

# **Productive Margins**

**COMMUNITY FORUM**

**17<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

**Single Parent Action Network**

**SPAN**

**Summary and Reflections**

# Preface

This report is an amalgamation of the many field notes which recorded this, the fourth Productive Margins Forum meet.

Though I have merged these notes (which do include a number of my own) I have not edited or interpreted the tone or contents of what was originally written, consequently though my voice (and writing style) permeates the report it is an embracing vision constructed through the multiple lenses of the many note-takers. The length and detail of the report reflects this.

Helen Thomas

# 1: Single Parent Action Network



## A Brief History by Sue Cohen

“We are against discrimination, against racism and sexism, proud of our families and proud to be parents.... Welcome to a network which aims to defend each other’s rights and the rights of our children to a positive, loving and fruitful future.” SPAN’s founding declaration

SPAN was established in 1990 under the Third European Poverty Programme by a multi-racial group of single parents in Bristol, the great majority volunteers, working to make a better life for one parent families. The EU programme supported SPAN to develop a network across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland that would link single parents, self-help groups and organizations working to combat poverty and social exclusion.

For SPAN self-help was never about living on the breadline. They stated then as they do today to be working for high quality widespread childcare, improved housing, training and educational opportunities, secure employment, good wages and working conditions.

They took our aims into national and European arenas, linking with single parents living in difficult conditions across Europe, bringing internationalism to a grass-roots level. They stated that oppressed groups could unite with each other rather than against each other, and work to support each other in struggle. They recognized and stated at the time that they were enriched by our diversity – different ethnicities and cultures, mothers and fathers, parents with young babies, parents with teenagers, teenage parents, lesbian mothers, differently abled parents and children. Some of them were divorced, some widowed, some had never lived with a partner. They believed then and believe now that all of us can be united by our single parenthood. They wanted our differences to be recognized, respected and fought for.

Though the 1990s were a very difficult era for single parents in the UK SPAN came through difficult odds to develop:

- A **network of groups and individuals across the UK** including inner city and rural areas, towns and peripheral estates, and by the beginning of the century, an **interactive website** connecting more isolated mums and dads that has now developed into [www.onespace.org.uk](http://www.onespace.org.uk) with over 100,000 unique users per annum
- Funding for over **300 self-organising groups** through a small grants programme supporting start-ups, drop-in centers, self-assertiveness and IT training, committee skills and parental support
- **The life changing SPAN Study Centre** set up in 1998 as a model action project in Bristol for parents to improve their self-confidence, education, health and well-being

- **Partnership work with the Race Equality Foundation** delivering the ground-breaking Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities parenting programme to more than 3000 parents living in disadvantaged, isolated situations
- **Policy work in partnership with leading agencies addressing poverty and discrimination** including the Women's Budget Group, UK Coalition Against Poverty, and the European Anti-Poverty Network
- **The Lone Parent Benefit campaign** which SPAN helped to lead that became a turning point in the way in which government shifted support to one parent families at the turn of the century
- Management of **10 successful European programmes** including support for women in further education and training, anti-racist training, anti-poverty strategies and researching children's experience of poverty

## 2: Framing the Day

SPAN owns and manages the expansive Silai Centre, a warren like building which alongside hosting SPAN's national and local offices and the OneSpace hub boasts a café, a crèche/ pre-school and the Span Study Centre which includes specialised learning spaces such as a fully equipped hair salon and comprehensively resourced sewing, upholstery and craft based learning spaces. The study centre had closed for the Christmas holidays and so there was relative calm in what is normally a hive of activity. We were welcomed into the café for brief refreshments before gathering in one of the larger study rooms.

The room felt like a learning space, resources were lined on shelves and the walls hosted evaluative displays of some recent ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. As a collective we filled the space almost entirely, a cluster of desks to the centre of the room were circled by chairs, in places there was both an inner and outer circle of seats due to the sheer volume of people, with some choosing to sit on tables outside of the circle. This required us to exercise consideration for each other's inclusion which at this point in the building of relationships across the Forum felt natural and occurred with ease. However I was acutely aware that when SPAN's peer evaluation team arrived at the very end of our brief introductions (which had been little more than name and role/organisations) they were, due to the space constraints firmly located on the 'outside' of the circle and though there was of course physical movement and greetings extended from all those in the vicinity this may have felt exclusionary particularly as they had not had an opportunity to be part of the introductions. In contrast during this Forum we also welcomed a new member; Nathan from the South Riverside Community Development Centre. Nathan had travelled to SPAN with the Welsh contingent and had an opportunity to mingle during the welcome coffee, making connections and participating in the introductions of both the Forum generally and each member individually, his positioning physically within the 'inner' circle was ensured as, as part of welcoming a new member to the forum, others had prioritised his seating.

Across the sequence of Forums which stretch out in front of us we can anticipate continuing to work in changing physical spaces, there will inevitably be issues of space at other meetings and Forums, how we use that space in regards to new Forum members is something that requires awareness. Drawing on my background running support programmes and interventions in community settings it is my feeling that the preamble...the coffee, tea and informal greetings can be essential elements to putting people at ease in what can be an intimidating scenario. Similarly the opportunity to meet someone in advance, to have a brief background to the programme whether that be simply an early coffee before a Forum 'officially' begins or a chat on a train journey provides the footing on which new members can feel like 'insiders' rather than a guest sitting on the boundary. Over the course of Productive Margins we hope to be welcoming new members into the Forums, thinking about the ways we do this may be the essence to keeping the Forum's moving forwards.

Morag's introduction served as a reminder of the forum as a space to share ideas, look for overlaps and find out what is already happening. The aims of this particular Forum were ambitious and we intended to fit a lot into the day, reflecting the desire on behalf of the whole spectrum of programme members to 'get things moving' (see appendix 1 for Forum timetable).

Morag discussed the need for openness about how we all feel about the processes involved in Productive Margins, and to consider them as sites of co-production. The Forums should feel like something we are all part of, the routes through which co-productive research is born; ultimately the Forums should serve as a launch-pad for new research projects.

# 3: Emerging Ideas: Presentations, Discussions and Working Groups

We began with a series of brief presentations around the ideas that have emerged since the last Forum. Each presentation was followed by an opportunity to ask questions and share ideas.

We then moved through SPAN's building as we broke into four working groups each focused around one of the emerging ideas. We elected not to hold a space for a working group around the cross-national media centre as in its current phase this is centred on building cross national partnerships rather than the active development of a research idea.

The working groups were intended to be a space where different interests and expertise could converge around the emerging ideas and progress them forwards particularly in relation to how we can work across organisations with similar interests. These summaries are an amalgamation of the various notes collated through the 'emerging ideas' sessions.

## 3.1: Girls at Risk: Helen Thomas and Roz Hall Knowle West Media Centre

### Presentation Summary

Against a background of the highest rates of domestic violence in Bristol, Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) set up the "Teen Relationships Project" (TRP), a series of workshops with young women in the area who had identified themselves as victims of teen relationship abuse (psychological/emotional, physical and sexual), which aimed to explore the issues and problems of domestic violence for teenage girls.

Girls @ Risk builds on this and seeks to explore the normalisation of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in teenage relationships and communities, finding ways that teenage girls can both understand the processes that have led to their isolation and challenge them in ways that can support other teenage girls. Penny and Helen have been coming together with a high risk group of young women from across Bristol through a series of workshops to talk about how they engage with digital spaces when thinking about theirs and others romantic relationships.

