MY CARLOW
IN AUGUST 2017 WE CAME TO STAY IN YOUR TOWN FOR A WEEK. WE OCCUPIED A SHOP IN THE POTATO MARKET, AND INVITED PEOPLE TO COME IN AND SHARE THEIR MEMORIES, HOPES AND IDEAS FOR CARLOW TOWN.
WE DID THIS IN ORDER TO ARTICULATE A SENSE OF PLACE FOR CARLOW. WE ACTED AS IMPARTIAL LISTENERS; COLLECTING MATERIAL, WHILE OFFERING PERSPECTIVES IN CO-CREATING A JOINT FUTURE.

THE MAJORITY OF OUR TIME WAS SPENT WITH CHILDREN. WE RAN TWO TYPES OF WORKSHOPS:

‘PUPPET MAKING’ WORKSHOPS- WHERE CHILDREN WERE ENCOURAGED TO INVENT, DESIGN AND MAKE CHARACTERS THAT HELPED MAKE CARLOW A BETTER PLACE. THE STORIES WERE PERFORMED EACH DAY ON A TABLE-TOP LIGHT STAGE, AND STORY BOARDS AND CHARACTERS WERE EXHIBITED IN THE SHOP.

‘URBAN PIONEER’ WORKSHOPS – WHERE WE WENT OUT INTO THE TOWN ADVENTURING; ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO WORK TOGETHER TO EXPLORE, CONSIDER AND DRAW WHILST IMMERsing THEMSELVES IN THE FABRIC OF THE TOWN.

IN ENGAGING WITH YOUNG MINDS WE WERE ABLE TO OUTLINE AN IMAGINATIVE FUTURE THAT DISTILLED AND EXPOSED CORE VALUES THAT UNDERPIN HOW WE ASSESS A PLACE. CHILDREN AREN’T INFLUENCED OR RESTRICTED BY SOCIAL NORMS OR COMPLIANCE, THEY ARE FREE TO EXPRESS AND DREAM WILDLY - IT WAS A TOUCH OF THIS ‘WILD’ ASPIRATION WE WERE KEEN TO CHANNEL AND DISPLAY.

“It will be a magic rainbow portal, & it has the power to change everything!”

- HILARY, 7 YEARS OLD.
WE ALSO TOOK PART IN WIDER SURVEYS WITH THE PEOPLE OF CARLOW THROUGH CONVERSATIONS AND IN STUDYING THE RESULTS OF A QUESTIONNAIRE. WE WERE HUMBLED BY THE RESULTS AND BY HOW MANY PEOPLE CITED ‘THE PEOPLE’ AS A FAVOURITE THING IN THE PLACE. THERE WERE CERTAIN ASSETS THAT WERE REPEATEDLY MENTIONED AND CELEBRATED: THE RIVER BARROW, INNOVATION, CULTURE, GREEN POCKETS, HERITAGE AND THE UNIQUE LOCATION.

IT IS CLEAR THAT CARLOW ALREADY POSSESSES THE PHYSICAL ASSETS TO MAKE THE TOWN GREAT. WHAT ALSO MUST NOT BE FORGOTTEN IS THE ENERGY, SKILLS & IDEAS THAT ALREADY EXIST IN THE CARLOW COMMUNITY – THIS IS AMAZING! YOU DO NOT NEED AN ‘EXPERT’ TO COME AND WAVE A MAGIC WAND, THE IDEAS JUST NEED ARTICULATING AND THE DIRECTION NEEDS NUDGING. AFTER ALL, ANY EXISTING TENSIONS ARE SIMPLY EVIDENCE THAT PEOPLE CARE ABOUT THEIR SURROUNDINGS.

THIS PUBLICATION CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS -

1. WRITTEN SUMMARY OF PEOPLE’S FAVOURITE PLACES/FEATURES OF CARLOW WITH SUGGESTIONS OF HOW THEY MIGHT BE AMPLIFIED,

2. AN ILLUSTRATED NARRATIVE SHOWING HOW IDEAS MIGHT COME TO LIFE.
1. CARLOW’s MOST POPULAR ASSETS & SUGGESTIONS OF HOW THEY MIGHT BE AMPLIFIED...
RIVER

A POPULAR & NATURAL ASSET TO CARLOW. BLOSSOMS OF ECOLOGY, NATIVE WILDLIFE. WONDERFUL RECREATION: WALKING, RUNNING, CYCLING, FISHING, BOATING, PICNICKING ETC...

