WHAT IS THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS AND WHY #UNUSUALGLASGOW?

After the success of the Unusual Suspects Festival in London September 2014, we brought the Festival to Glasgow!

With youth clubs, artists, ex-footballers, universities, social enterprises, think tanks and the Scottish Government among some of the participants and hosts- we explored how we can work together in new and different ways to create real social change.

More than 35 different organisations hosted 20 unique events across the city for three days and we saw over 600 people participate and engage in the Festival.

The events ranged from playing the Glasgow Game, to planting trees at the Whitehall campus and developing a network of science gardens in the city, to debating different approaches to justice and rehabilitation. Participants heard music written by prisoners and worked with young people who are designing better futures for themselves.

THE ORIGINS OF THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS FESTIVAL

“THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS FESTIVAL IS ABOUT COLLABORATION. IT’S ABOUT LOOKING FOR AND PROVIDING A SPACE FOR THOSE UNLIKELY CONNECTIONS THAT CAN PROVIDE INSPIRATION AND CATALYSE BREAKTHROUGH THINKING AND ACTIONS.”

The Unusual Suspects Festival grew out of an idea of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, UK Branch, in 2014. Working in collaboration with SIX (Social Innovation Exchange) and Collaborate, the Gulbenkian Foundation wanted to explore the link between collaboration and social innovation, and simultaneously, find a way to bring the social innovation community together with people who are doing social innovation but don’t identify as ‘innovators’. The networks of SIX and Collaborate broadly represented these two groups.

With support from Gulbenkian, the first Unusual Suspects Festival was held in London in September 2014, working with 35 different organisations to host more than 28 different events across the city engaging with more than 1,000 people.

Following the success of the London festival, we replicated the model and brought the Unusual Suspects to Glasgow.

“BY BRINGING TOGETHER PEOPLE WHO ARE DOING INNOVATIVE WORK EVERYDAY BUT DON’T NECESSARILY IDENTIFY AS SOCIAL INNOVATORS WITH THOSE WHO KNOW DIFFERENT INNOVATION METHODS- WE HOPE TO SPARK NEW IDEAS AND FOSTER NEW RELATIONSHIPS.”-LOUISE PULFORD, SIX
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‘THE BEST IDEAS WILL COME FROM THE MARGINS. THE BEST IDEAS COME FROM THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS’ - GEOFF MULGAN, NESTA

‘SOCIAL INNOVATION IS FULL OF DESIGN TOOLS AND SOMETIMES IMPELENTRABLE LANGUAGE AND HOW YOU TRANSLATE THIS IN ORDINARY COMMUNITIES AND GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE CONVERSATIONS HAS BEEN SOMETHING THAT I’VE REALLY BENEFITED FROM THIS WEEK.’ - RADHIKA BYNON, YOUNG FOUNDATION

WHY GLASGOW?

‘SCOTLAND WAS AN OBVIOUS PLACE TO BRING THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS FESTIVAL. IN RECENT YEARS IT HAS ESTABLISHED ITS GLOBAL PROFILE AS A PLACE UNWILLING TO STAND STILL AND ACCEPT THE STATUS QUO. THERE IS A RESTLESSNESS AND APPETITE FOR CHANGE, WHICH HAS MADE THE COUNTRY A ‘MUST WATCH’ SPACE. THIS, COMBINED WITH A CURIOUSITY AROUND NEW WAYS TO APPROACH LONG-STANDING PROBLEMS, CREATED A NATURAL SPACE FOR THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS.

