself is not quantifiable, this graphic is more abstract than the first. Here, 'enabling conditions' are things that support other work to happen, rather than things that create immediate outputs themselves. An example would be the Peer Learning process, which develops skills and knowledge in the local area, without any definable product or culminating event in the shorter term (what we've called 'action').

The assumption is, however, that enabling conditions may well prepare the ground for future actions to grow. At the same time, actions are like seeds, without these, the enabling conditions (or groundworks) aren't enough alone (such as the skills from Peer Learning, which only become fully apparent when they are later used in practice).

As funds are distributed to the various decision-makers (team, collaborators and grassroots community members), this money is eventually 'spent' to stimulate these different types of action or their wider enabling conditions (RHS).[8]

What we notice:

- Community-led action is the largest resulting category. It also has the highest number of decision-making stages concentrated to the LHS of the flows, representing decisions made by those closer to the communities they support.
- Locally-based artist-led action is the second-largest resulting category, benefiting from decisions made by Peers, through learning activities across different project strands of Make/Shift, as well as activity decided upon by resident collaborators. Artists, as both peers, and collaborators, are therefore making decisions outside of Make/Shift's direct influence, whilst bringing their pre-existing expertise to the network.
- There is no single decision-making level that *directly* supports all three resulting categories, which demonstrates the importance of Make/Shift's distributed model in ensuring that onward action and enabling conditions exist in their diverse forms.
- Collaborators are the only decision-makers that operate outside of Make/Shift itself, that cause funds to filter into all three resulting categories via their onward flows. The make-up of this group may be central to the breadth of distribution that is possible, and should be considered as a crucial function in future planning (in particular when decentralising funding).