This projects conception pre-dates Productive Margins, Helen had been in communication with Penny through her role leading an intervention for 16-24 year olds for a charity supporting women and children experiencing DVA. Engagement with Productive Margins enabled a space where it became clear that at the root of Girls@Risk was the question of how to transform the ways teenage communities regulate their relational norms.

The aim of the research is that the teenage girls along with the researchers and digital experts will co-create a digital platform that can support teenage girls at risk of, or already in the early stages of

abusive relationships. The young women have also strongly expressed their desire for a wide reaching campaign which will accompany this digital platform.

When a call came out from the Communities and Culture Network+ for pilot studies looking at young people and digital spaces it seemed an ideal opportunity to scale-up the project and the grounding in Productive Margins provided a strong footing for the funding bid. This project will be able to form part of the Productive Margins programme without drawing from the budget and sets a precedent for working together across the Forum members to develop collaborative bids for additional funding.

We must ask the question of how Girls@Risk can cross the boundaries of the Forum, where are the commonalities with other organisations and communities?

## **Discussion Summary**

There are high levels of violence in relationships in communities that some of the Forum members are working with in Wales but we have to proceed with caution, we need to understand where communities are coming from, what's behind the practices and not impose our own values. There are big challenges for the 'academics' and 'professionals' in Productive Margins if we are to create a safe space where we are not imposing our judgements on people. Ultimately the community has to shape the intervention and we have to find ways of engaging that is neither collusion nor judgement. It will be crucial to analyse where communities come from in terms of understanding the gender role, the history of place etc. The process of Girls@Risk is important in this – Knowle West Media Centre is grounded in action research which starts with action, not just finding the answers together but also the questions. There are some similarities that have been identified between this project and the Valley Project in Cardiff.

## **Working Group Summary**

It can be frustrating for some, particularly those who are not digitally literate that there is a focus in work with young people on their use of digital media.

Domestic violence and abuse is an issue that crosses communities and cultures, the apparent increase in frequency and severity of abuse and violence including sexual abuse is a major concern for families who often don't know where to turn.

Knowle West, Easton and St Pauls all have strong established communities but how to support young people in healthy relationships is difficult. There are significant cultural differences across micro-geographies particularly in areas like Easton and St Pauls which are more transitional than Knowle West – what impact does this have on normalising violence in relationships and sexual exploitation?

## 3.2: Deaf Heritage: Emma Burns

### Deaf Access Cymru

#### Presentation Summary

Deaf Access Cymru is developing a project of which the express aim is to bring two generations of deaf people together. There is a significant divide at the moment with differing interests, expectations and norms' creating a chasm between the elderly and young people – the digital world is having a huge impact, breaking down the personal and communal relationships that were once a strong-hold of the deaf community.

Challenges have been identified through some of the work that Deaf Access Cymru have already done, the older deaf community often do not want to be included and don't recognise the young people's social actions as expressions of deaf culture. On the other hand young deaf people found the existing deaf clubs boring 'all bingo and coffee'.

A proposal has been suggested to train both young and old deaf people to construct 'Deaf Access Cymru' – an online portal designed to bring the deaf community into new age. There is an urgency around this work because the notion of 'deaf communities' is diminishing, the transmission of deaf culture; which was previously achieved through social clubs and deaf 'spaces' is difficult to pass on with the current situation. Older people feel like the younger generation of deaf people have lost their birth right – there needs to be a space which is neither an old nor young place but a 'deaf community' space.

The project Deaf Access Cymru is developing, would make multiple connections by training groups of deaf young people to design a website and then in turn engaging them to train the older people in digital skills. Older deaf people would develop links and understanding with the young. So too would the culture of the older deaf community be transmitted and preserved, passing on the deaf 'birth-right'.

#### Discussion Summary

Akash tablets (£29) were suggested as one of the way to teach older generation basic internet functions such as browsing and checking emails. The possibilities of this project as a motivating drive in the digital realm was extensively discussed. It could be really beneficial for two age groups to find a third space where some sharing of knowledge and experience could be initiated.

It would be also beneficial to see what older deaf people would think about technology and the ways of engaging by doing some interviews with them. There are some case studies from Finland which would be worth exploring. Also since the project is still emerging at the moment, it would be beneficial to focus on the main goal and see where the project would go instead of going into details too much.

# Deaf Heritage Working Group Summary

## Deaf Youth and Older People

Younger deaf people need the agency which would be provided to them by the culture which is dying out, can this project provide a bridge to a source of agency. The deaf 'homeland' would have been the deaf schools – but they don't exist so much anymore.

Even if the deaf clubs do diminish what is important is identifying deaf heritage and identity. Do the young people actually feel cut off from deaf heritage? Is this coming from them? Is there a need for more seed-corn funding? Does the younger deaf generation 'do' deaf community differently? At the same time the deaf community is not a homogenous group. How do we have a conversation with the most isolated so that we are not projecting on to them our ideas – why are they the most marginalised?

## Regulation

Where does regulation come into this: Where do you place yourself to be heard. Marches in London for deaf recognition. In 2003 government recognised sign language as language. Spit the Dummy is a campaign following on from that – they saw the legislation as a dummy. It is all online but has not had much impact. When we talk about regulation it is not just about government – regulation in the home or in the school.

## Co-production and Methods

Visual methods are particularly important in this project. How do you make sure you don't push through an idea which the community is not actually passionate about because you have the idea for the project?

Know your Bristol On the move: identifies places in Bristol with historical deaf significance. Co-producing with the deaf community but they have never been asked to co-produce, how do we start a conversation with them?

# 3.3: Isolation and the Elderly: Simon Hankins and Ben Barker

## Southville Community Development Association (SCDA)

### Presentation Summary

The Southville Community Development Association is working with isolated and lonely older people in the BS3 (South Bristol) areas of Southville and Bedminster. These geographically small communities include approximately 5,500 people over age of 65, 10% of which are 65+ and many of whom suffer from loneliness.

Acute loneliness is a major feature of many older people's existence. On top of this, this age group is suffering physical illness and poor health, reduced immune system, slower recovery, dementia and stress. They may well avoid GP visits due to the cost or experience of travel as they may suffer from poor eyesight. Loneliness can be physical in terms of being far away from others, or emotional, being part of a community but feeling outside of it. 'Acute loneliness' refers to enduring, chronic, health zapping loneliness; this has been shown to result in higher rates of physical illness, reduced immunity, slower recovery times, and increased mental illness.

SCDA are developing a project looking at ways to combat elderly people's experiences of acute and non-acute isolation. They have already established a foot care clinic for older local residents, IT training, social tea dances and free theatre tickets. Though their current activity base for older people is small, they have big aspirations.

They have a strong desire to understand the lives of the elderly in their pasts and present, to use this an exploratory process through which they can find out what the older people they are working with would like to do and what currently prevents them from achieving this. In practical terms SCDA want to bring the elderly back into the local area and generate a mix between generations. Alongside developing processes to link local organizations into their work more effectively, for example through the Dementia Action Group who have been offering training to shop staff on how to understand and aid elderly customers who may be forgetful at the till and need focused assistance.

Any research will need to find ways to acknowledge the neighborhood context and comparisons between neighborhoods. Social carers often don't take into consideration the places where people live and the spaces that they have occupied and consider as 'home' particularly when declining health requires a geographical move – often out of the area they consider 'local'. This raises the question; what does home mean as you get older? What does the austerity agenda which is very difficult for health and social care mean for older people whose support networks are changing, who is mapping this?

SCDA are looking into Bristol Community Transport as a possible way to start a dialogue, SCDA older person's worker has been travelling on the community buses to make connections with harder to reach older people. There is also some community research that is currently being undertaken through surveys which have been distributed using connection to Wiltshire Farm Foods (the local meals on wheels provider).