AS A CITY GLASGOW HAS A REPUTATION FOR ENERGY AND PRAGMATISM. IT’S A PLACE BUILT ON A CULTURE OF INNOVATION, ENTERPRISE AND SOLUTIONS. AS A SHIPBUILDING CITY, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CROSSING POINT FOR PEOPLE AND CULTURES, MAKING IT A PERFECT VENUE FOR THE FESTIVAL.’ EDDY ADAMS, SIX ADVISOR AND FESTIVAL CURATOR

‘The mix of the festival and the city is incredible - a great match. The city is very vibrant, a lot of spontaneity- it’s very similar to the ethos of the Unusual Suspects.’ - Francesco Carollo, Ouishare

‘Scotland is so much more creative at looking at social issues - it’s time to invest in that.’ Lina Algoed, BSHF

‘GLASGOW IS A PRETTY COMPLEX CITY WITH A BIT OF ATTITUDE - ALMOST SWAGGER AND A BIT OF CALLOUSNESS... HOWEVER, THE CHALLENGES AROUND POVERTY IN GLASGOW NEED TO BE ADDRESSED IN NEW AND CREATIVE WAYS BECAUSE COLLECTIVELY WE’RE NOT GETTING IT.’ - NORRIE INNES, BAAD
The Unusual Suspects Festival is a new model that enables people to connect, learn about brilliant collaborations and innovations, and develop strategies to help them increase their social impact - it’s not a conference, it’s not a workshop, it is a city festival, run by the people of the city themselves. There are a few key ingredients:

**Collaboration is key:** All events are collaborations of organisations who work in either the same sector, or similar ways, but who did not know each other before the festival.

**Facilitating serendipity through real time connecting:** It is important to provide as many way to connect people in between events, so whether it’s the Festival HQ, run at Snook Café, or through real time twitter match-making, we attempt to make unusual connections at every possible moment

**A city-wide experience:** The decentralized approach of the festival is not only reflected in the organization of events, but also in the event venues. Each Festival event is hosted in a different part of the city, often in the organization of the session hosts, which gives participants even more of a flavor of the diversity of work.

‘SCATTERING THE EVENTS ACROSS A SERIES OF QUIRKY VENUES IN THE CITY ONLY SERVED TO HEIGHTEN THE SENSE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION AS A BROAD CHURCH - WITH PARTICIPANTS GETTING A REAL SENSE OF GLASGOW AS WELL AS THE SUBJECT MATTER AT HAND.’  JOHN PETO, BUILDING CHANGE TRUST, BELFAST
A SNAPSHOT OF #UNUSUALGLASGOW

EMBEDDING THE FESTIVAL IN GLASGOW - A BAAD OPENING

The Festival opened in the new Barras Art and Design Centre (BAaD)- a renovated market hall in the east end of Glasgow- a once thriving part of the town that is now struggling with de-industrialisation and disrepair. With the help of local innovator Norrie Innes, BAaD has re-opened its doors to artists and the community.

As Norrie explained ‘the market is the place that everyone should embrace- the market cart is the simplest form of entrepreneurial activity. There’s a lot of talent out there- but it’s not enough just to share and exchange ideas - we need more implementation’

‘With 41% of children in Glasgow living in poverty and the impact of this poverty and inequality within generations has left the city and country in need of fresh thinking and real solutions. We need to open our eyes to new ways of doing things, and that doesn’t just mean partnership working. The challenges are too pressing and too urgent’ - Rachael Brown, Unusual Suspects Advisor, formerly Director of Impact Arts.

SNAPSHOT OF THE EVENTS

HOW CAN METADESIGN STRATEGIES ENCOURAGE GREATER COLLABORATION IN GLASGOW?
Hosted by MA Design Futures and Metadesign at Goldsmiths University

This workshop explored how metadesign can create new collaborations between innovative organisations and individuals, foster networks and stimulate a practice towards change agency. Metadesign is a framework that encourages design to be re-designed and challenged. It’s also about facilitating a co-creative process by giving interdisciplinary teams the tools, space and support to develop an idea.

Participants at the workshop included designers and non-designers; with ages ranging from 22 to 60 years old- there were artists, lawyers, nurses, service designers, criminal justice experts, social enterprises and a public health specialist. The workshop presented several Metadesign tools and explored the development of re-directive propositions for local change, and opened a dialogue between academics, community groups, policy makers and businesses about designing the futures we want to see. The tools showcased in the workshop aimed to be creatively democratic by fostering ideas of design becoming a facilitator for social innovation that will encourage anyone to think beyond what is possible.

