A tale of two cities

Community perspectives and narratives on inequality, struggle, hope and change

The Young Foundation

Inequalities are widespread and complex and affect many areas of people's lives. The Young Foundation is a research and action institute with a track record of confronting these inequalities. We work across the UK and internationally to create insight and innovations which put people at the heart of social change.

Acknowledgements

The researchers

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The city, people, places and names have been anonymised. We use pseudonyms and have attempted to broadly disguise people's identities in terms of details, however remaining representative of any relevant demographic information.

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Executive summary

Today we are facing unprecedented inequality challenges. Who holds responsibility for the widening gaps in society and how do we solve them? While one mode of change, policy, has clearly had an impact on gains for inequality, people no longer appear to believe the state can act alone and that a combination of civil society actors also have a significant role to play in tackling inequality.

However, while there have been recent calls for a community of common interest there still appears to be an emphasis on change – making solutions and leverage points as residing in the hands either of recognised NGOs, policymakers or formal movements and institutions. The potential voice and role of ordinary people in making change seems to be overlooked entirely. This gives rise to a significant gap in knowledge and voice.

If we worked in new ways, hearing from more of these ordinary voices, and from this created different evidence and insight, would we be able to develop new ideas on understanding and tackling inequality? There is evidence to suggest that if we did this, our measures would be more precise and relevant, and therefore that findings and policy might differ. With different insight, we might be able to question prevailing ideas in a more fundamental way and create more leverage points. For example, is an inclusive growth model the best way to create change? Should communities be 'let into' growth, or should we work with another paradigm entirely?

In what follows, we present community perspectives on what inequality is, and how it is experienced, struggled with and resisted. These perspectives – rooted in lived realities – help us to understand inequality in a much more nuanced way than the account typically portrayed in political and media narratives. The lived experience of inequality helps us to begin to see the boundaries of different types of power and decision making; how power feels to those who do not control budgets, spending and decide on services. **Understanding the complexity of communities' experience helps those who do control levers of power, finance and influence to develop better strategies to tackle inequality**. Applying this understanding begins to identify opportunities for mutual and collaborative approaches which actively challenge inequalities instead of reproducing them.

This summary shares the findings of research which took place over a year in three different communities in a city in the North of England. Furthermore, while the evidence and examples are drawn from one city, we have found that its themes chime with cities and places in other parts of the UK and internationally.[1] **Further research is necessary to test the practical application of these findings for strengthening community responses to tackling inequality, but we believe they offer some clear pathways to new solutions.**

Key findings

Community concepts of inequality

People experience their lives in a complex way, made up of material, economic, social, sensory and emotional experiences, and experience inequality this way too. The challenges people feel they face aren't just found in the economic factors of their lives, but in their social interactions, their sense of value or visibility to others, the way they are served and the few opportunities they have. This means their discussions of their lives and inequalities are often not based around clearly distinguishable policy areas or issues but broader systemic concerns.

People are concerned about resilience and risks, in particular the stressors and disruption inequality places on them collectively, and feel increasingly isolated from support. They view inequality to be driven by external forces. Key elements of concern focus on vulnerability and increasing exposure to risk and exploitation by markets e.g. insecure work and bad pay, poor treatment and lack of services, and market-led housing conditions.

People see inequality as relational, found in the difference between what some have and others don't. **The challenges people face aren't just found in the economic factors of their lives, but in their social interactions, their sense of value or visibility to others, the way they are served and the opportunities they have.** People see inequality in racism, lack of representation and disinterest in young people as well as lack of opportunity and an absence of aspiration for some people. Here, **inequality is felt socially and is deeply stigmatising. This stigma is experienced on a daily basis, having a strong impact on community wellbeing.**

Inequality is deepened by being in a situation you have little control over but others appear to. People feel that inequality has got worse and the ability to challenge those who hold power and resources has dwindled. They identify it as blatant, without constraint.

People understand that the ability to act on the world to change it in credible ways and with influence often comes as a result of resources and social position. This was expressed in terms of some **people possessing – and others lacking – the 'permission' to participate in change**, and represents a new understanding of how inequality works on the structural level.

The role of communities in resisting and challenging inequality

This research shows us that despite these challenges, people are actively trying to tackle inequality. They work hard in small groups, collectively, in communities, with those they are proximate to and share interests with, to challenge inequality and its impacts. This is heavily social in nature and often focused around 'place solidarity'.

However, this activism is relatively hidden and often goes unrecognised by others. It is micro-dynamic and can potentially be missed: it is invisible to many, or not perceived as the right kind of change. While it is sometimes framed as just coping, it is important to see that these actions are dynamic and innovative. They are trying to make change happen. This suggests that **community-led change is potentially more widespread than believed.**

Here we can see and diagnose that **people are continually creating what we would call practice fields of social innovation**. While these actions and activisms often share similarities with established social innovation practice, they often follow distinctly different pathways: they tend to focus more on collective action, and be driven by solidarity.

These attempts have therapeutic and empowering impacts. People report a stronger sense of community and self-worth when they have acted with others, particularly when they can create spaces which better allow them to practice their values or ideals, and challenge normative behaviour or narratives. This also impacts on how people feel about change and their role in driving it.

There is a small ecology of change in each community we worked in. **When communities come together around an issue, they appear to be able to provide some momentum to create change in new ways, which are not normative or constrained**. This can be uncomfortable for external powers and forces, and can often be rejected in consequence.

Change-making and community-led innovation in tackling inequality

Activism and change-making by communities can be blocked by what we call permission apparatus. Permission apparatus can include legislative sanctions, welfare sanctions, health and safety rules and guidance, resource allocations to formal groups, budgets and accountability. This permission apparatus also builds on and can include social factors, such as lack of visibility beyond the community, gatekeeping, lack of 'expertise', lack of recognition and lack of formal roles. This means **permission apparatus is intertwined with inequality.**

Change has 'credible messengers'[2] and this works in different ways. Narratives dictate that only certain actors or agents within a city region can act, and that change is only valid or interesting, if it is formalised and policy-led, or organised. However, we also see that without community support, trust and representation, 'top-down' change-making attempts are reported to tend to fail: people reported that they got involved with change and activism through their social networks built on trust and proximity, which were often place or valued-based. If change wasn't working, this was often seen to be a key feature of failure or lack of sustainability. Here, we recognise that communities are just as capable of giving change permission or not.

In certain scenarios **communities can develop what we call 'the social permissions to act'**, by working together, encouraging and coaching each other, developing mutual skillsets. In this research, we observed that as they did this they saw how their actions created change and had success, which tended to invite more people they knew into participation. This appeared to create momentum for alternative ways of doing things that were reported to be more sustainable because they had more social and community level support.
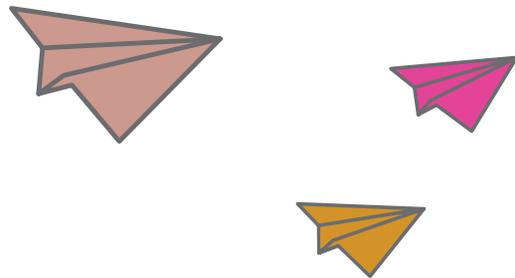
What can we do to tackle inequality together?

These findings have some radical implications. They share more with us about how change works and how it can be blocked at different stages by assumptions we make about people, how they live their lives and what they have to offer.

It suggests that we now need to recognise the implications: **failing to build an understanding of people's lives, and involving them in change, means that change-making attempts at all levels of society will fail.**

On the other hand, there is huge potential to scale up the power of hidden activism and change-making, **and to create more impactful systemic responses by building understanding, collaboration and partnership into the practices and decisions of institutions, organisations and businesses.**

Rather than just listening, we also need to hear and acknowledge what people tell us about how their lives are shaped by devastating inequality and how that can block them from taking actions.

To solve poverty and inequality, we need to work in a radically different way, one that aligns and redistributes resources of all kinds.