Considerations going forward are how to sustain an ongoing dialogue with older people, and how to analyse the data collected. Simon and Ben highlighted a need to unpick and delve into the term co-production. Co-production may be possible with older populations but what is important is to reach those most isolated.

## **Discussion Summary**

Some of the key issues are how to identify loneliness, how to develop an ongoing dialogue with older people and how to analyse and interpret that data and what to do with findings. This is something that needs delving into - how do we coproduce with people we don't have a dialogue with – perhaps older isolated and lonely people come in later in the process?

There are close overlaps with the Cymru deaf project, how do we bring older people back into the community?

Housing is a closely related problem in Southville and Bedminster. Bedminster has an extremely high proportion of flats for older people which are ghettoised through their collection in high rises. Housing and health are issues that interrelate with loneliness and we cannot and should not focus on loneliness in isolation.

Joseph Rowntree has done a big project on loneliness and there is a Big Lottery bid going on around aging in Bristol. This project is connected to something much bigger and Productive Margins should be a part of that, ultimately we are all attempting to exact change which better the lives of the people in our localities.

Qualitative Interviews were suggested as a way to truly understand this group.

## **Working Group Summary**

### **Co-Production**

Co-production is a new way of working and very hard to achieve – if we are going to do it there is no way we can do it from the beginning with isolated older people. We can start with older people but not the isolated ones. As project develops, more dialogue, trust – others may step up. Could you access them through gatekeepers – carers, family and do a short study with those people. But what about the damage when you walk away?

OK – the reverse – you find out what they wanted to happen. The framing of the questions is going to be important and interesting. Austerity is very important in that project.

How do you measure the effectiveness of co-production?

# **3.4: How can you have a voice: Kate Smith, Mushtak Hussain and Helen Thomas**

## **Single Parent Action Network**

### **Presentation Summary**

Kate is a free-lance consultant on participatory evaluation and leads SPAN's peer evaluation team and began this presentation by reflecting on her own experience of dissent. She began her life in a mining town when mines were closing and so dissent has informed her whole life. Kate briefly touched on her background in International development and the ways in which initiatives of development in this area are not actually reaching the marginalised. She feels there is an urgent need to find different methods, ones which genuinely include others. The participation movement and using participatory methods which move from verbal to visual communication is something she described as being very close to her heart, there is the potential with visual methods to shift power dynamics.

Mushtak is one of SPAN Study Centre's learning mentors, when introducing herself Mushtak discussed identity and how important identity became when growing up in different countries. Mushtak is multi-lingual and part of her role at SPAN is to enable women to engage regardless of language and to emphasise the value SPAN places on women's stories spoken in their own tongue. Mushtak feels that the ability to talk about your family in your own tongue develops confidence and builds connections, SPAN reflects the ethnic and linguistic background of their community in their staff, this influences the organisations impact.

Kate was commissioned by SPAN to come together with Helen and facilitate a workshop at SPAN which asked the question 'Who has the right to be a dissenting citizen?' Recognising that the language of this question did not reflect the language of the majority of SPAN's parents this was re-branded as 'How can you have a voice?'. Women need to explore what they do anyway in dissenting terms and the ways they can get their voices heard as well as developing new ways to have a voice. The one day workshop hopes to be the start of something – sowing a seed that can be developed – perhaps through an expansive series of workshops. SPAN have done this sort of work before, it's about the process, co-producing new ideas takes time.

The workshop happened in two parts and was conducted using entirely participatory methods; first examining different scenarios based on case study examples of women finding themselves in difficult situations – home, school, health and then exploring what the women felt stopped them having a voice.

What was immediately identified were the issues that stop those women having a voice – intimidating behaviour from services, not being familiar with the procedure, not wanting to rock the boat, deep sense of compassion – trying to understand the other point of view so much so that it stops them taking action and not wanting to confront people in a higher position. Language (not just in terms of first language but in relation to professional jargon and differing and frustrating differences in communicative norms) and confidence, were closely interlinked as barriers to being heard. Kate produced a visual report which can be widely shared and is owned by nobody, something she considers to be very important in participatory terms.

## **Discussion Summary**

How does this fit into Productive Margins both in terms of everyday dissent and also in articulating demands to people in power. There is an election coming up – how can we use this, train young people to make demands, it would be a lost moment if we forgot this!

The media representations of single mothers, working women and ‘new arrivals’ (recent immigrants) are having a big impact on the ways women see their rights.

In addition to the series of workshops that SPAN would like to develop Helen is conducting in-depth interviews with some of the women who attended the workshop.

## **Working Group Summary**

This working group was facilitated by Kate Smith and as a group they trialled some of the participatory methods that Kate champions in her work. Due to this it was not possible to take notes and the session felt like a showcase which, though valuable, perhaps could/should have been shortened to enable a discussion to take place.

Ultimately though this was an interesting method sharing exercise but meant that this idea was not subject to the intended discussion focus and there were no notes made available from any of the group members.

# **3.5: Cross-national partnerships in delivering a Media Centre: Eva Elliot**

## **Cardiff University**

### **Presentation Summary**

In the last Community Forum it was clear that a lot of our community organisations were a bit unclear about the roles, processes and actions involved in Productive Margins. We were all still

finding our way - we want to learn and understand where other Community Organisations are coming from.

At the end of the last forum some links between Community Organisations began to emerge. Commonalities between communities that are being worked with and the issues that people are concerned about for example food poverty, domestic violence. The question we need to ask is how we can facilitate these connections to work together?

Knowle West Media Centre was a community emergent initiative which is now a successful media hub and employer in a location blighted by poverty and lack of opportunity. There is funding for the development of a Media Centre in the area local to some of our Welsh partners, there are commonalities in both the center and the sorts of projects and initiatives it hopes to bring to the local communities. This is a clear point for collaborative working and it would be valuable to bring a group to KWMC to explore options. It is hoped that the seed-corn money will enable this exploratory encounter to occur at a depth which is not possible in the forums.

This is not without problems, there have been questions raised across our community partners about representation and community leaders. These are questions which we all need to reflect on, who are community 'leaders' and 'representatives' representing and, more importantly who are they not. Co-production is not simply a process of working with the relatively powerful and when we are co-producing together across our multiple and complex communities, who decides who attends something like the proposed meet at Knowle West Media Centre and how does Productive Margins engage (or not) with these sorts of decisions?

## **Discussion Summary**

### **Community representations in media**

Public depictions of a culture of dependency is a serious issue for many communities, 'A Town Like Merthyr' was a local expose which sought out people who were not media savvy and have extensive personal challenges, ultimately participants were chosen for their outrageousness with the aim of sensationalizing and humiliating the local people and area. Similarly 'Shawnie' was written by an ex-social worker about young people in Knowle West that was seen as a national representation of Knowle West, local people found it both insulting and damaging.

There are questions about surveillance and representation. How are we able to represent ourselves in the ways we would like by showing our assets as opposed to countering and deconstructing other people's representations? How can we shift the power dynamics of media and other forms of representation towards that which we want to portray?

There is a link to the Girls@Risk project in terms of the over-sexualizing notions of young working class people and the way this is publically depicted.

# 4: Research Themes: PhD Presentation and Facilitated Discussions.

## Mobilising Neighbourhoods by Bryony Enright

### Kaylee Perry – Mobilising Neighbourhood's PhD Presentation

Kaylee has an undergraduate degree in sociology and an MA in longitudinal research; she wants to provide a quantitative point of view on productive margins. The central theme to Kaylee's research is health and deprivation in relation to the development of cervical cancer, she is looking to explore response rates to cervical screenings, considering the impact on uptake in relation to the doctor patient relationship and how the wording of appointment letters might influence who will go for screenings?