Tips to amplify:

• Heighten tourism associated to the river environs and natural assets along the rivers edge
• Sustainable, and ecologically sound improvements to river track
• Continuous access adjacent to river, and increased opportunities for recreation
• Better links between the town centre and river’s edge/ walk.
• Better public amenities on river
• Stop town turning its back on the river - key locations that can be activated by retail: eateries

• Small scale infrastructure along rivers edge to promote and support its more frequent use, this could be mapped or marked trails, sculpture trails or organised tours
• Increase the footfall and lighting to help people feel safe in the park and paths adjacent to the river

CARLOW ROWING CLUB

“Areas around the River Barrow developed as parks and walkways with adequate security so that people feel safe to use them”

UNIQUE BRIDGES

“Improve the walks along the river.”

SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

“Make the River Barrow easier to find and enjoy”

VACANT LAND NEXT TO RIVER

“That the town gets into a good relationship with the river and stops turning its back on it”
CASE STUDIES:

NANTES GREEN LINE, FRANCE
Pairing wayfinding & culture
https://www.levoyageanantes.fr/en/parcours-images/

A simple green line painted on the floor providing an easy-to-follow trail of city attractions and art works. A corresponding website and free tourist map is also available. Its mission is to promote the cultural projects of Nantes and hence develop the city as a cultural tourist destination. In addition, every summer the city council curates a cultural programme where public spaces are filled with temporary art works and the green line acts as the orientation tool to guide visitors through and connect them to local businesses.

RABALDERPARKEN SKATEPARK, DENMARK
Flood alleviation + skatepark
http://www.snearchitects.com/project/

Combining both a large-scale park and water retention basins, Rabalder Parken encourages sustainable drainage whilst providing an exciting public amenity. In conditions of flood, a series of drainage canals collect rainwater and direct them into basins for slow evaporation. However in dry points of the year the canals can be used as a skateboard & BMX park. The park also has fitness equipment, trampolines and paths for running & cycling.

WATHAMSTOW WETLANDS, UK
Nature accessible to all
https://www.walthamstowwetlands.com/

For decades this group of reservoirs was closed to the public; however with investment by the council, the London Wildlife Trust, Thames Water & the Heritage Lottery, the Wetlands opened in November 2017. To keep the nature reserve wild & as natural as possible, all signage is at ground level and low key. Light-touch sustainable paths were added to allow access for wheelchairs & pushchairs. The 1885 pump engine room is now a visitor centre with a café, shop and exhibition space.

Moving forward:

- How do we involve future user groups in the planning of public spaces, and nurture custodians who will be involved in future activation?
- Could small scale infrastructure make the river more accessible and make our town more resilient in the face of environmental change?
- How do we make our local authority infrastructure and maintenance budgets work harder?
INNOVATE

A TALENTED POOL OF STUDENTS, RESEARCHERS & PROFESSORS LIVING AND LEARNING AROUND CARLOW.
THE IMAGINATION & AMBITION TO USE TECHNOLOGY TO ENRICH CULTURAL SCENE.

Tips to amplify:

- Students can offer an energetic & diverse workforce for the town
- The tech emphasis at Carlow IT has potential to spread into the town providing jobs, attracting visitors & branding the town as a tech leader in Ireland
- Attract entrepreneurs & tech start-ups and support them to stay in Carlow and use it as an affordable base to develop from
- Capitalise on the success of the potential future university
- Make further links with other institutions and businesses to amplify impact
- Make Carlow IT more visible in the town centre
- Carlow can be a test bed for innovative ideas - e.g. community infrastructure
CASE STUDIES:

**IMPACT HUBS, GLOBAL**
Flexible space for start-ups & entrepreneurs
http://www.impacthub.net/

What began as a single Hub in London has evolved into a global network of people taking action towards a single purpose: impact. Part innovation lab, part business incubator, and part community centre, Impact Labs offer their members a unique ecosystem of resources, inspiration, and collaboration opportunities to initiate local impact. Attracting local talent with fledging business ideas, the Hubs allow members to grow within a supporting environment connected to other members – linking ideas, and nurturing peer to peer support.

**MAKER SPACE, KNOLE WEST MEDIA CENTRE, BRISTOL**
Shared resources
http://kwmc.org.uk/thefactory/

The Factory started as a training and employment programme to Knowle West residents, operating from a temporary base in a disused youth centre. Now the facility offers laser and CNC cutting facilities, product design and prototyping services, and opportunities for training and business support. The Factory also offers a programme of residencies, training courses and volunteer opportunities, providing support and advice for those looking to develop these new skills into a career or business of their own.

