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*From Preston to Paisley:
Building Community Wealth
to Achieve UN SDG8*

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Achieve UN SDG8

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Executive Summary

This present working paper explores the state of the current economic context in the post-pandemic era, which has been marked by rising inflation and diminished government support, especially as communities strive for sustainable growth. It discusses the relevance of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 8 (UNSDG8) and summarises the evidence that advocates for sustained and inclusive economic development through innovative approaches. Using the newly developed Preston Model, we advance a viable solution that promotes local wealth retention by encouraging local procurement practices among essential public institutions while also supporting small businesses, cooperatives, and social enterprises. Central to our contribution is the notion that our Preston Model is grounded in the effective use of property and land to maximize community benefits, thereby enhancing economic resilience and boosting local employment. We conclude by providing implications for practice and policy, as well as directions for future research.

Background Statement

Entrepreneurial Ecosystems are of interest to both policymakers and academics (CITE). The role that research plays in the development of these ecosystems is currently unclear. Despite numerous reviews of the literature and suggested research agendas (Alvedalen & Boschma, 2017; Cavallo et al., 2018; Scaringella and Radziwon, 2018; Wurth *et al.*, 2022) there remains ambiguity about whether research is driving policy or vice-versa (Autio et al., 2018; Stam and Spigel, 2018). Arguably worse, there is a strong and continuing school of thought challenging the value of research emerging from business schools for businesses themselves (Parker, 2018). The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 8 (UNSDG8) champions sustained, inclusive economic progress and quality employment for all, necessitating novel strategies (Biermann et al., 2017). Scotland has identified these goals as key to economic and social development for the country in the next few years (East and White, 2016). This paper suggests that the application of the Preston Model to Paisley, Renfrewshire, may highlight some opportunities that could help meet this goal.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8

The UN SDG 8 goals which aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (Halkos and Gkampoura, 2021), is particularly important for Scotland. This goal supports Scotland's ambition to build a fairer and more prosperous society (Fonseca et al., 2023). By focusing on inclusive economic growth, SDG 8 helps ensure that all segments of the population benefit from economic progress, thereby reducing inequalities and fostering social cohesion. Full and productive employment opportunities are crucial for improving living standards and providing financial stability to individuals and families across Scotland (Scottish Government). Additionally, promoting decent work aligns with Scotland's commitment to workers' rights and well-being (Scottish Government, 2021), supporting healthier and more

engaged communities (Illsley and Coles, 2009). Sustainable economic growth also ensures that Scotland's natural resources are managed responsibly, contributing to long-term environmental sustainability (Gloyne and Hutton, 2019). This paper will propose an economic approach that could be applied to Paisley. Achieving SDG 8 is thus essential for Scotland's social, economic, and environmental resilience, enhancing its ability to thrive in a globalized world.

Paisley

Paisley is a historic town which is often considered the largest town in Scotland by population (Brown, 1886; Government, 2010). It is in the council area of Renfrewshire, near Glasgow and is renowned for its rich heritage and cultural landmarks, such as the Paisley Abbey and the Coats Observatory (Visit Scotland, 2024). Once a thriving hub of the textile industry, particularly known for its famous Paisley pattern (Campbell, 2002), the town has faced significant economic challenges in recent years. The decline of manufacturing has led to reduced employment opportunities, contributing to economic stagnation and increased unemployment rates. Additionally, retail struggles, partly due to the rise of online shopping, have resulted in numerous shop closures on the high street. Despite these challenges, Paisley is striving to reinvent itself through various regeneration projects aimed at boosting tourism, enhancing infrastructure, and supporting local businesses (Russell, 2024). Initiatives like the Paisley 2021 bid for UK City of Culture have helped raise the town's profile, fostering a sense of community resilience and hope for a more prosperous future (Gates, 2017). The latest Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) had Ferguslie Park in Paisley ranked as the third most deprived area in the country, an improvement from the first spot in 2016. Paisley has two of the spots in the top 10 of the SIMD, suggesting that there is a need to address these issues (Government, 2020).