Kaylee is relatively new to the project and feels she is still developing an understanding of how she can use co-productive methodologies with secondary data particularly as how her research develops will be largely dictated by the data that is available.

### PhD Questions and Discussion

We talked about the Behavioural Insights Team (Nudge unit) in government and the work they are doing on this e.g. wording of tax returns and letters regarding organ donations. Bristol hospitals have an initiative about putting research out to patients in a more friendly way. Bryony Enright has further information on this and is going to locate and make available some readings on nudging and Behavioural Insight Team.

Emma (Deaf Access Cymru) discussed a workshop she ran for young deaf girls about the cervical screening letter –they had said that they would chuck it out. The question was asked as to whether Kaylee had considered working in Wales and if so how this might work in practice. There was also mention of Community First who are looking at health screening in terms of the language challenges for communities.

How does health and especially health screening and check-ups influence the lives of people who have other issues and bigger worries e.g. extreme poverty, unemployment or under-employment, financial worries, violence in their homes etc. – do health checks e.g. cervical screening, take a back seat. They may not have access.

How can we give community groups the data? KWMC have done some great work on visualising data. They did live links to the supermarkets and shops in Knowle West – so the community could see what people were buying and it had a big impact on what people were buying – they didn't want to be the person only buying crisps! Knowle West have also had a lot of success with energy use and visualising data.

How does this relate to neighbourhood – finding the people in communities who are not going for screening?

Does neighbourhood mean the same as community – this is something which would have to be explored in the research. This is an interesting question to ask within **the ‘neighbourhood’ – are people self-defining as cohorts?** Are people identifying with others in their local area? It’s not just about physical distance. Do people feel part of something? There are imposed structures in Bristol e.g. the 14 areas – this is quite top down.

The discussions around community are going in two different ways 1) communities becoming imagined and dispersed but then 2) in places like Liverpool communities are becoming more tightknit, accents are getting stronger. Are communities facing a polarisation between cohesiveness and dispersal? Thrive or die?

Looking at life expectancy in Wales – there are very different life expectancies across communities. Community First is integrating with very deprived communities, when deprivation is measured by income it maps clearly onto other maps of life expectancy. But then people’s perception of neighbourhoods don’t always map onto these. **Maps which are bottom-up** may be useful in showing how resources are distributed in other ways – shows something different. **How do communities perceive their** neighbourhoods and how do schools map onto communities? Bristol doesn’t have catchment areas so you can drive to any school. But, every school has a flavour to it – accents in the playground – this all plays into how the child will grow up.

Communities First found that resources were being distributed in different ways in different neighbourhoods – there are ‘other’ ways to deliver services.

## **Wider Theme Discussion**

### **Mapping**

Big data drives governmental mapping and then that drives mapping. How could we work with that in communities? Maps have power – how do you enable people to have power through mapping. Do you want to know you live in an area where your life expectancy is lower than up the road?

Knowle West has suffered from this – even people in authority in Bristol talk about it in a negative way. Zahir from Building the Bridge held a walk of Stapleton Road from one end to the other – this enabled them to visualise what is going on.

Also depends who is doing the mapping – implications for neighbourhoods if it is done on their behalf, also what is made available to neighbourhood.

There are two projects in Wales:

- GIS Map – developed by police sciences institute who are exploring how young people can use it as a tool. What do they think about it? How would they map their area? Then ask them to talk to people in power. How can we use this and take it forward?
- There is also an app that the police used to map how their resources were being used in the community – really localised data. This was meant to go on to another stage, to hand the

information back to the community to see how resources could be used better by the police. The project was more about safety and wellbeing – not so much about the problems, could map where people feel safe.

Could we have hot-spots in Bristol so you could see a flow of people into areas - tell a story about how people are using an area?

In Bedminster they have divided the area into 10 smaller sections – 7 of these are currently being ‘covered’ by community groups, they are going to start an audit, identifying areas of concern and talk to the groups that exist – what are the objectives of these groups – then, from this derive projects for which they can secure resources. Ideally these smaller plans will lead to the creation of a whole neighbourhood plan. Eventually they are hoping to have community plans which set out how the community feel about their local place, this can then be communicated to developers, policy-makers, local government and hopefully will have some moral standing (although legal standing is unlikely). For example this could work by getting administrative bodies to work together over green space – a green mapping which maps the green things you have in your space. This will push the conventional road map to the back.

### **Space**

Space matters – let’s focus on the physicality of space in the communities – how can space be rearticulated?

Rethinking space – Merthyr Tydfil and Beaufort - the place where the first million pound cheque was signed, they were at the heart of the industrial revolution – but now they are off the map.

In some areas there is reluctance from the council and other bodies to take ownership of the land. The suitcase experiment is an example of this, for 26 months the abandoned suitcase wasn’t moved and they couldn’t get anyone else to move it. They tried to intervene with the council to get it moved but the council, council estate and local council would not take ownership of it.

What do the community agencies want to remember – thinking about memorial centres, what do they want to write as their knowledge of the place – how do their imaginings of a place converge? The suitcase is a monument performed in a particular way. Legacy lives on through wealth not necessarily through history. In the deaf community for example the deaf people have very little ownership of the community groups they use; this means they can easily be taken away. Some of the younger deaf people have a real sense of placelessness.

### **Regulation**

Regulation can be a real hindrance to community spirit – Emma told a story about clearing a farmer’s derelict field and then being threatened by the police for theft. There is a chance that the communities become the aggressor because they want to make a difference. How can people use those in-between spaces – are they already inhabited? ‘Gorilla Gardening’ is one such idea, in Cardiff they have taken over a police station. But, that is such a small thing – how does the majority of the population engage?

Thinking about spaces of dissent – how do people find a space to dissent? How do things bubble over – e.g. the Tesco in Stokes Croft. How do we get the small things to grow into bigger things?

We are finding ourselves often talking very much about urban communities – in the Valleys in Wales they are facing very different issues – open cast mining and fracking this is something which will affect us all. Whose environment is it?

Place and space is both highly regulated and unregulated – you can feel total powerlessness and powerfulness.

Short-termism becomes an issue when we think about regulation – this is why history is so important and how we remember it. We need to insert historical consciousness and memory into planning.

# 5: Research Themes: PhD Presentation and Facilitated Discussions.

## Dissent

### Greg Bond – Dissent PhD Presentation

Greg discussed working with dissent in the community and the need to take those micro, private expressions to next level - into the public domain. The space that people use to explore dissent could be out there in the public and doesn't need to be traditional, think theatre, film, practical experimentation, media installations, share and discuss – public conversations.

'Spaces of Dissent' should be for people to engage with policy, installation art can be a practical application of dissent that can be used to make links. Public events can be linked to policy and online conversations, this is partially inspired by the mass observation of the 1930's and Boal's theatre of the oppressed, a way to 'open up' unheard voices. Greg framed this as official spaces of dissent, a place where people can express their need for dissent – otherwise they employ unofficial spaces of dissent such as riots and occupation.

### PhD Questions and Discussion

Tove is interested in using film as a tool at SPAN. SPAN do already have some experience of this having co-produced a film with a Dad's group held at their premises, Greg discussed his vision for getting SPAN's 'How can you have a voice' discussions out into the public domain.