**LIVITY, BRIXTON, LONDON**
Communications agency/hub for young people
http://livity.co.uk/

Livity is an award-winning social enterprise who specialise in marketing to a young audience. At Livity young people can gain skills in photography, journalism and design whilst working for a highly professional magazine, in a wide range of marketing and awareness campaigns. With its open-door policy and collaborative work and mentoring approach, Livity has found a way to build skills and confidence and transformed life opportunities for a large range of young people in Lambeth and beyond.

**Moving forward:**

- How do we create the right conditions to support the next generation of entrepreneurs, and encourage graduates to be part of an open ended approach to the future of the town?
- How do we work collectively to unlock potential funding streams?
- How can cultural and educational institutions reach outside the walls of their premises and beyond the constraints of their traditional functions?
- How do we embrace and strengthen the skills, ideas, energy and drive already in the local area?
Culture Activities, Sports, Arts & Performance. Carlow has more than its fair share of buzzing social & recreational scenes.

Tips to amplify:

- More widespread advertising of events, and a united platform to display news
- Combine small events to enhance audience diversity and maximise impact
- More opportunities for locals to get involved in VISUAL - community shows in town and Visual/George Bernard Shaw Theatre
- Maximise markets and promote local natural produce
- Culture involves sport - food - music
- Experiment with collaboration between the creative and business communities
**CASE STUDIES:**

**NARROW WAY, UK**
Trial pedestrianisation with prototyping & events

http://www.studioweave.com/projects/narrow-way-festival/

‘Narrow Way’ was initially transformed temporarily in the summer as a pedestrian-friendly public space. Decorated with colourfully painted patterns on the ground, on seating and on planters the space invited the community to play, socialise, and enjoy the space without traffic. Following a six month trial period, and after numerous workshops, festivals and consultations with businesses, residents and Transport For London, the scheme was made permanent.

**CHATSWORTH ROAD, UK**
A truly local market

http://www.chatsworthroade5.co.uk/market/rabalderparken/

The ‘Chatsworth Road Traders & Residents Association’ was formed with the aim of re-opening the historic local market. After many years of campaigning the market reopened with 40 stalls (50% of them living in the local area,) offering crafts, vintage clothing, fresh food and more. The market boasts an entrepreneurial scheme, in which local residents are given four weeks rent free to test a business idea. Additionally the market has a weekly community stall which organises free activities for market visitors.

**BOLD TENDENCIES, UK**
Cultural programming to repurpose a multi-story carpark


Bold Tendencies is a NPO creative enterprise and arts organisation located on the top floor of an under used municipal car park. Over 10 years they have worked with local businesses and an Orchestra to transform the space through a programme of exhibitions, concerts, poetry readings and literature festivals. Open from May – October, they curate immersive public spaces that are enhanced by beautiful views across the roof tops. Recently, the additional floors of the carpark have been occupied as artist studios, whilst the ground floor has opened as a market.

**Moving forward:**

- How could events and temporary installations be used to test and prototype ideas?
- How do we interpret the ‘public’ in ‘public realm’ in a way that invites people to co-produce the spaces they use everyday?
- Which existing spaces could support activities/events and who would take ownership of activating them?
- Can starting with high visibility, low-threshold interventions build a shared vision and a pathway for future steps?
GREEN

CARLOW NESTLED IN THE LUSH BARROW VALLEY. A VARIETY OF DIVERSE PARKS. PATCHES OF GREEN PLANTING. MANY POCKETS OF LAND WITH MAXIMUM POTENTIAL. OPEN GARDEN TRAILS & TOURS.

Tips to amplify:

- Present Carlow as a settlement with a thriving biodiversity focusing on wholesome sustainable interventions (e.g. beehives)
- Provide more opportunities for recreation and sport for all ages
- Bring colour and life into urban streets - encourage the nurture of natural life & maintenance of the built environment

- Build upon the existing garden centres and local garden tours to establish Carlow as a naturally blooming settlement and green-tourism destination
- Green pocket parks - make more oases in the town centre
- Planting of hardy, native plants and provision of growing spaces as community activity

“Replant the town with native Irish trees and plants and wild flowers. Become a model of bio-diversity.”

“Build a Greenlink joining up Carlow IT, along barrow, Carlow Castle, Dublin street, the courthouse and Visual.”

“I love being able to go for a walk in some places and listen to the birds sing.”
CASE STUDIES:

INCREDIBLE EDIBLE, TODMORDEN, UK
Community growing
https://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/

A coalition of local residents who forged new paths to accessing publicly owned land for planting. The project aimed to generate greater awareness and support for local food growing and trade and health whilst also testing and pioneering new relationships with local land owners and developing easier processes with the local council for people to access space. IET now supports two paid-part-time educators and tour guides sustained by tourism and consultancy fees, and has secured funding for an educational Food Hub.