Our recommendations

1. **Policy-makers and local decision-makers need to recognise and value the ways in which communities or small change-makers** are tackling or challenging inequality. Without this recognition, they can't get support or social permission to act.

2. **Systems should be created for people to have a clear and trusted voice in setting priorities,** and they should participate in its design or recognise it to be needed from the outset, rather than be given a chance only to 'react' to it. This system should create opportunities for people to advocate on behalf of disadvantaged or overlooked communities to support and coach these processes to ensure a pathway and access to redistribution.

3. **To create change pathways and influence relating to resource redistribution**, involve communities in decision making about resource use in neighbourhoods or transfer assets (not services) with support. Recognise the different modes and expressions of concern people make, which are not always framed in bureaucratic language.

4. **Funders should recognise that process is as important as outcome.** They need support the idea that the process of being involved may create the greater change than the desired or eventual tangible outcome funding bids so often currently request. A reviewing process is therefore crucial.

5. **Carry out more experimentation to test the potential for social movements as the way for communities to act.** This would involve establishing centres of practice and learning which would facilitate community priorities and values and align them with funding, skills development and support.

6. **Carry out further research to understand the mechanisms of change-making**; specifically explore the hidden and educational or transformative aspects of change-making.

7. **Revisit the lens we apply to community and civic action, and reframe perceptions of community action**. Taking a lens of 'action' rather than inaction would help us diagnose and understand better how to work with communities to support them and make efforts to tackle inequality more sustainable.

Introduction

Ideas and narratives about what inequality is, how it is constituted, and how we might challenge it are deeply embedded in sociohistorical context. Often in these narratives and explanations of inequality historically, there has been an assertion that those who are unequal are responsible for their own inequality as a result of their own behaviour, identity or culture.[3] While this has commonly been contested and problematized, it has remained a prevalent idea.

More recently we have seen attempts to change the narrative about inequality through evidence. These attempts both attempt to challenge what is perceived as "poverty porn"[4] and suggest 'studying up' addressing how the wealthy maintain their wealth and recast inequality.[5] This has been an ongoing concern. As Laura Nader put it in 1972:

"the quality of life and our lives themselves may depend upon the extent to which citizens understand those who shape attitudes and actually control institutional structures… never before have so few, by their actions and inactions, had the power of life and death over so many members of the species."[6]

Here there are consistent, welcome and growing efforts to establish an agenda around it and to think about new measures of development and progress, particularly of community wellbeing or investigations of what 'the good life' may be and how it may be constituted.

However, while in many circles inequality is increasingly recognised to be a problem, there remain many differences of opinion about where we should focus to challenge it, whether it be solely on economic inequality and investment, or on the impacts. For example, is an inclusive growth model the best way to create change? Should communities be 'let into' growth, or should we work with another paradigm entirely?

By comparison, what leverage points are there for change? How much difference will each make? One leverage point, policy, has clearly had an impact on gains for inequality. While there have been calls for a community of common interest[7] there still appears to be an emphasis on change – making solutions as residing in the hands either of elite NGOs, policymakers or formal movements and institutions. This gives rise to a significant participatory gap that is itself narrative based – the lack of role and position of ordinary people in creating change.

We can see these gaps as paradigmatic policy or analysis narratives, knowledge or principle-based accounts that shape and design solutions to perceived problems. As we will go on to see, neither policy makers nor ordinary people particularly appear to recognise ordinary people as having potential here, even when they are taking significant actions.

In order to explore these issues, we conducted a piece of research with 'ordinary people' living in what seem to be peripheral communities in order to explore their views of inequality. Our question is whether with different evidence and insight, our ideas about inequality would be different? Would measures be more precise, or relevant, would findings or policy differ?[8] This report details the findings of this research and provides some answers to these questions.

We found that inequality is a topic that people want to engage in and there is clear evidence presented in what follows that they are, either by narrativising it, or by challenging or innovating to tackle it. This suggests to us that solutions to inequality are not just in the domain of elites and policymakers, or self-defining activists. Instead this report begins to reveal the extent to which amongst 'ordinary people', ideas and analysis about inequality are constantly invoked, and exist beyond the realms of specific policy experts. We want to show that people everywhere and from every walk of life are engaging in and part of a wider societal dialogue about inequality, whether they have been heard until now or not.

As a result, this report is designed to add to the wider debate on inequality by viewing people who experience it as having expertise in it and supporting the sharing of an alternative narrative about it, one which it is important to say often coalesces with 'expert' ideas but is often unheard. Understanding why and how they might view it and any associated priority they give to change is fundamental to understanding how to create transformations in cities that are equitable and sustainable. It gives huge potential for understanding wider change.

About this report

This report shares the outcomes of mixed methods research carried out over the period of a year in a city in the UK The research has attempted to understand the ways in which people in three specific areas of the city, with different backgrounds and circumstances, have experienced their lives. Until this research, few of them stated they had been formally asked for their viewpoints on inequality or had been considered experts in it.[9]

We undertook what was essentially an ecosystem or ecology approach. People narrated their experiences as embodied themes and dynamics, and often did not distinguish between specific services or policy areas.

Our report is divided into two parts; the first on how inequality is conceptualised and experienced and the second on how people act on inequality. Key findings are found in every chapter heading to clarify what the chapter will discuss, for those who may be more interested in one aspect than another.

We begin with a review of how inequality is identified, experienced and understood at a local level. We explore the issues people have and the ways in which they understand and articulate those inequalities, focusing on their concerns about value and recognition. These concerns provide a backdrop and a contextualisation of how people analyse and talk about them which identifies why people try and challenge them and how they do so.

In the second part of our report, we focus on the perceived strengths of the communities by communities themselves: their strong social network focus and networks of support. We look at the ways in which communities attempt to challenge or overturn inequality dynamics by emphasising alternatives, and how this helps us understand community change-making.

We hope that by sharing a community perspective on inequality, expressed predominantly through narrative, we will reveal some unheard or unappreciated dynamics relating to inequality to shine light on different ways in which **it is experienced as well as how it is mediated, resisted or acted upon to attempt to make change**.

The research context

On advice, we have decided to anonymise the location of this research to ensure that people felt able to talk openly about challenges they faced and that learnings from the report, which have relevance to the UK context more broadly, could be shared in the way which would give fullest insight into people's social worlds.

To give some background context, the research was focused in and around three communities in a city in England. The city's population is relatively young and increasingly diverse with over 140 ethnic groups.

Despite the economic downturn since 2008, the city's economy is considered to be one of the most resilient in the UK.

Services are well developed with diversification, yet the city falls below average for income distribution. One in five people in this city are considered to be living with poverty, and there are more working households in poverty than out of it.[10] Health outcomes are relatively poor compared to income distribution.

To achieve a varied viewpoint on life in the city, the research took place over a year between 2015 and 2016 and was focused in three 'case study' areas, all of which were described as facing specific challenges and with disadvantaged populations, but which varied in terms of income distribution, demographic makeup and location in the city.

We chose these communities under advice to give insight into the inequalities experienced by three communities with seemingly different opportunities, backgrounds and demographic makeups. A breakdown of the participants in each of these communities is provided below.

However, our quantitative survey was representative of the entire city population, covering all wards, and our engagement exercises were likely to engage with a wider demographic of people.

The selection of the three areas of focus for our in-depth research, followed legislative division of the city. One Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) was chosen from each, to ensure reasonable geographic representation of the city. In order to ensure demographic variation between the three areas chosen, we also took into account the MSOA's population characteristics, to ensure differences in the areas in ethnic diversity, age breakdown, housing tenure and scores. For some of the time, we also worked outside those communities where it was relevant or necessary, on the basis that people rarely consume or live their lives inside exact ward or formal boundaries.