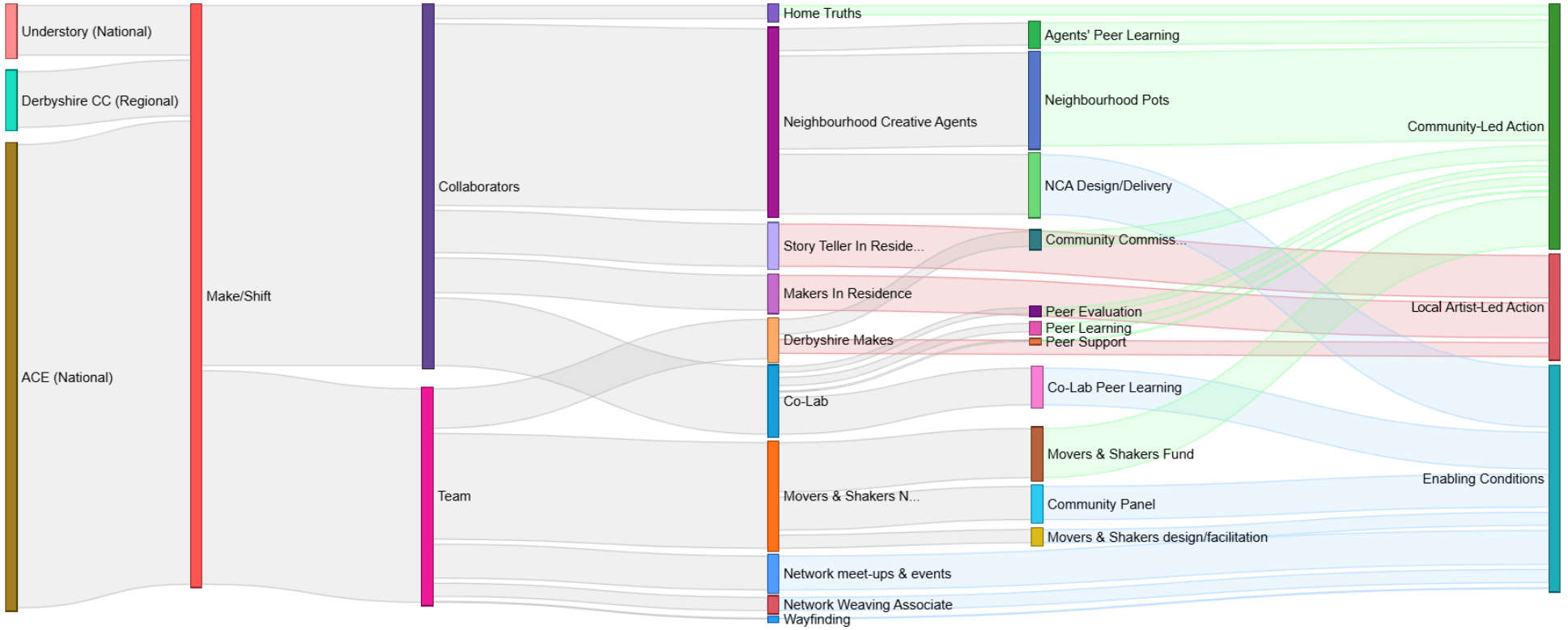

Figure 3: Decision-making stages in the flows of money from income sources to supported action across 2024-2026, for Make/Shift CPP

Circulating

Make/Shift's asset-based approach and their simplified, regular funding opportunities aim to challenge scarcity thinking. This reduces associated behaviours that come from this preexisting sense of instability and insecurity, allowing more creativity and generous sharing.

Traditional siloed funding models can often create pressures that Make/Shift aim to counteract. We observe that their direct funding opportunities act as catalysts for local economic benefits that may exceed what is possible through more traditional means.

Some of these knock-on effects include extra footfall to local businesses during events, new commissions, paid workshops, or collaborations that didn't exist before. The example below of Swanwick Men's Shed shows some of these.

There are other considerations and assumptions we need to raise in terms of this data.

Firstly, some local spend may 'leak' out of the area. For example, due to the geography of Amber Valley and public transport challenges, many Agents and Movers & Shakers describe how car use is unavoidable. This includes fuel and maintenance spend that largely supports national chains.

Despite this 'leakage', spend at a locally based outlet of a national chain (petrol stations, supermarkets, travel companies etc) contributes to the wages of the local people that work there. When funds are spent by locally rooted groups, economic modelling shows that proportionally more money circulates within the area than when spent by larger organisations.

[B]y investing in the true infrastructure here, the chance of lasting change outweighs short lived 'delivery projects'.

Jodie, Platform Thirty1

We also assume that repeated rounds of funding, where spending decisions are made by those closer to the resulting activities, will only amplify the original contribution. Increasing spend with local suppliers and freelancers (for example, hiring local designers, caterers, facilitators) can support additional local jobs that are 'outside' of the traceable Make/Shift network.

Paying forward, rippling out

From other Make/Shift work strands, we have observed how being paid for creative activities can provide 'validation'. Alongside the funding received, it is also important that in most cases awardees receive this through being nominated (by peers and/or other community members) or invited from the recognition that they are, through their experience and skills, local 'resources' or 'assets'.

This sense of validation has been 'paid forward' in the way that the Movers & Shakers Panel, selected by Make/Shift, have now passed on these ethics to their own communities. For example, the learning around the value of recirculation in the local economy is demonstrated by the Neighbourhood Creative Agents practice. Agents reflect on how they have asked their communities to find their own resources or suggest purchases within shared budgets.

Example of circulating resources locally: Swanwick Men's Shed

An example from the Swanwick Men's Shed, sums up how money flows around the Make/Shift system, and also builds opportunities for both financial and capacity growth.

The relationship started when they were invited to be part of the Storyteller in Residence strand in Make/Shift's first year of operation. They continued involvement through the Community Living Room and gained confidence and profile.

Men's Shed Member Tony joined the Movers & Shakers Community Panel. He chose to use the fee he was paid for his involvement to invest, as a donation, back into Men's Shed. With this they bought a gazebo to boost their presence at events, as well as for new tools suitable for families.