‘The Metadesign framework was new to most of the participants, and many were curious to learn what it is about. Some were mostly attracted to the sustainability part, while others found the co-creative approach most attractive as it connected to their own interests in collaborative work. Many could also relate to terms such as ‘ecosystem’, which is more frequently used in design jargon these days, but not always explicitly explained.’ - Marie Elvik Hagen, workshop host.

‘What surprised me most was the eagerness and willingness of people who wanted to learn new methodologies- particularly from the criminal justice and healthcare sectors.’ - Meaghan McClure, workshop host.
### BUILDING MOVEMENTS OF YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

**Contributors:** Bad Idea, Litre of Light project, Make a Difference Institute (MaD), See Think Make, Tell it in Colour, The Agency

Too often, we talk about young people and the policies that affect them but rarely with them. For the session on building movements of young changemakers, we brought together six projects from across the world that are working with young people in innovative ways to share their key insights and ways of working. Three areas for action emerged during the discussion:

1. **Allow young people space to experiment**

   Ada Wong from MaD explained that their accelerator programme is more about the process of allowing young people the opportunity to be creative and try and test their ideas rather than scale a successful venture. “We encourage young people to take action and to go out and do something. It’s more about the opportunity rather than pushing them to succeed.”

   Anthony Gerrard of Bad Idea, a social enterprise that empowers young people by encouraging their creative ideas and entrepreneurial attitude through our training, competitions, and digital community, agreed that “providing space and opportunities to learn, try and fail was extremely important” for developing innovative and entrepreneurial young people.

2. **Co designing means you need to be open to new perspectives and ways of doing things**

   Through the process of storytelling, Tell it in Colour wants to see community labels lifted and stereotypes removed.

   Claire Harris explained ‘you need to redefine your territory including who you work with and your area of expertise to let people in and actually co-design the process. Hierarchies aren’t the best way to hear from young people and to get voices heard… (Movements) require leaders seeing the ethos as bigger than their ego, who will support young changemakers to identify their strengths and then to enable them to spiral off to utilise them to affect change.’

   Many of our speakers agreed that traditional civic representation wasn’t working for young people—whether that was in Belfast, the Philippines, or Hong Kong. As Ada explained ‘young people genuinely want to participate. Governments around the world have to acknowledge that and facilitate for this. Democracy needs to be more participatory. Young people can work with governments to co-design.’

3. **We need to invest in young people**

   Kate Bradnam explained the reasoning behind the Agency’s decision to pay the young people who came to the programme as an investment and said that we need to ‘invest in young people. Why do we get less funding for a youth performance than a main stage performance? Young people see success as money and they feel valuable when you give them that.’

   ‘Perhaps we should be looking at young change makers as simply change makers. Young People are not just the leaders of the future, but they are leaders now, we need to support them to grow and develop and then we – the older generation - need to get out of their way.’ - Claire Harris
## The Potential of Digital Social Innovation in Scotland

Hosted by Nesta Scotland

This session showcased how digital technology is being used to address social challenges, and explored the potential of digital social innovation in transforming Scottish society.

Digital technologies and the Internet have transformed many areas of business – from Google and Amazon to Airbnb and Kickstarter. Huge sums of public money have supported digital innovation in business, as well as in fields ranging from the military to espionage. But there has been much less systematic support for innovations that use digital technology to address social challenges. Digital technologies are particularly well suited to helping civic action: mobilising large communities, sharing resources and spreading power.

So what does digital social innovation in Scotland look like, and what more could digital technology do to improve Scotland? The session highlighted several great Scottish digital social innovations - contributors included #NOTWITHOUTME, a new initiative looking to address and test solutions to digital inclusion challenges facing vulnerable young people, Musmantik's Soulight app which promotes digital health and well-being, and Maklab an innovative Scottish charity focused on providing resources for people from all backgrounds, of all ages and all abilities to use physical making as a tool for social empowerment, regeneration, economic growth and social capital.