Table 1: Demographics of the three communities

	Community 1 (C1)	Community 2 (C2)	Community 3 (C3)
Ethnic diversity	**Diverse ethnic population** with 45% of people from BME communities (predominantly Pakistani).	Population predominantly **White British (94%).**	BME population percentage (11%) broadly reflects the **city average.**
Age breakdown	Higher than city average proportion of children and young people and a much **lower proportion of older people**.	Higher than average proportion of **children and young people.**	Higher than average proportion of people of **working age**.
Housing	**Mixed tenure area** but with a significantly high proportion of households renting from private landlords (over 24%). Almost all properties are classified in Council Tax Band A.	**45% of households are owner occupied** and 41.5% are renting from the local authority. 72% of properties are classified in Council Tax Band A.	**53% of households are owner-occupied**, 25% are renting from local authority, and 14% are renting from a private landlord. 44% of properties are classified in Council Tax Band A.
City Index (as ranked by city council)	**9.38 – significantly lower** than the city average score (58.15) Ranked 6th worst neighbourhood in the city.	**24.57 – below** the city average. Ranked 20th.	**61.86 – slightly above** the city average score. Ranked 42nd. Scores particularly well for housing, economic activity and community safety.

About our research methods

The research that informs this report is primarily based on a year-long programme of qualitative research in three communities in a city in England and has been tested and supplemented by work elsewhere in the UK in particular, as well as being tested internationally.

The overall research approach used was in-depth and ethnographic in its focus on working with communities and exploring their worldviews with them on a continuing and regular basis. The tools were participatory, designed to focus on and develop a mutual understanding with people of where inequality lies and how we might challenge it.

To achieve this, our method was iterative and reflexive: based on observation, dialogue and participation with people in a local situation. We worked with local researchers and with local groups.

Due to the in-depth qualitative nature of this work and its fluidity, we also felt it was important to test the validity and reliability of our findings. As a result, some focus groups were deliberative sessions to develop an analysis of the data and we developed a quantitative survey to check the extent to which people agreed with findings or shared similar values. Not all participants shared monitoring/characteristic information. Therefore we only attributed quotes to participants where it was possible.
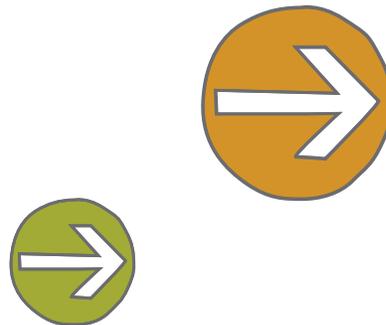
To carry out this approach, the research has specifically used a set of mixed qualitative methods.

These methods include:

- **In-depth ethnographic work** with the three specific communities in the city over a period of months, including open unstructured interviews, life histories, group deliberation sessions, participant observation, attending events and everyday activities and repeated conversations about specific areas.

- **In-depth structured interviews** with key stakeholders (one-to-one). These interviews focused on inequality and how the voluntary sector and other actors worked to address it or serve those worst affected by it. They also touched on why people sought to create change.

- **Informal deliberation sessions** (with six to eight people at a time). Over 20 sessions focused on what people liked or enjoyed about their lives and the places they lived, inequality and opportunities, and what they felt challenges and opportunities were for the city and their lives in it.

- **Participatory video** training for people in each community to use video to tell a story about their area or a theme of interest. Importantly, they created and were editorially responsible for this narrative.

- **Themed focus groups** on specific inequality issues including health and wellbeing, financial exclusion and social inclusion.

- **A representative survey** of 1500 households, in all wards. This explored and tested the extent to which people shared concerns and values. The survey results largely do not appear in this text as it takes a qualitative approach to reporting but can be found in footnotes where relevant.

- **Learning and reflection from accelerator sessions** using a specific retrospective technique – taking a theory of change backwards – with innovators.

To support the analysis of our work, we further **carried out co-production and co-creation sessions in each community**, which aimed to reflect on initial findings and steer towards new avenues of exploration. We tested this more widely with others via **participatory knowledge exchange events** to map voluntary sector engagement with specific issues. We also carried out **community engagement activities** including **research on themes**, **co-production workshops on analysis and narrative**, and by delivering a survey to 1,500 representative households in all wards about the extent to which they shared these concerns and how much they resonated with them. **Over 2,000 people were asked for their viewpoints by the end of the process.**
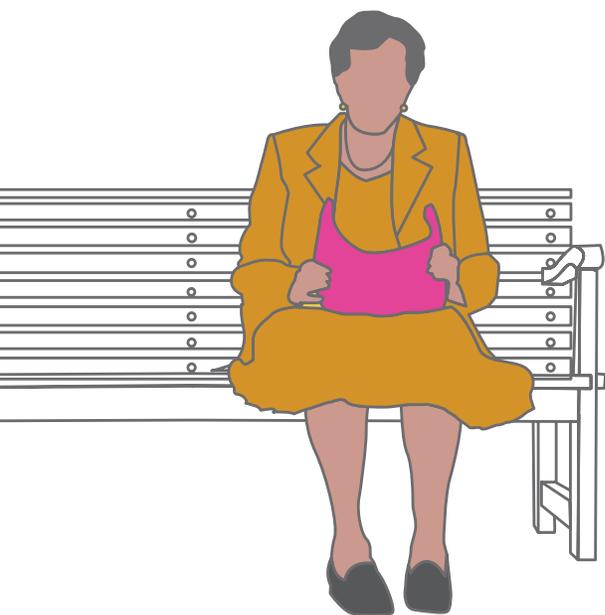
Community viewpoints of inequality

In this first section we review community perspectives on, experiences of and concepts of inequality. This is part of an approach to exploring people's worldviews: how people describe inequality and conceptualise it.

In the introduction to part 1 we share a broad and general community narrative or assessment of inequality. We think this has significant implications for how we understand how and why people analyse the situations presented with and how they act.

Narratives about inequality can be situational, in that people are 'making sense' of external contexts from a certain position or place in the fabric of society. Even as individuals, they use and draw on similar social templates and narratives to each other, meaning there is shared commonality in their expressions.[11] They are also changeable, which we go on to argue gives some dynamism and potential for change.[12]

Much of the deliberation about inequality has been conceptual which is why this initial introduction to part 1 is presented as thematic. In the next two chapters we touch specifically on more detail about how people's socioeconomic experiences frame their lives.

Below we present **key insights** into community narratives about inequality.

Inequality is about growing gaps and distance between people

Inequality is most often identified as relating to unequal resource distribution. In addition, there is a strong conceptual understanding of inequality as an operating dynamic or determining factor which is found in relationships between people and places – and things they have or don't have, or their life circumstances.

It is also socially relational – it corresponds to other people's inequality or opportunities. The gaps between people are found in the differences between the ownership of, or access to, economic resources:

"It's like a shiny thing, but we've got these pockets of deprivation that are hidden, but if you just came into the centre people wouldn't know that." (Charity worker, C1)

This gap is manifested in ideas about divisions or binary differences. For example, the city was described as "a city of two halves", 'a city of two tracks', 'posh or scum', 'forgotten communities' with **spatial and geographical representations of inequality repeated at different levels and in different ways:**

*"**It's a city of two halves.** I find you see it's black and white, isn't it? The centre is nice and glitzy but then you turn a corner and it becomes rough and run down because it's not the area where Next is, and **I think that kind of relationship goes through the whole of [the city], because you get areas that are really nice and then next to it you get really poor areas…"** (Mother on maternity leave, C3)*

These gaps manifest in place-based ways via geographical features mapped to city layout:

"There's a ring of deprivation around the centre and it's about breaking that cycle of deprivation". (Charity worker, C2)

Spatialized inequality knowledge based on a division between two states, of wealth and inequality also forms a narrative that people invoke about local areas themselves:

"[C3] is basically divided into posh and not so posh area by the railway line". (Pensioner, C3)

They also manifest in where people live and the type of housing or community they live in. As two tenants of a housing association reflected as part of a workshop:

"People are in a cycle of deprived-ness, because of the structures that impact them. Because it is a council estate, the people who get houses here are on benefits." (Young mum, C2)

In this viewpoint, inequality 'stays' in places, and then affects the people in the places who suffer it.