Through this they have developed beyond their initial expectations:

> **We're just getting bigger and bigger and bigger [...] Some give a couple of quid, some have been giving fivers or tenners, so it all goes back into whatever we want to buy, screws, glue, or whatever else. Things are good and we're making new stuff.**
>
> Men's Shed Member

This has led to a 'virtuous circle' of benefit:

> **Their only business income was from selling their products; now they're making quite a lot of money from delivering workshops.**

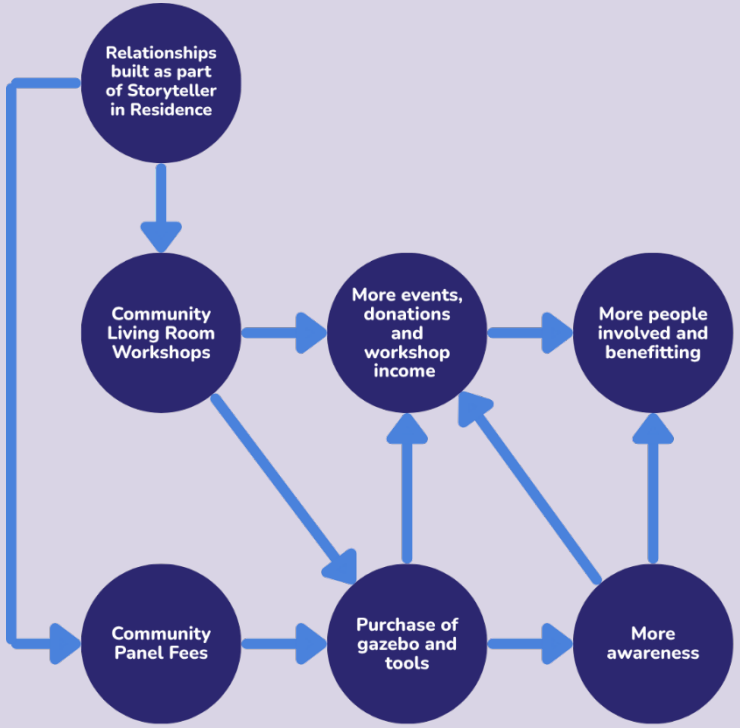

Figure 4: Swanwick Men's Shed financial and value flow model

> **So [...] that's got multiple values because it's allowing them to share their skills. It's allowing them to build their confidence, but it's also bringing in income.**
>
> Rachel, Make/Shift

This funding loop is not visible in the financial and decision mapping above but reveals one traceable loop of which there are likely to be multiple other examples currently invisible within the Amber Valley communities.

I think it would be fair to describe that a natural circular economy is more present now, as we know more of the skills and value of people living and working closer in this area.

Jodie, Platform Thirty1

Other identified ways in which value recirculates within Amber Valley as result of Make/Shift are:

- Skills – as communities bring in different people who have done something similar and who can work with them. This has knock-on benefits as the local communities upskill, removing the need to hire externally.
- Venues – due to the geography of Amber Valley, Make/Shift host events at many different venues. Hiring community spaces (markets, halls, informal meeting places) is an investment – contributing to their improvement and upkeep. This creates social value – improved social spaces encourage social gatherings and generate economic value over time.
- Kit/consumables – loaning of consumables across the projects and an aspiration for a future locally-held 'kit library'. This has the social benefit of helping resource creativity and improve access.
- Public events – help feed stories back into the community and to partners, potentially influencing how future decisions are made. This generates economic value from the events themselves, and social value circulates as communities meet and learn together.

Other types of 'value' have been generated and collected, such as local stories through conversations, vision boards, photos and informal interviews, which can all be used to shape future activities.

Our other case studies[9] have demonstrated how participants have also acquired transferable skills that can improve their access to further paid work or enable them to start enterprises.

Growing

Different types of value emerge from 'values'

A recurrent outcome of the other case studies we've explored across the phase has been the recognition that skills and learning are also distributed by Make/Shift's approaches, underpinned by their ethical and values-led decisions.