### Wider Theme Discussion

Alex discussed the relationship between legitimacy and dissent the need for visibility in these expressions. Bristol women involved in Building the Bridge are seen by counter terrorism initiatives as moderating the 'out of control' men in their communities. They are included but only in very restrictive ways. How can women challenge these expectations? Therese talked about how through Building the Bridge they had witnessed dissent as a claim to citizenship – a process through which a claim could be stated about full participation in the body politic. Muslim women are frequented in media and justice discourse but we need to bring them into community engagement, how can Muslim women enter public spaces in full citizenship? There are assumptions of liberation but also the conceptualizing of dissent as relational to 'full citizenship'.

Are people being silenced or not speaking? If these people are not being heard maybe they don't want to be heard. Interpreting voice can be seen as a method of social control, could an official

space of dissent be stifling? Should dissent raise challenges the framework of the official. To what extent will people be encouraged to participate (perhaps un-wittingly) in their own regulation? What would be the methodology?

Naomi defines dissent as disagreement – a process of highlighting difference, disagreeing with the stories being told about ‘us’. Who is the ‘us’ for example in the stories of refugees? There is always a danger of recognizing authority as expertise.

Sue pointed out how we all wrestle with hegemony in our daily work and lives – sometimes as dissenters in public spheres – how do we effect change? What are the commonalities between some of the different PM projects – communities in Ebwe Vale, single parents for example, disagreeing with the stories told about us – expertise in these communities could be translated into forms that lead to change (possibility for a cross nation research project?).

Becs discussed Co-exist as having a passive role, opening the doors to many different groups. It is born out of creating a space for whoever wants to use it, they want to ‘stay neutral’ but there are opinions about things being in the space and they are not representing everyone in their community. Ultimately though there are a number of tensions including gentrification. Becs raised the issue of leadership – what does this look like – what is our role? Rather than Coexist playing a passive role, how can everyone step up? Create a space to give people a voice at Hamilton House.

Tove spoke of SPAN as an organization based on dissent – single parents in the organization really disagree with the way they are treated by society – those who feel stigmatized are drawn to work for SPAN around 75% of staff members. Single parents with language barriers find their lives in particular are so heavily regulated by authority. Feedback from the seed corn funded ‘How can you have your voice’ group was that “no one cares about what we have to say.” Who has the legitimacy to be a dissenting citizen? Habitual residents test a particular barrier. There are so many different layers – if you are state dependent do you have the right to be a dissenter?

How is the dissenting voice given access, how do people in authority and positions of power hear that voice so often it is sucked into hegemony. Nancy Fraser’s articulations of alternative moral spheres were highlighted in terms of social, moral visions and transitional spaces which bridge public spheres - how the voice can have an impact.

Tove cited an example of a local Somali women’s group who were having problems with regard to their children’s education – SPAN supported them with a small grant and they brought in the Head of Cotham School to the group and in doing so turned the power around. Now the head meets with them regularly.

### **Methodologies**

How do we consider methodology in relation to dissent and what roles do we all play in this. There is a question of what right/experience do any one of us have in the research process – we must ensure that we don’t just ‘take’ and place knowledge in an official space. Co-production should be about safe spaces considering collectively what is in the interest of justice in the distribution of power and privilege.

We need to own up to our individual knowledge and expertise and use that with integrity, recognizing authority without using authority to dominate and all the while recognizing different forms of expertise. What are the mechanisms of the conversations we need to have about the way things work in Productive Margins, the idea of PM as a 'neutral space' from which research can commence is problematic. We need to explore the regulatory processes that are embedded in and created by Productive Margins considering our expectations of the relationships and power dynamics within the programme. Naomi suggested moving from forums to action groups moving towards asking the specific questions 'what do we want to change' and ' what do we want to think about'

# 6: Research Themes: PhD Presentation and Facilitated Discussions.

## Harnessing Digital Spaces by Sarah Eagle

### **Amanda Ramsey – Harnessing Digital Spaces PhD Presentation**

Amanda outlined her PhD, based around the Knowle West Neighbourhood Planning Forum; it's about communication and neighbourhood and focused on the digital. She's working with KWMC where several junior digital producers are employed for six months. Amanda has the communications brief, and is currently getting the forum to think about the first three steps. The first one is the Name; they have moved from Your Voice Your Choice to Our Voice Our Choice. Issues include finding messages that resonate for all age groups, from eighteen to eighty five and beyond; how to raise awareness of the forum, which is envisaged as happening through messages in little nuggets. Amanda has produced a pack on the subject 'how do you get your community group engaged' which she distributed to all present.

### **PhD Questions and Discussion**

We had a brief discussion of the relationship between framing a question that is researchable for a PhD, and the agendas for Productive Margins and for the Neighbourhood Plan for the Knowle West area. This is a messy process with lots of decisions to be made. Some decisions obstruct other things from happening – so something complicated is happening about 'which decision can be/is made in advance of/ other decisions'.

Knowle West is developing a local Community Dashboard, through which people can see representations of data on health statistics, house prices, crime levels and traffic flow. The intention is that it inspires people to take an active part in their city, from trying something new in their lives to actively seeking to make differences in their area. The interface involves images and interactive avatars. Data from this source will be used in the neighbourhood plan. The challenge is to represent data in a form that a wide variety of people can meaningfully use.

### **Wider Theme Discussion**

#### **Data**

Ros Sutherland pointed out that the heart of any question about data there needs to be an interrogation of the assumptions built into the statistics, the models that have been used to develop what we are calling 'data'. It's easy to think of it as neutral, value free, but there are underlying assumptions and models and what we are looking at even in visual representations of data is ultimately something that is ideologically driven – often in a multi-layered way.

#### **Productive Margins Processes**

Simon Hankins introduced a discussion about the processes in PM. Academics have been sitting back and waiting for something serendipitous to happen. Dissent has been a driving force already in the project – as Southville Community Development Association said that they would disengage if

nothing happened. They experience frustration in not knowing who is actually regulating the processes in Productive Margins; how are decisions being made? It's not transparent. And one of the biggest issues is that community groups are said to be of equal power in Productive Margins but the university has control over the budget and access to information that community groups don't. Another issue is that lots of discussion is going on in the theoretical field. There was a suggestion that this sub meeting could send the message back that nine months down the line, some partners are not feeling included, and have a sense of meetings and information being held in separate spaces.

Simon gave an outline of his Big Data idea, circulated earlier in the week. The power of working through Productive Margins would be that questions could be framed in a different way – work at KWMC is inspiring in giving an example of asking different kinds of questions. The vision is that with data that is available that is relevant to older people's lives, and with good questions, new knowledge could be arrived at – it could bring up issues, problems, gaps etc that knocking on door with a clipboard could never do.

Gabrielle had already emailed with a link to COSMOS in Cardiff who are actively looking for groups to trial their methods. (Briefly, [Cardiff Online Social Media Observatory \(COSMOS\)](#) involves social, political, health, mathematical and computer scientists studying the methodological, theoretical, and empirical and policy dimensions of Big 'Social' Data. A foundational question was the extent to which university-based sociology and social science can compete with the data rich resources built into the marketing and data generation strategies of the large multi-national corporations that hold and marshal much of this transactional data. Researchers now have the possibility of studying social processes as they unfold at the level of populations, and there are political and ethical implications of Big Data. There are tensions between the 'panoptic' and 'synoptic' powers of digital observatories and the allied possibilities of a 'signature science'.)