Inequality is social

Perhaps most importantly, inequality isn't just economic or just about the lack of economic resource. People understand (and they would like others to understand) that talking about poverty is not enough: economic inequality has a strong impact on social relationships and people's futures. So inequality is definitively social.

Although economic inequality affects people, they experience and are strongly concerned about its social implications – the stigma, embarrassment, stress, disconnection and disenfranchisement – that it causes.

This inequality is identified in experience and tangible issues: in the unequal life chances and differing opportunities of people across the city, in their treatment by others and in the idea that inequality is driven by a powerful discourse on identity which is stigmatizing.

Inequality is also articulated in people's felt ability to attract interest and value to the areas they live and to be heard with any validity:

*"We need someone who's going to listen. No one listens. This area is the slums. There needs to be more opportunities and skills for kids to learn. [The city] has no ears. It has plenty of voices but no ears."
(Male teenager, C1)*

This influences ideas people hold about the opportunities that people have to act to improve their lives, that there are barriers and preventing structures in place which prevent life getting better:

*"I wouldn't say everyone's got an equal chance."
(Pensioner, C3)*

In this conceptualisation, inequality is not only in every dynamic and every interaction you make with others and with your environment, it is and becomes a pervasive narrative about what you mean in that environment too.

Inequality is systemic

The analysis reveals that people believe that they collectively experience inequality as a systemic issue. This is not only a common narrative, but seen to be a shared experience:

"The things that affect them affect people collectively. It's not down to individual things, its outside forces which impact on it." (Young man in shift work, C2)

They also view it as a system that operates so definitively and pervasively that it can profoundly influence people's lives. This is because rather than being created by their actions, it acts to structure and influence their lives – where they live, what jobs they have, how they live, how they raise their children:

"It's not the people, it's the system."

When they think about their specific inequalities and their micro-dynamics, they relate them to broader societal dynamics, such as market forces and capitalism:

"…but these are all macro things – and capitalism is fundamentally built on inequality."
(Charity worker, C3)

People believe that the workings of inequality are so deep-rooted because the power structures and agency which hold it in place as a force are beyond their control:

"…it is what it is: the structure's already in place so it's going to be hard to change that."

This appears to mean that it is seen to be driven by exogenous systemic dynamics, and, in this conceptualisation, inequality becomes something that is beyond the control of many – and potentially divorceable from – the everyday actions of ordinary people.

So inequality is deepened and control is undermined by being in a relational situation you have little control over. But here, there are issues of power, because some in society seem to be able to manage and benefit from these dynamics. Examples given were numerous but included: the housing you live in being owned by a landlord who doesn't seem to care about its conditions, or the belief that the city is one of two halves and one half is never seen or heard, and is perceived as having little of value to contribute. People see it in racism, lack of representation and disinterest in young people.

Here inequality is expressed and found in the power that resides elsewhere. This can be related to the power of outsiders over small place-based communities, as we go on to see. For example, much of what is unequal appears to communities to be based in legislative or policy terms, or ownership of wealth and power outside the remit of many people in the communities we spoke to. People understand that the ability to act on the world to change it often comes as a result of resources and social position:

"I probably don't see it [inequality], cos I'm in a position where things get done I suppose."
(Charity worker, C1)

Most strikingly, people feel that there seems to have been a shift in how inequality is accounted for or noticed in national politics, or with powerful stakeholders.[13] It is considered to be obvious in people's lives to such an extent that it cannot be disguised, but nor does anyone want its impacts to be:

"I'd say inequality is fairly blatant…"
(Charity worker, C1)

That a folk or community viewpoint of inequality relates explicitly to 'power' also suggests something to us about people's feelings about the depth and breadth of inequality: how people are engaged with current participatory and governance structures and how they feel they can use them to have a voice.[14] Furthermore if they don't engage with these structures, it may explain why some schemes 'fail'.
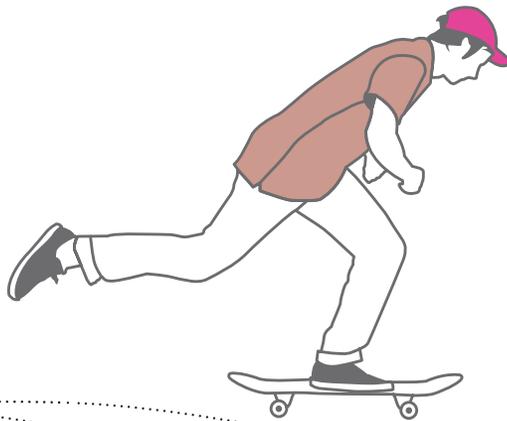
Throughout this report we will return to the idea that responsibility for and power over structural inequalities are felt to sit outside most people's personal control in terms of creating fundamental change. Through rationalising[15] and reproducing the lack of agency people feel in terms of community voice, we are acknowledging that in doing so they are communicating their inequality.

But inequality must be tackled

However, people are keen to reject the narratives about inequality and what it suggests to others. Its narratives are unfair. They want to counter its apparent 'truths'. It doesn't impact the things they think about or what they think of others. However it has a strong impact on what they think others perceive of them.

People view inequality as entrenched: they find it a struggle to see how to change it in their daily lives, but most experience some form of it up close in many different ways and layers of reality. However, people believe that those who experience its worst impacts are going to understand it the best.

They want to improve their lives and the lives of others, and in part 2 we explore in more depth how they attempt to do so. We will also show how they are hopeful, how they act on these issues to cope with them or resist and subvert them and how this shared desire to create change and action can be recognised, amplified and scaled to create wider change. We turn from narratives about inequality to expressions of and descriptions of action.

Our 'social' inequality

Key findings

- People believe that if they live in a place, then regardless of what they do and what they have to offer, they are framed by others as having certain characteristics, challenges and aspirations on the basis of living there. Despite intersecting backgrounds, they experience this collectively.

- These narrative frames are considered to be dominant and influential: they are well-known, often used by others, and a way of referring to the entire community.[16]

- People feel particularly strongly about what they identify as 'stigma', the way in which they are excluded on the basis of these narratives and the limited value they are seen to have as people and communities.

- Resources, services and provision of support are experienced in a social way.[17]

- Economic inequality is not just about coping with the impacts of having few resources, but also involves longer-term social impacts, both within your own networks, community and places you belong, and the way you feel the outside world and other people, perceive you.

- In some communities, people have to 'pay to live': to service their needs, they are paying more for services and being asked to take greater risk exposure.

- Economic inequality manifesting in a lack of access to certain resources such as housing is seen to be an exogenous force or injustice perpetrated on people and compounding their inability to flourish in a place.

- People are experiencing stigma on a daily basis, a sense of a loss of value attached to them.

- Value and belonging can be challenged of those expressing racism and intolerance.

- Viewpoints about your community or your identity which are perceived to be stigmatising can result in feeling disconnected from one's community.

In this chapter, we review specific subjects relating to people's experiences of inequality. A concern for people living in each community is the way in that specific places are perceived and described (by others or by people living there themselves), as those where certain kinds of poverty, behaviour, motivation or potential sit, and where for some their aspirations are a disconnect with the place they live in or the treatment or services they receive from others. **This narrative is often referred to as 'stigma', social disapproval of them focused around socioeconomic and racial characterisations and often associated with place.**[18]

They perceive that this narrative is influential and dominant, with little community control over it and little control to enter into dialogue about it and be seen as credible when they do. This narrative is consistently 'reproduced'[19] about them in a way that they feel disempowers them. **They argue that this stigmatic narrative represents inequality in itself and is a symbol of power differentials.**

The next chapter explores the feeling that this creates in terms of citizenship, decision making and participation, and how narrative expressions, thoughts and conceptualisations about the community impact on the treatment people receive.