In particular, the session highlighted digital technologies that have the potential to transform society such as a breathing apparatus designed at MakLab for a patient with a chronic condition that was printed using 3-D technology. The lightness and flexibility of the design changed the patient's life allowing more freedom and movement.

## New Ways of Engagement: U-labs Session

Hosted by the Scottish Government

This mini U-lab was designed to provoke discussion on the role and ability of government to empower citizens. Ulabs is a MOOC offered for free by the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT), designed to “put you into the driver’s seat of innovation and change” by helping you to make transformational change by changing yourself. Pioneered by Otto Scharmer and now championed by the Scottish Government- there are now dozens of Ulabs around the country ranging from health improvement to education to self-management and wellbeing, several of which were brought together as part of the Unusual Suspects Festival. This session also introduced the concept and new methodologies, such as reflective journaling, to participants, who have not been involved in the growing Ulab movement to date.

’ULABS ARE TESTING A DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND THE GOVERNMENT ACROSS SCOTLAND.’ - KEIRA OLIVER, LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND REFORM RESEARCH, SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

’#UNUSUALGLASGOW U-LAB - LEARN TO MAKE CHANGES WITHIN YOURSELF TO THEN MAKE BIGGER CHANGES WITH OTHERS’ - PENNY TRAVLOU
IMPACT FOR THE HOSTS

Unlike many other events, the Festival is designed so that it is just as useful to those who are hosting an event as well as to the event participants. Here is how our diverse group of 35 hosting organisations found the experience helpful:

EXPOSURE TO NEW COMMUNITIES

The session ran by the Yunus Centre at Glasgow Caledonian University examined the role that universities and research can play in understanding social innovation in communities and highlighted the need to reach out to local communities in a different way.

As Cam Donaldson the Director of the Yunus Centre explained ‘this session brought together different perspectives and new approaches on what matters to people and how to create health in communities. There were different people there who wouldn’t normally attend our events- particularly from the social enterprise sector, which helped make the conversation more unusual. It was quite different to our normal events’.

JOINING THE DOTS

In a city like Glasgow there is often a lot of social innovation activity, and although lots of people know of each other’s organisations, work is often still siloed and disjointed. The Festival helped connect some of these dots:

‘Our session was on do we bring better consuming to Scotland and it provided an opportunity for people who might be engaging in separate communities to get together and realise that there’s a lot of things that we can do together, there’s a lot of ideas that we can feed off one another and by making this space- the Festival allows this conversation to continue happening.’ Katie Gallogly-Swan, Common Weal.

The concept of social innovation isn’t really talked about in arts, and artists are not linked to social innovation networks – so this was a great ‘excuse’ for the two groups to come together and realize how they could help each other! Alison Fullerton, WASPS Studios

A SPRINGBOARD FOR NEW COLLABORATIONS

Taking time to reflect on our practice is important, and given the time, new projects and collaborations can emerge. One example is the launch of the Social Innovation League, as an informal meet-up of like-minded individuals in the Greater Glasgow area.

I had been meaning to set up Social Innovation League for 18 months, but working full time I hadn’t gotten around to it…The Festival was a great platform to launch. There hasn’t been anything like the Unusual Suspects Festival previously- focusing solely on social innovation in Scotland, so I didn’t want to miss the opportunity…(this) has created a lot of momentum around social innovation. Alison Fullerton, WASPS Studios
Participants came from across Scotland, the UK and from around the world from a variety of backgrounds and sectors. 95% of our participants from our feedback survey either met someone new or unusual, learnt something new or unusual or came away inspired to try something new, and everyone got something different out of the event:

**FEELING PART OF A COMMUNITY**

‘It is not a label I had considered before but am delighted to now think of myself as an ‘unusual suspect’ after attending the Unusual Suspects Festival in Glasgow…I hadn’t even realised I was part of a community either, because working with social innovation often feels like being out on one’s own or with a small group of like-minded people….I have come away with lots of e-mail addresses of people I want to talk to more.’ - Mandy Cowden, Clare CIC, Belfast

‘I’ve taken away new contacts, encouragement and an enhanced sense of mission.’ - John Peto, the Nerve Centre, Northern Ireland.