It is possible to use social value analysis to assess how cultural initiatives create positive changes for people, communities and environments by applying monetary values to things like wellbeing or health benefits (see Transported Art[10] as an example of this being done in a CPP).

Some of Make/Shift's work has more indeterminate value by the very nature of its non-traditional approach. The case of the CoLab (see Wayfinding case study) uniquely demonstrates how things like reflection time and peer-to-peer social activity which do not have predetermined outcomes can generate wider positive outcomes that cannot be easily quantified.

Personally, I can share that I have grown deep relationships through the CoLab experience. I can see trust has grown amongst the Agents too. This is a very valuable currency and I'm hopeful it will last.

Jodie, Platform Thirty1 and CoLab member

The idea that trust may be the local economy's most valuable currency suggests that this becomes a resource that can be spent. This currency is not however 'used up', but rather it accumulates more value as it repeatedly circulates around its networked economy of collaborators and peers.

> **I think it is complicated because it's not got a value attached, like a monetary value. It's not work, but it supports work...**
>
> CoLab Pod member

Make/Shift have demonstrated how the Amber Valley has accumulated a pool of experienced organisers and practitioners who are better equipped to deliver future contracts, commissions or social enterprises, ultimately attracting further investment into the region. For example, Beth, the Storyteller in Residence, has evolved her practice and raised funds herself through other Arts Council funding streams.

Other combinations of Make/Shift participants, partners and collaborators have formed to apply for funding elsewhere. In summary, the values-based skills and relationships Make/Shift have nurtured have become competencies now applicable to wider settings where more financial capacity is being accessed. This outward ripple of skills and knowledges is becoming increasingly evident.

Learnings

- **Flow maps of funds make relationships visible, not just transactions**. This can help organisations argue for trust-based funding by showing visual patterns rather than just values-based, power-based or finance-based language.
- Even within the constraints of statutory requirements associated with running a major project, and within only a few years of operation, Make/Shift have managed to **distribute a significant amount of their financial resource directly into hyperlocal communities where recirculation will give the greatest value**.
- Despite a model which also requires a lot of community infrastructure, in terms of time and enabling conditions (such as panels, peer learning etc), **it is still possible to get a large amount of money into direct activity** in the community.
- **Make/Shift's collaborators enable the support of a diverse range of activities across communities and artists**, through their role as trusted decision-makers outside of the core team.
- **Early signs of longer-term outcomes show where local investment may have been most impactful** – for example, new micro-enterprises or people starting to charge for their skills.
- **Economic benefits of localised funding, and the knock-on effects, are types of 'value' that accumulate and circulate** – one type of input generates multiple other outputs. Intentionally enabling this circulation (e.g. a future kit library) amplifies impact without extra spend.

Endnotes

[1] see *Movers & Shakers* and *Opening up collectively* case studies - https://rmresearch.uk/makeshift-reports/

[2] https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/spillover-impacts

[3] Understory; exploring attachment as a means to mobilise | Notion and https://communities.understory.community/ambervalley/network

[4] https://www.wearemakeshift.uk/understory-x-amber-valley/

[5] NB The model shows 'all funding' in and out – this includes core spends on e.g. team salary and other operating costs..

[6] https://medium.com/onioncollective/liminal-economics-swimming-at-the-edge-of-the-economy-f16fb476daa4

[7] NB The model shows 'all funding' in and out *with staffing and external services excluded*; Open Collective has also been removed as a node, as this also does not represent a decision-making stage, rather a method for the financial transfer of decisions made.

[8] There is some inevitable overlap between the two types of local action shown here (artist- or community-led) as some individuals may be classified as both, however this gives an estimated delineation between those that engaged as self-identified 'artists' versus those who engaged as members of the local communities first-and-foremost.

[9] See the full set of case studies at https://rmresearch.uk/makeshift-reports/

[10] https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/20734/download?attachment