Social value

People in each of the communities we spent time in have a strong sense of how the place-based community is perceived by outsiders and others and, as a result, what its status is and how it is 'valued'. This can be one of the most dominant concerns for any community. **People feel stigma; that you are identified as having a certain kind of characteristic or value because of the place you live, your economic status, employment or parental status or your racial identity.** In this worldview, representation, recognition and distribution are inseparable. The perpetuation of inequality and injustice is based on stigma, which is expressed in unfair representations of people which structure their access to resources and opportunity.

This is a significant concern for community members. Research revealed that people in each area believe that there is a significant dominant narrative about at least one thing in the community which is a prism influencing the way other aspects of community life are looked at and thought about.[20] On a daily basis they experience othering[21] depictions of the places they live, their communities and themselves but with little or no opportunity to enter into dialogue about it or be heard if they challenge it. These depictions can be intersectional: for example relating to your economic status, employment, gender or race.

This is not just considered to be a corollary of economic inequality but an inequality in its own right which is cyclical: a product of stigma, and caused by it. There is a strong concern that they are thought of in certain ways by others as a result of being part of particular communities and their identity markers. As we go on to see in chapter 2, **people feel that ideas about them impact the ways in which they are recognised or visible, services are designed or opportunity and aspiration is enabled on the basis of a narrative about who they are. This narrative is confining** and can be viewed as evidence of the operation of inequality.

Some in particular believe that people in their community occupy negative space in the city's conceptualisation of itself. As the introduction suggested, **there is a widely referred to 'inequality knowledge' in the city that these narratives draw from and simultaneously reinforce.**

In one community, for example, there is a widely shared view that people have a negative perception of the place and people who live there. It can be viewed as racist, or as having high levels of need or unemployment.[22]

Some of its residents feel that this reputation is unfair. As Martha, a parent with an interest in studying health at postgraduate level says:

"I think they talk about [area] in quite a pejorative sense when they talk about it being a council estate. They talk about needing to break these kids out of the aspiration of their parents; they use the rhetoric that is popular in the media or the government about the culture of dependency and worklessness."

And for people in other areas, similar experiences are reported. In C3, which has higher levels of owner occupation, people fear that living on a certain social housing estate in a certain area results in a lack of interest. If you are the wrong side of the track in the community you live, you don't matter:

"They don't want anything to do with these council houses. It is stigma."

Likewise C1 has a specific contestation over image. While some feel that it is a vibrant welcoming place, they are concerned that because of its diverse population it is described more widely as chaotic, hosting a population with little interest in dominant values:

"It is seen as deprived. People want to move away from these problems. They want better schools… if you look at the streets, it is not a clean area. It has a lot of problems and issues, so people want to move." (Male parent, C1).

For people who live in C1, there are two competing narratives revolving around the community – one which is positive and positively affirming, where people support each other and want to stay, and the other narrative or perception that it is a chaotic and divided place which people leave. **The issue of injustice or unfairness at hand to consider is that one of these narratives commonly achieves more dominance and is more influential than the other.**

This struggle with narrative and perception creates a strong sense of remoteness from the city or lives others live (building on what is already experienced as physical isolation, which we deal with later in this report). Dealt with and experienced collectively, reinforced in every interaction and every treatment or service, it offers an ability to see how groups of people may form a view of a situation collectively, even given the intersectionality and diversity in any place.

A key issue people voice when they discuss these narratives focuses on **the lack of appreciation or recognition others around them have for the facts and circumstances of their everyday lives and what is happening in each community.**

People in each community are dealing with various degrees of disadvantage, and during this report we will return to the idea that they find it especially shameful and unjust when others appear to blame them for their inequality by characterising them as socially problematic, without considering their collective needs.[23]

Social markers of economic inequality

Underpinning this is relative economic status and income. Levels of poverty in some communities were high: evidence demonstrates that across the city levels of destitution were growing, and there are many pockets of communities who suffer complex and multiple disadvantage. In the communities in which we worked, some of these impacts were quite severe and some members of the community experienced high levels of poverty.

Although this differed in severity, there were many commonalities and shared experiences, as well as shared analysis.[24] Some people find it very challenging to work without certain kinds of infrastructure in place, and some are increasingly employed by shift work which is insecure. All of this is seen to deepen and further compound inequality.

It is important to know that when people discuss economic inequality, they are also concerned about and share a knowledge of the *social markers* of that inequality.

For example, people feel that it is possible to clearly demarcate and recognise the social markers of economic need, for example worklessness or debt, in a way that is socially as well as financially excluding.

This can be identified in a number of tangible and external identity markers. People know what poverty looks like and what its markers are. Louise, for example, describes worrying that people would think she had fallen into debt because she has a pre-payment meter pre-installed in the house that she moved into:[25]

"The prepayment meter works quite well for me, but it's your perception of how people see you. When I moved here and found I had a prepayment meter, I thought, people are going to think I've got into debt." (Single parent, C2)

Equally these things can be associated with place. One young woman describes being approached by a money-lender when she moved into her house:

"When I first moved in there was a man knocking on my neighbour's door. When I said "She's not in," he handed me a leaflet and said if I'd just moved in I might need it. It was one of those loan shark companies." (Single parent, C2)

The idea that there is an expectation that people living in a specific area or house will have a specific kind of need is disheartening and troubling, but a well-established and known idea.

Like Louise, an issue for people living in each community was the way in which they are impacted by facilities and services available to their community, and the costs of those services. This can both be regarded as a lack of economic parity with others, and is also considered by people to deepen the imbalance. (As we will go on to see in chapter 3, there is a feeling that this lack of service provision is part of the operation of inequality).[26]

Factors highlighted in other reviews of financial exclusion,[27] such as a 'poverty premium',[28] including a lack of choice, were found and commented on in each community, particularly around accessing mainstream services: the cost or lack of access to things others access easily or cheaply.

Examples include a lack of appropriate facilities in local areas, a single shop on an isolated estate having a monopoly or limited services. If there is a doctor's surgery, it has limited opening times or appointments. This was noted in each community[29] and has been widely noted elsewhere.

Many people reported that given the low levels of walkability in the city, not being able to afford a car was challenging. People have to pay to leave their communities via public transport, which at times and in certain places costs £5 a journey.

This travel cost affects any particular service on offer elsewhere, for example attending specific doctor's appointments or school:

"I'm diabetic and I need regular foot appointments. I have to catch two buses and it's a long way for me to walk. There is only one doctor on the estate with restricted opening hours." (Retiree, C2)

Having to leave your community or local area on a regular basis to consume services is problematic. However, in C2, this was thought to be particularly bad:

"We are isolated. There are no basic amenities, a huge lack of facilities, no cycle lanes, no playgrounds. There is only one set of shops which have a monopoly. One shop serves 15,000 people!" (Single female parent, 27, C2)

This is also seen as a fairness or social justice issue. In C3, Adam thinks the available services are not only offered at a premium but are making people unwell, or at least indebted:

"Betting shops, cash converters, pubs – we have everything here that facilitates and breeds poverty right on our doorstep – we are slap bang in the middle of everything we could have asked not to have."

The prevalence of moneylenders on estates gives the sense that it is accepted that there are few other options. Moneylenders are reported to use aggressive tactics which can be intimidating such as flyering or door knocking:

"I don't even think they're payday lenders some of them. I think they're worse. Not even [company names] but the kind with no records. The people who work for them look intimidating." (Single parent, C2)

Socially, this creates a sense that economic need and the stigma associated with it is enduringly connected to place. They feel that financial exclusion and its impacts and stigma build a series of consequences or associations with 'people living round here' which prejudice or influence the other parts of your life. This suggests that the corollaries or social impacts of financial exclusion could deepen throughout your life course if you stay in the same place.