‘Found out at #UnusualGlasgow #UnusualSuspects that all #creative #social #change makers faces similar challenges, let’s share ideas’ - @jkeyison, Josiah Keyison, ispace Ghana

**MEETING NEW AND DIFFERENT PEOPLE**

The thing that made this event different from other events is that you had different players involved- and involved in a different way. It was not just a normal thing – there was a different reach – and it wasn’t just the same old people.’ Claire Carpenter, Director of the Melting Pot, Edinburgh

‘It’s the connections that you can make with people that you might see in the street- so you feel like you’re making real connections beyond that time and place in the session at the Festival.’ - Lisa Gannon, Glasgow Centre for Population and Health

‘Great vibe & energy at Unusual Suspects Fest. Need more creative & unofficial spaces & conversations #UnusualGlasgow’ - @GerryHassan

**DEVELOPING NEW COLLABORATIONS**

“It was great to meet Maslaha and we’re excited that the Festival brought us together. There are not many people who are thinking about criminal justice in this way, but it feels like there’s a commonality of thought and in both of our approaches, which is inspiring and encouraging. We’re excited to continue the conversation and see how we can join up practice, public thinking and policy”. Alison Urie, Vox Liminis

‘It feels like she has the same creative approach to her work as we do and we’re interested to explore ways that we can work together and build each other’s work’. Sarah Hobbs, Maslaha

“I learnt a lot. I even met up with colleagues afterwards and we are going to be doing a piece of work together with two local communities in Glasgow around issues of health inequalities’ Hilda Campbell, COPE Scotland
LEARNING FROM OTHER APPROACHES

Kate Bradnam, a theatre practitioner with the Agency in Manchester, commented on her experience after the young changemakers session:

‘A Litre of Light’ follows the notion that the replication of an idea in different territories can mobilise a movement. This led me to consider if The Agency is, in fact, a movement. Does it want to be? I have never really thought of The Agency in that way. Why? I wonder. The method has been replicated by the project partners, from the favelas of Rio to the streets of the UK. We know the method is transferable and that the need for the promotion of youth voice and action is universal. ‘A Litre of Light’ began in a slum in Manilla and has now lit up homes and buildings all around the world. I want to take this idea of ‘movement’ forward into the next phase of The Agency, encouraging the Agents to consider if The Agency should be facilitated as a movement.’
BUILDING A LEGACY IN GLASGOW

‘The Festival has given us some sparky conversations which is brilliant because hopefully we’re going to see new action come out of this.’ Rachael Brown, SIX Advisor and Festival Curator, Glasgow

‘We are starting to see new collaborations emerging and old ones rekindled, with a focus on new solutions for the big challenges we all face.’ Eddy Adams, SIX Advisor and Festival Curator, Glasgow

The Unusual Suspects Festival is not just a travelling circus, and creating a legacy beyond the event is built into the festival design from the beginning. Involving as many people in the design as possible, and hosting events at organisations all over the city is intentional. The Unusual Suspects Festival is designed to catalyse breakthrough thinking and actions, not just provide inspiration.

Bringing together different communities around a variety of subjects and themes that matter to citizens of Glasgow can provide a space where familiar challenges can be reframed. The Unusual Suspects is a chance to shake up the chemistry; a space to challenge our assumptions. We did this by bringing in outside voices and experiences from around the world, but also by repositioning some existing relationships.

Over the next few months, we will be continuing to make connections, and working with our local partners to explore how new (and old) collaborations that continue to grow out of the Festival can be supported.

THANKS

Collaboration is key to the Unusual Suspects festival, and that means a lot of people have been involved in making the event a success. SIX would like to thank our advisors and festival curators Eddy Adams and Rachael Brown, Snook for hosting a wonderful Snook Café, Festival HQ and workshop/real time analysis, and to everyone who hosted, contributed or attended a session.
UNLIKELY CONNECTIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

THE 2015 UNUSUAL SUSPECTS FESTIVAL IS CURATED BY THE SOCIAL INNOVATION EXCHANGE