From Preston to Paisley

The Preston Model is an innovative approach to local economic development in the UK, aimed at enhancing community wealth and resilience (Manley and Whyman, 2021). Originating in Preston, Lancashire, it utilises public procurement to prioritise local businesses and cooperatives, keeping wealth within the community (O'Neill, 2016). Inspired by the Cleveland Model in the USA, it is grounded in principles of inclusive growth and economic democracy (Preston City Council, 2024). In fostering partnerships among local government, anchor institutions, and community organisations, the Preston Model seeks to create a more equitable and sustainable economy (Whyman, 2021). This approach has garnered national attention and offers a replicable framework for other cities facing economic challenges. Emphasising people-centred local economic development, the model prioritises community needs and local resources. Rooted in municipal socialism, it strengthens the local economy through procurement strategies that support local businesses and cooperatives, ensuring fair distribution of economic benefits (Manley, 2021).

The Preston Model redirects wealth back into the local economy by strategically supporting local enterprises (Whyman, 2021). Collaborating with anchor institutions like local government, universities, and hospitals, it ensures significant spending remains within the community. This empowers local people by increasing employment opportunities, improving wages, and enhancing economic stability (Whyman, 2006). Promoting local ownership and participation, the model fosters a more inclusive and resilient economy, encourages sustainable development, and reduces economic leakage to external corporations. This community-focused strategy enhances social equity and long-term prosperity (O'Neill, 2016). *The pillars for the model are below.*



Figure 1- Adapted from Preston City Council (Preston City Council, 2024)

Anchor Institutions

The Preston Model utilises anchor institutions to drive the municipal socialism, by leveraging their economic strength in the community (Preston City Council, 2024). An anchor institution is large, typically non-profit public sector organization, such as a local government, university, or hospital, whose long-term sustainability is closely linked to the wellbeing of the local community (Omeihe, 2023; Manley, 2021). These institutions play a key role in the Preston Model by utilising their significant purchasing power to support local businesses and cooperatives (O'Neill, 2016). For example, by prioritizing local procurement, anchor institutions help retain wealth within the community, promote local economic development, and contribute to building a resilient and sustainable economy (Whyman, 2021). Their commitment to the community's economic health makes them integral to the success of the Preston to Paisley Model.

The authors have identified the key anchor institutions with Paisley (outlined below).



The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is a modern, multi-campus university with a rich history dating back to 1897. It has campuses in Paisley, Ayr, Dumfries, Lanarkshire, and London. UWS offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across various disciplines, including business, computing, engineering, health, education, social sciences, and the creative industries. The university is known for its strong focus on employability, industry engagement, and applied research. The Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH) is a major general hospital located in Paisley, Scotland. It is part of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC), the largest health board in the country. The RAH provides a wide range of healthcare services to the population of Renfrewshire and the surrounding areas. West College Scotland is one of Scotland's largest further education institutions, formed in 2013 through the merger of Clydebank College, James Watt College, and Reid Kerr College. It serves a wide geographical area, including campuses in Paisley, Greenock, and Clydebank. Renfrewshire Council is the local authority responsible for governing the Renfrewshire area in Scotland, which includes towns such as Paisley, Renfrew, and Johnstone. The council is tasked with delivering a wide range of public services and amenities to the residents and businesses within its jurisdiction.

Renfrewshire's police force operates as part of Police Scotland, the national police service for Scotland. Police Scotland was established in 2013, merging the former regional police forces into a single organization to provide consistent and effective policing across the country. The Renfrewshire police work closely with local councils, health services, and community organisations to create a safe and secure environment for residents and visitors which fosters trust and cooperation within the community.

Land, Property and Investments

The towns of Paisley, in Renfrewshire, Scotland, and Preston, in Lancashire, England share several similarities:

Historical Importance:

- Industrial Heritage: Both towns have rich industrial histories.
- Historic Buildings: Both towns feature notable historic buildings and architecture.

Economic Challenges:

- Post-Industrial Transition: Both towns have faced economic challenges due to the decline of their traditional manufacturing industries. This has led to issues such as unemployment and the need for economic diversification.
- Regeneration Efforts: Both towns have undertaken regeneration projects to revitalise their economies and improve infrastructure.

Educational Institutions:

- Higher Education: Each town hosts significant educational institutions. Paisley is home to the University of the West of Scotland, while Preston houses the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan).