The experience is a feeling of being on your own against forces you cannot battle, control or make positive choices about:

"I feel a bit intimidated by them actually – [company names] – all that lot, they were always pushing flyers in my face. I got into a bit of debt with them and I'd still be in debt if [a friend] hadn't helped me out." (Single parent, C2)

It is also disheartening when it is a 'loan shark' who has identified the need you have rather than a credit union, bank or local authority that could address it more fairly.

The poor provision of comparatively expensive transport combined with the poor local services available **is evidence for people that they are living with and experiencing unfair disadvantage that could be addressed.** These issues affect both the mobility with which people pursue services as well as the added cost of making yourself well or maintaining your good health or socioeconomic status or capital.

Making choices, meeting needs and doing so in a healthy or needs-focused way becomes more difficult because of the lack of local services. It also affects the choices you can make, and how you can pursue what you want to do. **People consistently ask for a fairer opportunity to manage their limited money well.**

In C2 some residents want to use a credit union, one person in particular because she doesn't have a bank account. The nearest is four miles away:

"I go up town to use the Credit Union at [area]. It's great but it's a long way for me to go, especially with two young kids." (Mum of two, 30's, C2)

People in each community also recognise impacts on health and wellbeing because of the link between high transport costs and few local services. These are presented as compounded impacts of living in certain places with few resources:[30]

"The biggest barrier for people to access therapeutic activities that help their physical and emotional well-being is the cost of travel. It absolutely breaks my heart… I wish we could do something for those people not working. Give them a bloody travel pass for Christ's sake – it's unbelievable how much that would open doors for people." (Health worker, C1)

There is seen to be little connection between actual need and service take up as a result:

"This road means a lot of them find it hard to come down. Access is the main problem… not enough people come, although a lot of people need this place. A lot of people can't get down." (Class leader, C3).

Like choice, one issue is that of control over routine and services and exposure to risk that these dynamics create.

One intense concern is around routine maintenance and employment. Much of the available paid employment for people we worked with is shift work, often provided on an irregular basis, at unsociable or unusual hours, and at low pay.

Low or irregular salary income can make it difficult to maintain employment if people have other costs:

"I didn't get £300 a week, that's why I stopped! I can't afford to work for £6.40 an hour. I don't want to go to work and live on beans and toast and noodles because they only pay me £6 an hour. I've got four kids." (Male parent, C1)

However, there are additional invisible costs, which people have to invest in or subsidise before they can enter employment. Additional costs of working involve those around the consumption of services which enable people to attend work, such as travel or childcare costs. Mark shares an example of the financial penalties he incurs to journey to carry out shift work every day:

"It takes £5 to get a bus and sometimes I have to get a cab back. Sometimes people give me a lift. So it costs me £50 for a cab in the week – so by the end of it I have only £10–15 left." (Male shift worker, C2)

One very challenging issue is the lack of childcare provision:

"Often people on the estate have children and need to work night shifts to get by, this stops people going into further education. There is also no-one on the estate with CRB checks, so you can't leave kids with others on the estate." (Single parent, C2)

People are blocked from undertaking other activities through the compounded impact of shift work combined with a lack of the services they need which would facilitate work activity such as childcare. Some people meet their needs with the help of kin or social networks which would otherwise have a financial implication. **But if people don't have social or kin-based support, they find it difficult to gain enough affordable resilience**[31] **around the potential issue of new circumstances to enable them to *invest* in working because there is very little money to pay for extra costs should these inevitable needs arise.**

Resilience and exposure to risk continually crops up as an issue, one which is heavily politicised and seen as a key inequality. This issue is about investment but it is also related to the perceived capacity to manage risk, because of the commitments involved. In these cases, if people did go into work then have to manage a loss of work or an emergency, the options for their management would be debt, or missing work, as well as the burden of worrying that your children were appropriately cared for.

Many people are aware that they need to have or create economic and social resilience to sustain work, as the mother above says, and struggle to find it without great expense. The types of work available – shift work or zero hours work – don't help them create the capacity to manage the related aspects of their lives without creating some crisis points.

People are also likely to recognise when they do not have these support links or capacity to manage risk socially or economically.

Laura's concerns about risk

Laura is a single parent of three children whose mother 'threw her out' because she is white and had a relationship with a black man, which her mother didn't approve of. She now has little to do with her mother and her sister works in a job with very long hours. Her relationship broke down and she is the sole carer for her children. She gets no help and cannot afford any; she cannot take her children to social events because she struggles to look after them all. Her feeling has been of enduring isolation, and sometimes boredom and frustration:

"It's just me and the kids, always. That's the worst thing of all cos it's always just me and the kids. You go out and see people with their friends and that, but it's always just me and the kids."

She struggles with a lack of kin-based support and feels that if something went wrong she wouldn't be able to cope well without any support, so she says that **she tries to avoid risk:**

"I want something part-time but I'm worried because what's gonna happen in the school holidays? I literally – my family disowned me for going with a black man and having black kids. So my family don't want to know. So it's literally just me."

She would like to work or do something with others because she is lonely and wants to distract herself from her thoughts and problems. She feels trapped by the childcare she has to provide because it leaves her busy but on her own. She has few friends and she doesn't know how she can begin to do other things without the help of others.

Likewise, the proliferation of insecure work: zero hours contracts and shift work are a specific concern for people around managing risk and trying to educate others around it. Because the work fluctuates and is irregular, people identify that it has potential to create vulnerability to crisis or to undermine resilience. This might lead to making commitments which can't be paid for, which might lead to debt, being unable to pay bills and other costs if something went wrong or there was no work.

People are increasingly worried about themselves and often speak about the plight of young people in general, who they see as more vulnerable:

*"**Zero hours contracts are a big problem for young people.** I think it is used more and more to take advantage of young people who really don't understand the implication of taking zero hours contracts. It doesn't give you regular income. It doesn't give you opportunities to build your life for yourself. You don't know from one week to the next how many hours you are going to get... you can't have any stability in your life and I think that's quite detrimental. You are at such a young age and your employers are taking advantage of that fact I think…"*

Belonging

When people talk about any of these issues, their narrative often settles on people's roles and belonging within society. These issues are complex and they are not sure how to navigate them, although importantly they often return to how they feel inherently powerless to overcome something they feel is significantly beyond, rather than on, the level of personal behaviour.

Narratives focus on and wrestle with the place and role anyone, especially those who are defined or define themselves as disadvantaged, can occupy in the city. For some people, there are places in the city where they and others feel unwelcome or not part of things, where they perceive they do not belong or do not have anything to offer.

Value can also be framed on the basis of a sense of value to the city or in belonging and connection. One aspect of being disconnected can be through the impact of what are perceived to be stigmatic viewpoints about your community or your identity. One of the ways value is expressed and thought about is through belonging, and particularly through the challenges that face those experiencing racism and intolerant acts.

Alwyn's story

Alwyn sits in the park every day with his friends because, like them, he feels "lost". He has nowhere else to go. Alwyn is a young Black British man who suffers frequent harassment and racist abuse from his neighbour, which drives him away from his home to spend time with his friends in the park. He is unemployed and lives in social housing:

"I encounter a lot of racism, and I live in the nicer bit of [C1]. Old people all they do, they just curse on you all the time. My neighbour is racist and I asked to move but the council won't let me. The first day I went to view my house with my housing worker, she opened her window and yelled "If you're going to be like those others, I'll get you kicked out too." Because I was black. This grandma drives me crazy! I can't play my music, she knocks on the door if I run water, I can't have friends round. She always says I'm making noise and I can't do anything in my house, I just sleep there."

Experiencing this intolerance, he goes to sit in the park to be away from it. However, if he sits in the park, his social group is constantly being harassed by the police:

"How many times do you see the feds around here? Bothering us for just sitting in the park."