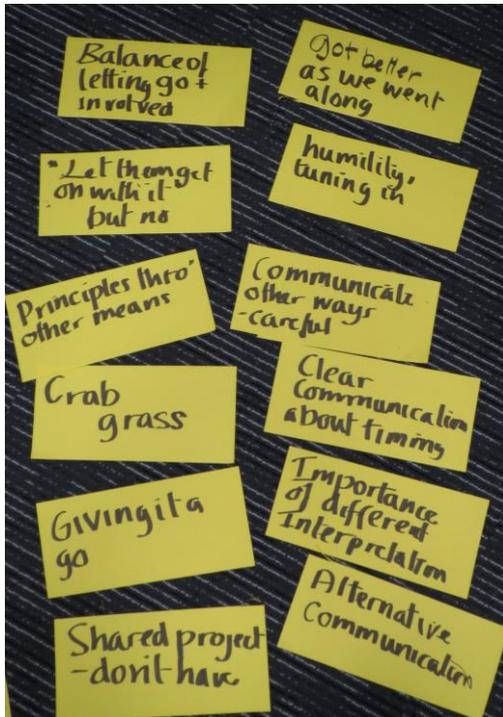
Southville CDA have someone in post working on Bristol Aging Better and would like to significantly expand their work around older people, seeing the need to grow capacity very rapidly. They are able to position themselves within BAB as guinea pigs, testing things that could grow to be useful in a wider context. Being part of Productive Margins is beneficial in the potential for it to leverage finance. What is important for Southville at this point is moving from theoretical talk to practical action, Simon will circulate the powerpoint that he prepared for today via Heidi.

We talked about having a conversation about how we construct and regulate the whole project, around coproduction, measurement and regulation, and there was a suggestion that academics and community groups could select who came along.

We just began to talk about how to research the process of coproduction when the meeting ended.

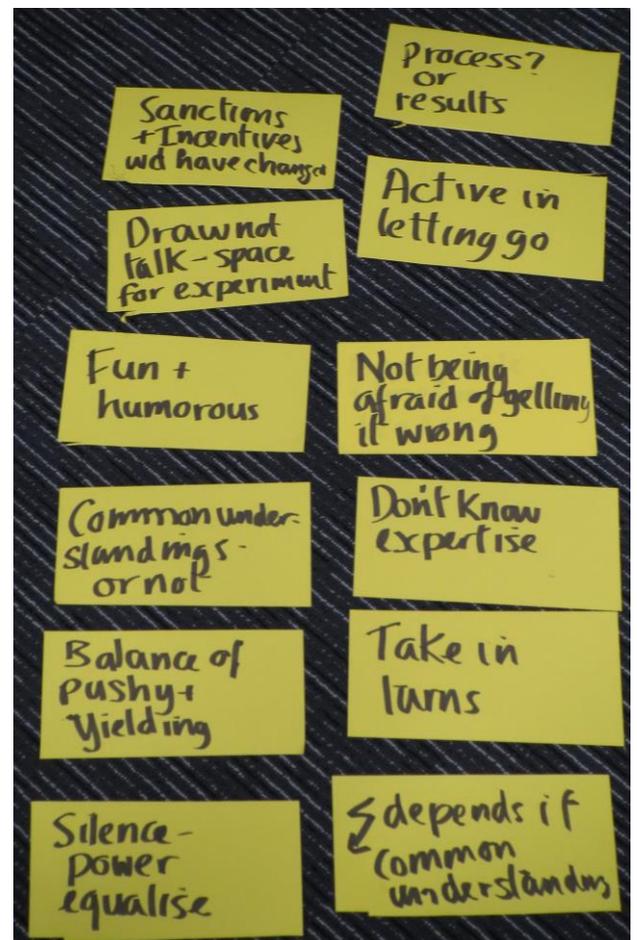
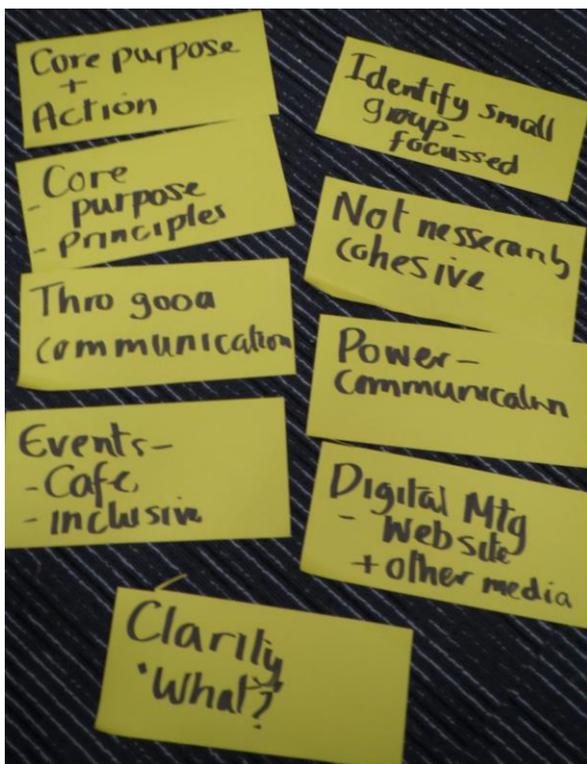
# 7: Evaluation of the Forum Process

The final session of the day was designed by SPAN and was used to evaluate the forum process as a site for co-production, Kate Smith and her colleague Tracey facilitated this evaluation using some of the participatory methods Kate had discussed at the beginning of the day.



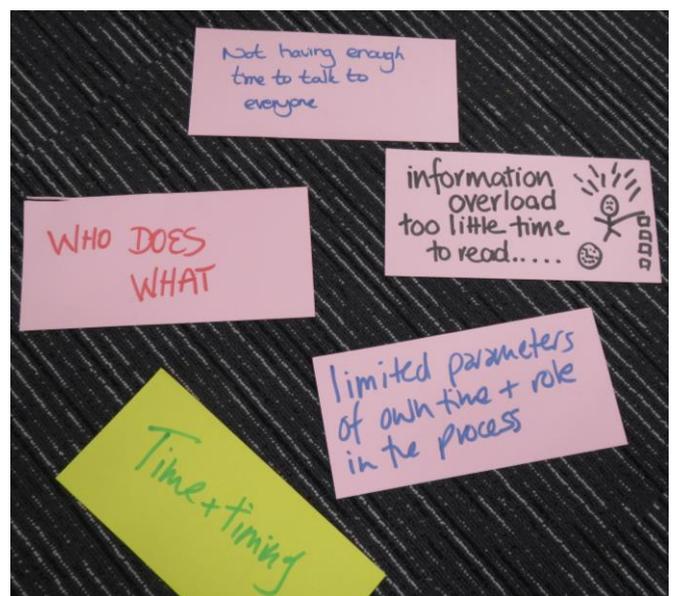
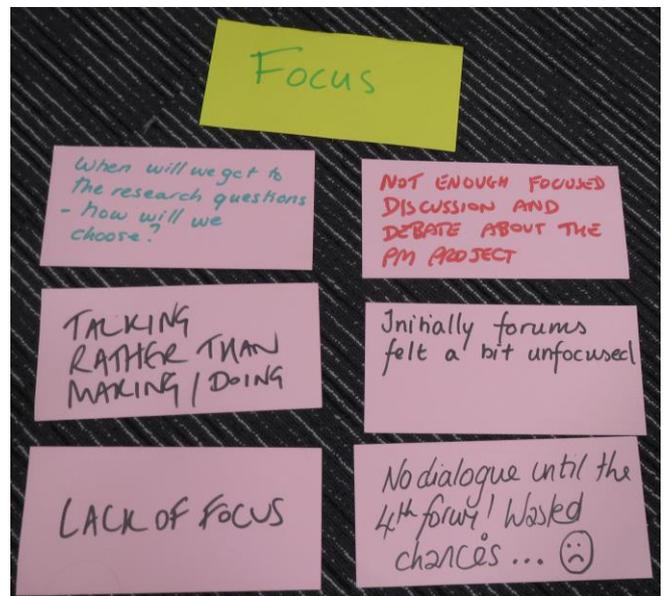
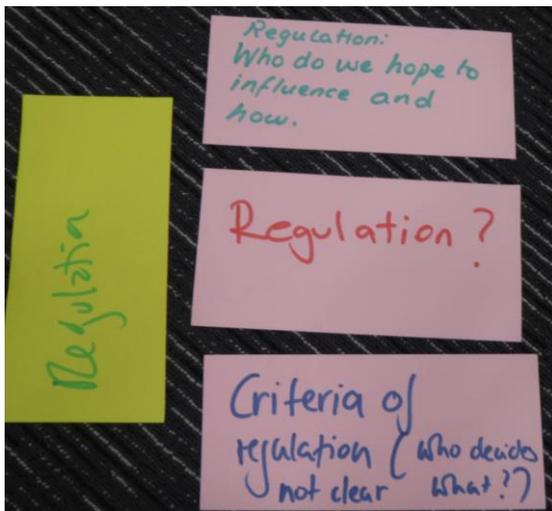
For the first activity we were asked to form pairs, each pair was given a single pen, some paper and asked to draw a flower, an elephant and a temple. This task was to be completed using only one hand, with both people holding the pen at all times and in complete silence – including no sign language. The whole forum (bar Kate and Tracey) found themselves crawling around on their hands and knees attempting to co-produce these images, an atmosphere of high comedy!