COMMUNITY KITCHEN, LEWES, UK
Community kitchen
http://communitychef.org.uk/

A community group took on a semi-derelict industrial unit on the riverside in Lewes. With the help of local volunteers, they created a permanent base and micro bakery. Here they run in-house cookery and bakery classes, workshops, cookery leader training and food hygiene training courses. They also host lunch and supper clubs, food and film nights and local community events. The kitchen is rented out to local food projects as well as to cooks and artisan bakers who need the occasional use of a commercial kitchen.

ST PANCRAS GARDEN, LONDON, UK
Urban pocket parks

An overgrown space was developed into a micro park providing a lunch spot and break in the urban surrounds. The form and layout of the seating was designed as a considered response to the space, with local crafts people invited to develop the detail for the seating. The carvers were given the creative freedom to develop the narrative behind their carving, with each one drawing on the history and stories of the area.

Moving forward:

- How do we develop an attitude to town centre planting and bio diversity that is sustainable?
- Could we develop small low cost strategies for improving the existing abandoned plots within the town centre (such as Hanover Park or vacant plots) with local groups?
- How can community-private partnerships create shared assets for common use? Could this lead to sustainable future energy?
ANCIENT

UNIQUE HISTORIC URBAN FABRIC, INTRICATE GRAIN. LOCAL MATERIALS. PRECIOUS ANCIENT MONUMENTS. DEEP HEARTED CONNECTION TO THE PAST.

Tips to amplify:

- Opportunities for recreation adjacent to heritage sites, play and leisure encouraged next to heritage. Heritage to provide a backdrop to leisure
- Provide additional layers of educational material and interpretation, heritage as educational resource
- Pairing of creative energy and heritage assets

- Capitalise on the tourist draw of heritage assets
- Improve access to monuments, and provide alternative access methods to create unique vantage points over heritage

BROWNSHILL DOLMEN

“Promote hidden gems - green and historic - in county to attract tourism.”

CARLOW COLLEGE

“Take pride in our Castle and landmarks and market them to tourists”

CATHEDRAL OF THE ASSUMPTION

“Promote active and cultural tourism - walking, cycling, arts”

COURTHOUSE

DUCETT'S GROVE
CASE STUDIES:

**CHATEAU DES DUCS DE BRETAGNE, FRANCE**
Playful approach to heritage
https://www.levoyageanantes.fr/en/parcours-images/

Suspended above the moat, and without ever touching the castle walls, a slide wraps the castle’s edge. Visitors are taken on an adventure, where they share the lead role with architectural heritage. This adds an exciting physical feature to a fascinating ancient construct.

**THE CASTLE CLIMBING WALL, UK**
Pairing recreation & heritage
https://www.castle-climbing.co.uk/climbing-at-the-castle

After standing empty and derelict for 25 years after it closed, High Performance Sports Limited (HPS) took over this Grade II* listed pumping station and converted it into a climbing centre with a cafe and community garden. The site has undergone extensive landscaping with the development of an organic garden and the construction of outdoor low level ‘boldering’ facilities to increase the capacity of the centre and offer a space for summer climbing.

**THE HEAR HERES, KEDLESTON HALL, UK**
Wayfinding & interpretation
http://www.studioweave.com/projects/hear-heres/

A series of ‘playful incidents’ positioned around the grounds of this National Trust property encourage people to explore the landscape and open up auditory vistas in the landscape through playing with sound. Both the events programme and the Hear Heres themselves playfully contract and magnify the landscape, opening up new relationships across the estate and between the house and its parkland. This has diversified the park’s offerings and attracted more visitors.

Moving forward:

- How do we create a new life for vacant spaces and sites that have lost their original purpose?
- How do we make the process of connecting local need with available space and identifying opportunities easier?
- How can hybrid ventures be used to re-imagine spaces, attract more visitors and meet modern day needs?
“I’d like to see the town united by a lovely wide walking and cycle path, one that leads people in to a new town square on Tullow street.”

PROXIMITY TO DUBLIN

“Encourage more people to live in town and create a busier vibe.”

COUNTY HUB

“I like its size: small enough to be human, big enough to be interesting.”

#CARLOWRISING

“Improve bus links from all the towns and villages to each other and Carlow.”

TRAIN STATION

“Encourage more people to live in town and create a busier vibe.”

LOVE CARLOW

CLOGRENNANE HILLS

LOCATION

A LUSH, FERTILE VALLEY WITH CLOSE PROXIMITY TO DUBLIN. CARLOW IS PERFECTLY PLACED BETWEEN RURAL PEACE AND COSMOPOLITAN OFFERINGS.