Trapped in a cycle of powerlessness, if he tries to use his housing the way he'd like to, he fears he'll lose it:

"I think older people take advantage because we're young and they've got more rights than us, she can report me and try to get me thrown out. I don't understand why she doesn't live in a retirement home someplace if all she wants is peace and quiet, and let me live my life. And I don't want to disrespect her. I'm worried one day I'll be frustrated and say something to her and then she'll get me kicked out."

Alwyn's frustration with his general socioeconomic position in society grows, and with this, instability and fear. He cannot get a job as he doesn't have two years of experience that is necessary for non-skilled work.

He perceives the local community to be close knit: he doesn't think this is bad or unexpected and has nothing against it, but it means he finds it difficult to think about his future or where he can belong.

He feels that he is in a difficult situation over which he has little ability to exercise any agency, and he wants to get out. His aspiration is to leave in a few years but the routes he wants to take seem blocked. He has a lack of role models or pathways to create change in his life. He is frustrated. And he finds it hard to overcome his frustration without having to be shameful or apologetic about who he is. There seems no positive way to create belonging:

"We don't even want to talk about it like that, I want to be one of them people who sees black and white as the same, but all I ever say to her is "sorry", that is the only thing she hears from me."

This experience intersects with place and socioeconomic status as a compounded inequality, specifically because many visibly ethnic communities are considered to be situated in specific places. Regardless of the diversity of experiences and populations within the city, it is an intersectional inequality which when articulated makes more evident fears and feelings about community.

David, who is white British, born and raised in C3, says that he had a job – shift work in a warehouse – but he gave it up because he didn't feel like he was in the right place. He felt like an outsider:

*"There was me and three other people – apart from that they were all Polish. I am not saying it in a bad way... it was full of Polish people. I didn't speak for 21 hours... for the full shift. I spoke to no one. **I just felt like an outsider. Very isolated. I felt misplaced.** There were absolutely loads of them and none of them spoke English."*

Alternatively, Jacek, who has moved from Poland, feels that he will never belong in C1 because he is white and from Eastern Europe. People shout names at him in the street. In C3, Carole, who is black British, has been called "the N-word" and had a banana thrown at her in the street by a child; being subjected to abuse for her skin colour has happened since she was a child.

When discussing racism, people mostly accept or suggest that it exists and is a significant challenge – and normatively reject it. This is important. However, people may call upon certain themes and ideas to try and explain society in ways which perpetuate something they are trying to challenge. Rick, who lives in C2, is a white British man in his late 30's who has felt disadvantaged by the way people think of him for most of his life, because he is from a stigmatized council estate. He has never fitted in and never been able to hold a formal role due to conflictual relationships.

He, like others, describes the Asian community as closed to the white community. Despite efforts, he feels shut down when he tries to connect. But he thinks that this is because they are viewed as terrorists. He thinks that they face rejection, racism and prejudice:

"It doesn't matter if you are Indian or anything, you get labelled a terrorist. Muslim the same because you have got a different colour skin: "You are a terrorist". But, you [to the researcher] are an Indian, how is an Indian a terrorist? Terrorists seem to be a Muslim. And that is where the confusion starts and no wonder Asians want to stay within their communities. There are even white terrorists, we had white terrorists. But people don't go 'oh you are a white terrorist'. Not all bloody Asians are terrorists. They are not."

He tries to explain the impact of stigma upon the Asian community and also, like others, recognises the ongoing impact of terrorist attacks on perceptions and comfort of the Asian community. In doing so he invokes the idea of a metanarrative not underpinned by individual action – that racism operates at a level above individual action, it is based on shared perceptions and concepts which are not rooted in reality. To him what stands in the way of togetherness is a stigmatic narrative about people which operates in a way which is divisive. But whose narrative is this?

Most significantly, Rick's analysis of inequality is that it is a misdirecting power-laden narrative about what people are, who they are and what they think. He feels that they are victims to the same narrative: in C2 where he lives, people are seen as racist regardless of how tolerant or welcoming they try to be. They are still held back by other people's perceptions of where they live as a place which is racist and to be feared. This makes others closed to them:

"I don't know why – is it the estate which has got the reputation or what? It is known as being racist. It has been known as a racist estate."

Despite their experiences within their communities, people often represent the places and people they know as tolerant and everybody as suffering the inroads of other actors. Martha is also keen to challenge the reputation one of the communities has for being racist: she resents the dominant narrative that it is a racist place. She also acknowledges that this doesn't mean that it doesn't exist, just that other things exist there too. She has Turkish heritage which she strongly associates with. However, because she is seen as 'white', white people don't realise this connection and speak openly in front of her.

At times people may not say that the everyday and casual racism that affects their life is as bad or is the same as that which affects others, as they simultaneously experience it:

"We see racism happening, but not often directly to us. Although, there was this one guy the other day, called us the N-word, for no reason, we were just walking past!"

Typically, people may not victimise themselves in these narratives, not describing themselves as experiencing direct inequality or being victims.[32]

Interestingly, when people talk about the perpetration of discriminary acts they generally tend to be more concerned about outsiders to their community as part of a sociocultural assault on their dignity.[33] They want to be clear that this is wrong, and indicative of relative differentials in power.

These narratives often revolve around injustice and unfairness. They are about struggle, about individuals and collectivities. They inevitably dwell on the power other people have to perpetrate injustices and not be challenged for it.
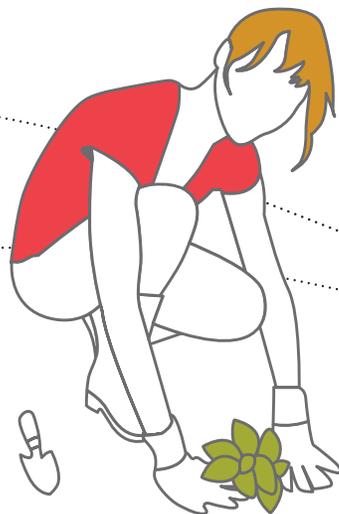
Saima feels significant prejudice to be coming from outside her community boundaries:

"Actually people treat each other equally in our community. No one makes you feel bad... If you go to jobs you experience racism. Ever since 9/11 it has become difficult. The way people treat you is awful. You have no opportunity, a lack of opportunities because of who you are."

Like others, Saima says her son and his friends experience prejudice and racism consistently when they try and apply for jobs, when they try to do things outside the community or take formal pathways to employment. When she discusses prejudice and her ability to challenge it, her experience dictates and she largely sees it as something perpetrated by more powerful agents outside her community.

Like her, struggle or feeling trapped or confined by unfairness is a dominant part of the way that people think about stigma, and unfair narratives about communities, places and people living in them. Here we have focused on the connection between stigma and ethnicity expressed as racism, but as the report shows, stigma relates to intersecting inequalities of precarity, class, income, gender. While these things clearly intersect they also create a compound force, a shared and collective feeling of disadvantage and injustice.

These issues are profoundly unsettling and disruptive – both to a sense of self and to community wellbeing. We will next turn to why these issues matter so much, as part of the way these concepts articulate themselves vis-à-vis others, especially people conceived to have relative power and agency to act to get things done.

Unfairness: struggling on your own

Saima has faced significant and open discrimination in her workplace:

"I found my experience of racism really difficult. Throughout my life I always took a stand for what is right. When I was experiencing racism from somebody else that had power, I let it go by, I tried to tell management, but I wasn't listened to. I got to the point where I thought I need to go forward with it. When it came to management, they closed though. They refuse to give me my hours, and it has been so hard. I am in overdraft."

Saima tried to challenge the racism through formal channels. But trying to confront the racism escalated it: she is now treated poorly by the entire organisation. She feels particularly strongly the unfairness of the refusal of management to take it seriously or any further. She identifies the operation of racist prejudice in the blocking mechanisms that exist at work to prevent her getting action to happen:

"It has become 'united institutional racism', because I decided not to accept it. It is hard to accept it every single day. They have just closed in, so all my doors are closed. I won't get shortlisted for jobs. You get to a certain point where you know you are not moving in the careers ladder. They have asked me to leave, but I have four kids. They are not getting me a new job. They refused to do that. I am stuck in an awful way. I wish I didn't make a stand."