With so much in common, it raises the question *how could the Preston Model be applied to Paisley?* To address the question, the Community Wealth Building- pillar of Land, Property & Investments is being applied to this research as it plays a crucial role in achieving the goals of the Preston Model by seeking to create a more inclusive and sustainable local economy.

This pillar emphasises the importance of local ownership, ethical investment, and community participation in driving economic regeneration and resilience. This pillar can potentially foster quick wins for this research project as key anchor institutions, such as UWS and Renfrewshire Council have a significant amount of land and property assets which are currently underutilised.



Figure 2- Adapted from Preston City Council (Preston City Council, 2024)

Potential opportunities

The following 3 examples highlight potential opportunities to achieve quick wins:

Catering and food production areas with UWS (University of the West of Scotland, 2024) could use during weekday evenings and all day over weekends by the community to operate as dark kitchens or virtual kitchens (Da Cunha et al., 2024), providing existing assets to be used as a food preparation facility that operates solely for delivery and takeaway orders. The focus being on maximising efficiency for online food delivery services, thus catering to the growing demand for convenience in urban areas.

Indoor and outdoor gym facilities owned by UWS could be made accessible to community members and groups (Scotland, 2024). Overall, providing free use of these gym facilities fosters a healthier, more connected, and equitable community, contributing to overall well-being and quality of life. UWS could provide space throughout its Paisley Campus to support the Paisley Art Institute Collection by providing a home to display its artistic works. At present, there is insufficient space being offered by the local museum (McLean, 2024), which has resulted in plans for the £4million collection to be housed in Glasgow (Kenealy, 2024), meaning it will be leaving the community as opposed to using our existing assets to enrich the existing community and bring visitors to Paisley.

Areas for further research

This paper suggests that there are 3 areas for future research which could enable the development of the Preston to Paisley model. The authors propose that addressing the Land, Property, and Investments pillar of the Preston Model requires initial data collection to assess potential opportunities. One approach for future research is to utilise Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to identify underutilised land and property from anchor institutions. This method can reveal valuable assets that, when optimally used, could significantly enhance local economic development. By accessing detailed records through FOI requests, researchers can gather precise data on properties that are not currently being used to their full potential. This information can then be analysed to develop strategies that maximise the utility of these assets, thereby enhancing community wealth and resilience.

As outlined above, this paper addresses the topic from a purely theoretical and academic perspective. For future research, it is recommended to focus on the stakeholders within the Paisley area. This research could examine the current understanding of the Preston Model and identify key stakeholders who are essential for maximizing the impact of adapting the Preston Model to Paisley. Engaging with these stakeholders would provide practical insights and enhance the model's application, ensuring its effectiveness in addressing local economic challenges and fostering sustainable development.

The Preston Model has been adapted and implemented in various forms across different regions and countries. For further research, it is recommended to analyse multiple case studies, critically discussing their relevance and application for adapting the Preston Model

from Preston to Paisley. This analysis can provide valuable insights into how the model can be effectively tailored to address the unique challenges and opportunities in Paisley.

Limitations

This paper addresses the UN Sustainable Development Goals from a purely theoretical perspective, which presents several limitations. The first limitation is that the Preston Model targets complex “wicked” problems involving multiple stakeholders and underlying systemic issues, requiring comprehensive solutions (Head and Alford, 2015). Although we focused only on one pillar of the model, the paper potentially reduces its effectiveness in addressing these complex problems (Zivkovic, 2018). A thorough analysis of the Preston Model’s application to Paisley would benefit from exploring all pillars, creating a more robust response. The focus on theory limits the paper's impact by not engaging with stakeholders, which diminishes the work's utility and leaves gaps that future research could address.

This theoretical approach may overlook the lived experiences of stakeholders in Paisley, as well as the variability in human behaviour, institutional constraints, and contextual differences. Additionally, without empirical evidence, the conclusions drawn are less convincing and applicable, and the arguments remain speculative and untested. Practical challenges and nuances in actual implementation are also likely to be overlooked, leading to an incomplete understanding of the topic. These limitations can be addressed in further exploration that engages in primary data collection with stakeholders around the subject.

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