Tips to amplify:

- More transport links to neighbouring towns
- Make more of proximity to Dublin
- Celebrate views to Clogrennane Hills
- Cycle paths connecting key places within the town eg town centre and Carlow IT
- Well signposted links to connect attractions and transport hubs
- Consolidate parking and reduce street parking on narrow streets.
- Collaboration between transport providers and tourism office
- Incentives to attract day trippers - e.g. summer deals for cheap weekend returns to the town
- Celebrate all things local and promote these to a wider audience. e.g surrounding fertile grounds that generate local craft beers and whiskey.
CASE STUDIES:

**TURNER CONTEMPORARY, MARGATE, UK**
Coordinated marketing
https://www.local.gov.uk/growing-creative-economy-thanet-kent

Through targeted media campaigns and a united approach to self promotion Margate is changing it’s image. The website of the Turner Contemporary also lists other attractions in the area to visit and marketing the town as a fun filled day trip and cultural hub is slowly building it as a major tourist destination.

**BRIXTON POUND, UK**
Social economy, promoting all things local
http://brixtonpound.org/what

The Brixton pound (B£1 is equal to £1 sterling) was designed to try and reflect the area’s unique identity and aims to encourage people to spend a proportion of their money locally. The B£ supports local businesses in sourcing more goods and services locally, reducing their carbon footprint. Using the slogan “money that sticks to Brixton” – the aim is to foster community spirit, strengthen local bonds, and defend local businesses from the onslaught of chain stores by paying for goods and services with the local money.

**THE LOW LINE, SOUTHWALK, UK**
Defining routes & character areas
http://www.betterbankside.co.uk/buf/the-low-line

The Low Line was conceived by a local resident and aims to transform the public realm by opening up the mostly car-free walkway that runs along the base of the Victorian viaducts. The project aims to regenerate the area by unlocking the economic potential of the railway arches as business spaces with a mix of offerings. The project develops a distinct identity, raising awareness to the heritage and practical benefits. At the moment the group is working with the council to develop a more formal public realm strategy.

Moving forward:

- How do we capitalise on the location of the town as a County Hub that is day trippable from Dublin?
- How can we retain wealth in the local neighbourhood and promote a sense of loyalty to local produce and independent business?
- How do we take charge of our own identity and develop a savvy approach to social media and marketing, attracting people and businesses to the area?
2.

IMAGINING CARLOW’S FUTURE IN STORIES

WHY NOT IMAGINE + MAKE YOUR OWN?
HMM...

LOOKS LIKE A SANDPIPER TO ME!

THERE IT GOES!

SANDPIPER

COOL!

THANK YOU!
POP UP 3D PRINTERS

I’m looking for a present.

This is one of his favourites.

My nephew loves nature, birds in particular.

Great, we can do that. No problem.

Thank you so much. He’ll love this.

It was a pleasure, see you again next year!

We accept the Carlow Euro!
ABOUT STUDIO WEAVE -

WE ARE A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY GROUP OF DESIGNERS BASED IN LONDON, UK. WE BALANCE A JOYFUL, OPEN-MINDED APPROACH WITH TECHNICAL DISCIPLINE TO DELIVER PROJECTS FOR BOTH PUBLIC, PRIVATE & COMMERCIAL CLIENTS. WE RECOGNISE THAT EVERY PROJECT IS A TRANSFORMATION (AS OPPOSED TO A STATIC NEW REALITY) AND ENJOY WORKING CLOSELY WITH EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS.

WE DEEPLY BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF STORIES TO UNLOCK AND EMPOWER PEOPLE IN THE QUEST TO NAVIGATE THE WORLD.

WE HAVE UNDERTAKEN SIMILAR PROJECTS RECENTLY IN HULL, NORTH ENGLAND; HAVERFORDWEST, SOUTH WALES & CROYDON IN SOUTH LONDON WHERE WE HAVE USED NARRATIVE AS A TOOL TO UNLOCK SHARED VISIONS OF THE FUTURE. WE RECOGNISE THAT OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD IS COMPLEX AND EMOTIONAL AND IS NOT LIMITED TO WHAT WE SEE, BUT ENCOMPASSES ALL THE SENSES. A STORY OR NARRATIVE, OPENS UP THESE POSSIBILITIES, ALLOWING US TO CONSIDER AND THEREFORE CHANGE OR CREATE ALL THOSE EPHEMERAL THINGS THAT BRING A PLACE TO LIFE.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LIAM COBB
HTTP://LIAMCOBB.TUMBLR.COM/

THIS PROJECT INVOLVED LOTS OF CARLOW STAKEHOLDERS AND WAS FUNDED BY:

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Carlow County Council