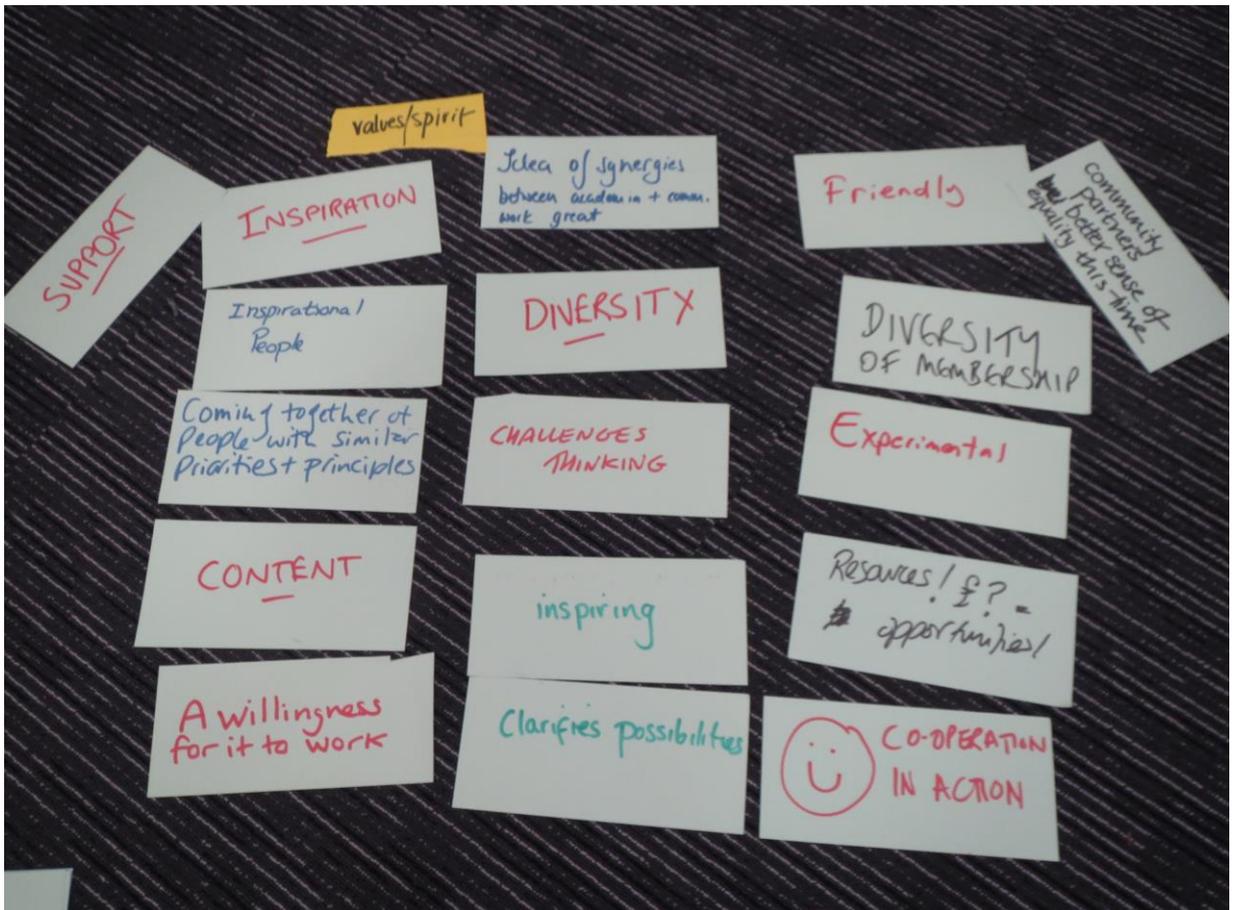
The drawings we created were widely varied and emphasised how different individual interpretations are, even of everyday images. The discussion that followed was captured by Kate and provides some interesting reflections on the co-production process.

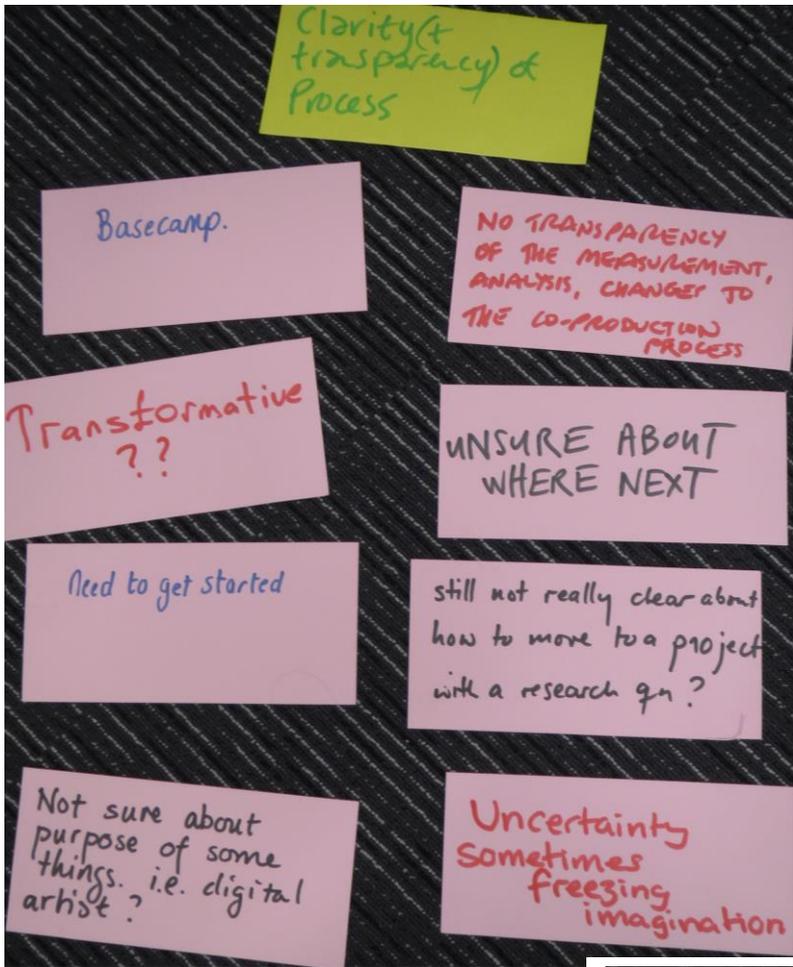


The second activity of the evaluation allowed us the chance to anonymously write some of our thoughts and feelings on the forum process so far.

