

# Art, Culture, Heritage and Civic Pride in Reading

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## Context

**A partnership between the University of Reading and The Whitley Researchers – a community based research group – has been actively researching social issues local to Reading since Whitley was awarded £1 million by ‘The Big Local’ National Lottery Fund in 2012.**

This year, the researchers began a 3 year participatory research project in collaboration with Reading Borough Council and ‘The Great Places Scheme’ to research the links between; community-led practices, health, wellbeing, and civic pride, with the aim to develop a cultural commissioning framework to be piloted in Autumn 2018.

## Our Research

Data was collected between July and September 2018 by 10 persons (students and Whitley Researchers) in the form of a questionnaire; in total 164 responses were collected. Questions covered opinions of art, culture and heritage, as well as asking participants to rate their wellness – for the purpose of this poster, my focus will be on the findings regarding opinions of Reading and Civic Pride.



*The Research Team*

## Civic Pride

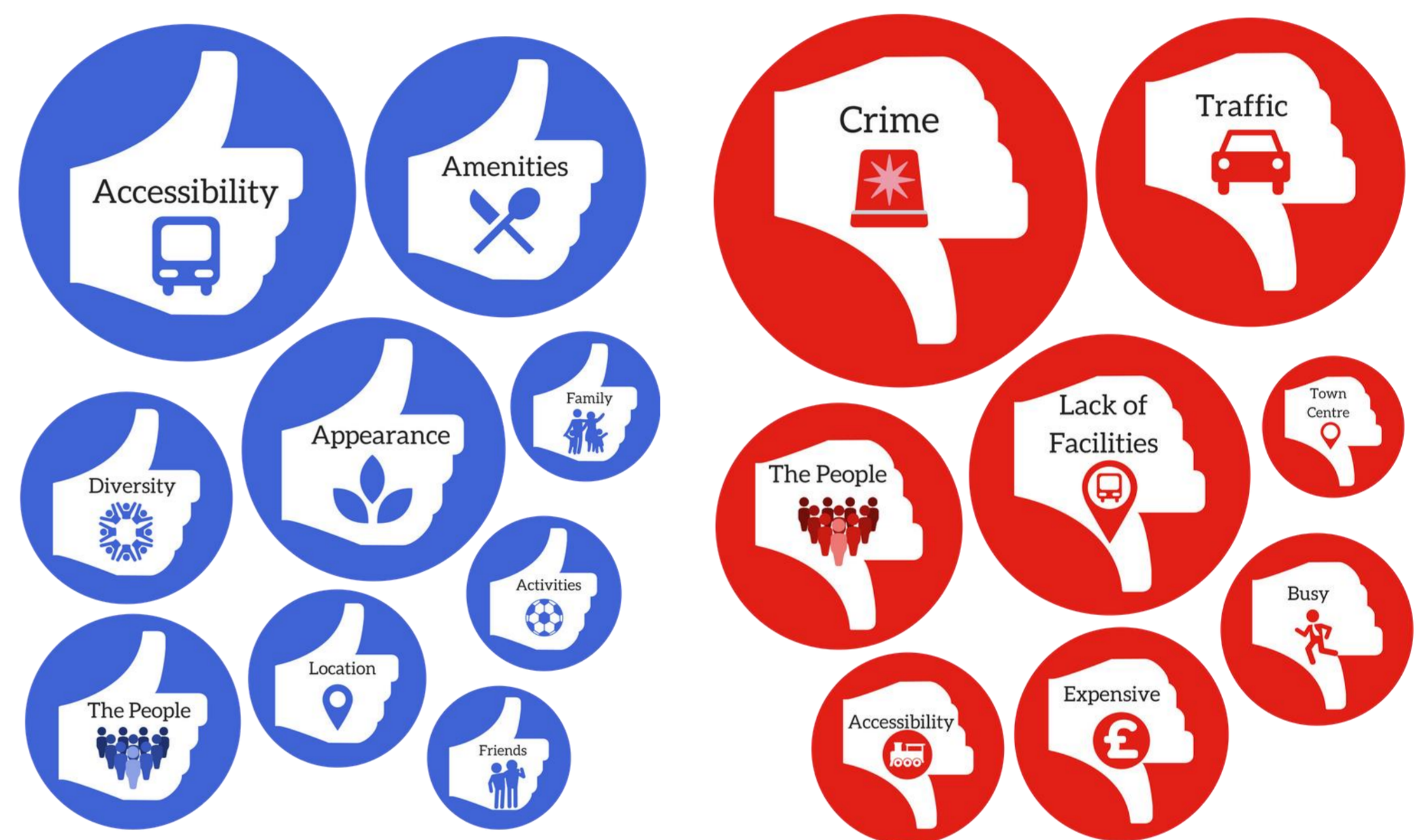
Civic Pride refers to ‘pride in the civic’, and suggests people’s positive identification with or strong loyalty to place and local community.<sup>1</sup> Pride in our cities is dropping with rising austerity and inequalities<sup>2</sup>, researching Civic Pride alongside art, culture and heritage allows for conclusions to be made about if decreasing funding of cultural offers is having an affect on people’s ability to be proud of where they live.

## Main Findings

- 60% agreed with the statement ‘I like living where I live’.
- Residents involved in art, culture and heritage events were more likely to be proud of living in Reading.
- 46% of respondents praised the amenities and faculties available in Reading.
- 32% of respondents stated that the lack of investment and amenities made them not proud of Reading – 30% also had an issue with the amount of homelessness in the town centre.
- 14% of respondents thought that the local area was getting better, whilst 33% thought it was getting worse.

## Designing Graphics

As a team we felt it was important to make our final report as creative and inclusive as possible, as one of the main focuses of our research was art. As a result of this, I took on the role of graphic designer for the project and produced a number of graphics representing our findings in a fun and engaging way.



*The Likes and Dislikes of Reading's Residents*

## Implications

A report has been produced demonstrating our findings and recommendations for a cultural commissioning framework and future funding allocations for art, culture and heritage. We believe;-

- South Reading is the geographical area that needs extra focus, as those from the area scored lower on the ‘wellness’ scale, were less likely to express interest in events, and partake in them.
- Worries surrounding crime in Reading and the affect this has on pride, needs addressing, hopefully further improvement of community cohesion should help to reduce this.

**In reference to the YouGov survey of 20,081 people in England on their pride of place<sup>3</sup>, Reading’s population is significantly more upbeat than England’s average – suggesting Civic Pride is high in Reading despite austerity and hopefully with improvements made to the issues raised in our research, that pride will remain high.**

### References

1. Collins, T., 2017. Towards a more emotional geography of civic pride: a view from an English city. *Social and Cultural Geography*, pp.1-20.
2. Collins, T., 2016. Urban civic pride and the new localism. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41(2), pp.175-186.
3. BBC, 2018. The English question: Young are less proud to be British. [online] Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-44142843>>

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