We were offered green cards for positive comments and pink cards for negative comments. When completed these were placed face down in a central pile and then sorted into themes by Kate and Tracey. The theme groupings are shown in the images below. NB: in these images the green cards have come out looking white.







Focussing

This forum feels like it has created space for focus on themes + looking forwards

IT IS STARTING TO EVOLVE / COALESCE

Makes concepts tangible

Lots of good ideas & constructive discussions in today's forum

Community

good to be meeting in the community

MOVING AROUND TO DIFFERENT COMMUNITY PARTNERS

VISITING COMMUNITY VENUES

Knowing what projects exist in the community

Diverse expertise in forum - let's harness 

Sharing Exchange

EASY TO GRASP OTHER PEOPLE'S POSITIONS EARLY ON

Exchange Ideas

BRINGS DIVERSE PEOPLE / EXPERIENCES KNOWLEDGE TOGETHER

hearing community partners ideas

Sharing experiences + knowledge

Width of experiences - let's share - in conversations

LEARNING MORE ABOUT PROJECT AND PARTNERS WAS IMPORTANT

HEARING OTHER PEOPLES EXPERIENCES

Picking up and

OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE IDEAS AND EXPLORE THEMES

EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT SETTINGS AND LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH

Sharing Exchange

Sparking links between our nations + different projects - exciting possibilities

connections between projects became clear

Hearing about peoples project-ideas

Communication

Sharing ideas

Range of experience knowledge and talent opening up + being shared

Interesting discussions

Different regional experience expertise

## 8: Reflections on the Forum Process

Since the last forum there has been much activity with many discussions between community organisations and academics. Research ideas are starting to emerge and there have been two seed corn grant applications.

The forums themselves are intended to be the sites of production for Productive Margins, the place at which ideas and inspiration can intersect into something which drives the research process forwards. It's also an opportunity to bring the Forum collectively back to the shared principles on which the collaboration is founded; the desire to find a way for communities and individuals whose voices aren't normally heard by the bodies and institutions of governance to have a say in regulation.

Though we come together united by the principles outlined above we have yet to find how best to work together and drive forwards; not just in the interests of our communities and academic specialities, but to be part of something that can prompt social action and have a lasting and meaningful impact on the way marginalised voices are represented and heard.

The three Forums' have demonstrated the challenges in communication and organisation across a forum of this size. The wealth of knowledge and experience the collective brings together is invaluable but with such a varied breadth of communication styles and differing expectations of each other's roles there are inevitable difficulties. This, within a frame of limited time and budgetary constraints can make for a pressurised environment. It can be hard to accept in the face of funding demands and a fast moving local picture that 'good', 'quality' research can take time.

The nomadic nature of the Forums; each of which is hosted by a different forum member has been revealing in a co-productive sense. SPAN had a strong vision for this most recent forum and took a directional role in instructing the day's structure and contents. This has been a different style of planning to the previous forums and reflects the varied approaches across the breadth of the Productive Margin team.

The forum should be space 'owned' by the Forum but ultimately it is outlined in our funding conditions that our Principal investigator; Morag McDermont, should chair and coordinate each one. Similarly the responsibility for the Forum's productiveness as a site through which the projects will develop is also; in funding terms, on Morag's shoulders, this is neither equitable nor in the spirit of co-production. A challenge for us all going forwards will be to negotiate the realities of our funding commitments both to Productive Margins and to our individual employers and organisations with our desire to work together and co-produce this research.

In this stage of the research process we are also finding that time is excessively limiting and there are foreseeable logistical challenges to bringing a wide group of people with various commitments and obligations together on a regular basis. How is this effecting productiveness of the Forums? It can feel during the forums that we are struggling to adequately explore the expansive groundwork of the programme yet this forum report illuminates a productivity that was not necessarily felt by all at the time. An illustration of this is within Kaylee's PhD, as a direct result of the 'neighbourhoods'

working group discussion Kaylee has begun exploring ways to map neighbourhoods and this will inform the first paper she writes for her PhD.

In order to move forward we need to create a space where we can be absolutely explicit about our individual hopes for the programme. Why are we involved in the programme and what do we hope will be the benefits? There are significant financial limitations and it a difficult truth that it is the University of Bristol alone who hold the budget – this is not the ideal grounding for a process of co-production. How can we come to a place where the budgetary power relations feel equalised, where collaborations are merging naturally rather than due to budgetary necessity or competition? Perhaps the start is acknowledging that these are problematic circumstances, from here we can develop an open dialogue about finances. These will have to be points to consider moving forwards.

# Appendix 1

Time	Activity	Duration
10 am	<b>Coffee, Introduction and Welcome – Morag and Tove</b>	30 minutes
10.30 am	<p><b>Emerging ideas presentations</b></p> <p>What ideas have emerged since the last Forum meeting and how are these being taken forward? There will be time for questions at the end of each presentation which can continue to be discussed in the ‘working groups’ activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowle West Media Centre: Girls at Risk.</li> <li>• Deaf Access Cymru</li> </ul>	15 mins 15 mins
11.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southville Community Development Association: Isolation and the elderly.</li> <li>• SPAN: Who has the right to dissent? Participatory methods and enabling women’s voices.</li> <li>• Cross-national partnerships in developing a media centre</li> </ul>	15 mins 15 mins 15 mins
11.15	<p><b>Emerging ideas working groups</b></p> <p><b>Refreshments will be made available at this time</b></p> <p>Tabled discussions on how academic and community knowledge and expertise relate to the emerging ideas, a space for identifying collaborations and ways forward.</p> <p>Initially you will be asked to join the working group of the idea you feel has most relevance to your expertise and/or community. There will be an opportunity to move between working groups during this exercise.</p>	1 hour
12.15	<b>Lunch Break</b>	45 mins
13.00	<p><b>Productive Margins Research Themes - Facilitated Discussions</b></p> <p>Breaking into three groups there will be facilitator lead discussions around the research themes, the PhD student linked to each theme will also offer a brief presentation to the relevant group. We will be discussing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is it we understand by the themes?</li> <li>• How are our organisations and knowledge already engaging with the themes?</li> <li>• How would we like our organisation/knowledge to engage with the themes in the future?</li> </ul>	45 mins
13.45	<p><b>Productive Margins Research Themes - Working Groups</b></p> <p>Building on the facilitated discussions, this is a space for identifying further collaborations and using the Forum’s varied expertise to explore how each of the themes can be taken forward.</p> <p>Again initially you will be asked to join the working group of the idea you feel has most relevance to your expertise and/or community, there will be an opportunity to move between working groups during this exercise.</p>	30 mins
14.15	<b>Coffee Break</b>	15 mins
14.30	<p><b>Facilitated session: evaluation of the forum process – SPAN peer evaluation committee</b></p> <p>Mapping the next steps.</p>	1 hour 30 mins
16.00	<b>End</b>	