Why is nobody interested (in our inequality)?

Key Findings

- People in each community experience a sense of disconnection from specific others. This has geographical, social, infrastructural and resource-based manifestations.

- This disconnectedness can partly be explained, to their minds, by the operation of an unequal stigmatic narrative about them and the places they live. They identify this as a manifestation of inequality.

- Stigma distances them from respect, power, agency and opportunity, things they feel they need to contribute fully to society.

- This influences the expectations and aspirations anybody has for them, and as a result the services they receive and what they are targeted towards.

- Dominant narratives about communities are considered to impact the resources they have.

- People believe that a lack of recognition, expressed more in simple terms as the need for human participation, trust and dignity, means they are not recognised and that they have less ability to challenge narratives about them.[34]

Through discussion of financial exclusion and what we have broadly termed stigma, we have seen that people in each area voice and feel a strong sense of disconnection which is linked to loss – a feeling of not getting (and perhaps never having had things like) respect, power or opportunity.
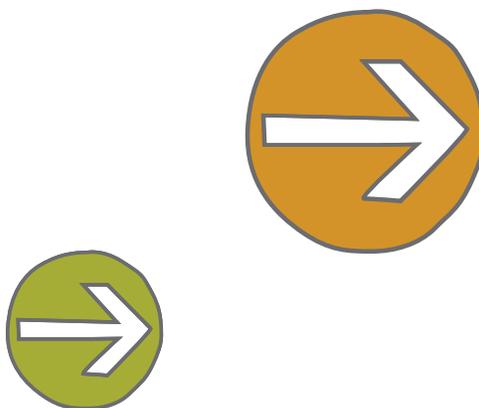
As we will go on to see, 'recognition' and the lack of it also features strongly in this conceptualisation of inequality, especially the way people believe it structures access to resources – economic and social – in terms of distribution and opportunity. This picks up on the negative conceptualisation of people via narrative and its influence on action.

Recognition is a much studied aspect of class and power, as well as playing a part in redistributive justice. Globally, it has been fundamental to rights movements mobilising around the need for or taking of recognition.

In this community viewpoint the request for recognition has some strong similarities: it is an expressed desire for a *different* kind of shared narrative and treatment and can focus at times around the idea that something is missing, because other people do appear to have this recognition.

These narratives are less sentimental than bedded in positionality and experience. Again, the suggestion is that it is a city with two parallel realities existing alongside but disconnected from each other – one seen and valued, and one invisible and underrepresented.

As we will go on to show, this is not particularly seen to be a local value, especially around a sense of hierarchy.

Isolation: distance from interest

There are several ways this lack of recognition can manifest. It can be defined as a broad sense of distance from others which straddles a feeling of isolation and remoteness *despite* apparent physical proximity, but is often focused on not being important or valued enough within the broader community to be of interest to others. It may be experienced in different ways, as a physical issue of not being able to get to a neighbouring community, a social feeling that you don't know how to connect with other people because you don't speak the same language as them, or a feeling that you are invisible to others because you are not provided with services that would help you (especially when others appear to be able to access them).

As the evidence presented in this report so far suggests, this is a feeling of being remote – distant from the *interests* or networks of others – because of what they represent.

People feel that their perceived identity as people living in certain places and the stigma each place has attached to it are closely connected to and a major driver of this type of remoteness.

The notion of remoteness helps explain how people may feel distanced even as they are an urban community living within close proximity to the city centre. People also feel unable to fully participate in the social fabric where they think others might or do. Importantly, as we will go onto see, people are not always experiencing social isolation or lack of activism within the community of interest they focus on. They mainly report close and co-operative links to others. This is a sense of the community or types of people vis-à-vis a broader body politic of the city or society at large.

While disconnections from others within places are particularly disheartening, one of the most profound senses of disconnection is from the 'two-track' city – those not in your community or social networks, and in or on 'the other side' of the city.

People share a feeling of being disconnected from the thoughts or interest of others outside the community. This is particularly concerning as they often view those outside the community to be perpetuating negative stereotypes or perceptions of the community, as well as being more powerful or influential.

They identify the evidence of this disconnection to be found in decisions which are made about the community, how the infrastructure of services, goods and opportunities is provided to each community, and how invisible they feel to others, as if they are not valued.

This is a tangible challenge because of its impacts. While some feel and are more isolated than others (and there are many layers or nuance to this which we are not able to touch on here), there is a broad sense of feeling invisible to decision makers and not part of decision making processes which affect your life. As we saw, if no services are provided to your community, it is difficult to live your life well or make choices. As we will go on to see, this is both perceived as an inequality, but also a manifestation of their unequal status in the city.

This, like our discussion of financial exclusion or physical disconnection demonstrates, appears to confirm to people their belief that others do not find these communities of interest or potential, and that disconnection is partly their fault rather than anyone else's. This is a broad and cyclical social narrative: as we will go on to see, it is perpetuated externally by others in the way they talk about the community, and its evidence internally confirms to those within the community that they are not worthy of interest.

The idea of feeling isolated and potentially on your own with something you cannot control is a recurring theme in people's discussions of the challenges and problems they face. These are important insights into agency, value and belonging.

One way in particular that disconnection is experienced (and, to people, proof of their disconnection) is, like educational aspiration, through the provision of infrastructures and services to communities.

Various community stakeholders feel that these communities are underserved. People in each community ask why things are allowed to be this way. Part of the answer, to them, must be their social remoteness and relative invisibility or disconnection from the rest of the city. People living in and around C2 feel that it is invisible and unloved. It feels remote because of its location and the way it is cut off from neighbouring areas, with people frequently raising its 'island' status in relation to provision of services:

"C2 is always forgotten, everyone knows it is called the forgotten island, and it's true – we are really last on the list. And the people on the estate, they feel it! We've got no mod-cons."

A neighbouring community is well-placed for visitors and its summer festival attracts thousands of people every year. By contrast, in C2, *"nobody comes from outside the community."* Any events or services in C2 only cater to the people who live there.

This feeling is shared across the communities and articulated and experienced in different ways. In particular, some of the housing estates and communities suffer from a lack of infrastructure or appropriate services. As a result:

"People feel a little bit abandoned. That's normal on these social housing estates, they were often built with no infrastructure."

A major preoccupation across the city communities which runs through discussions is that lack of access to services/ lack of service provision is of little interest to others. Having poor services also creates a sense of not being of enough value to others to make improvements, such as not facilitating bus routes or low cost credit availability.

This lack of recognition or investment also relates to the choices and opportunities those people suffering financial exclusion are limited to and illustrates how these issues are linked to geographical areas or places.

Narratives that 'socialise' the city and imbue place and communities who live there with socioeconomic characteristics also find distinctive iteration in views about physical spaces, their quality and their use. The dominant question is why this is allowed to happen in some places and not others. Here the two-track city narratives is commonly invoked.

The city has plentiful and highly-valued green space. But some of these public spaces are perceived as threatening, because of antisocial behaviour. Some other public spaces and parks are reported to be unkempt and dangerous to be in and appear to see little investment and no intervention.

A strong connection is made between place, public spaces and behaviour. For example, in C1 there are frequently shared perceptions that many young people are in gangs or behave dangerously and related crime is considered to be a significant challenge:

"If [C1] doesn't get fixed up it's going to be the most dangerous place in England soon. You can see it, people getting frustrated, people getting weapons, the shootings and the stabbings. It's getting worse."

Fears about crime focus on the impact on the community. Parents in a playgroup in C1 suggest:

"The park should be cleaned, because so many people, the youngsters go there and smoke and throw bottles of wine, so you don't go there. The parks are not good, there's broken glass and at the moment we don't feel it's safe. All teenagers without families use it. The park is mostly used for smoking and drugs."[35]
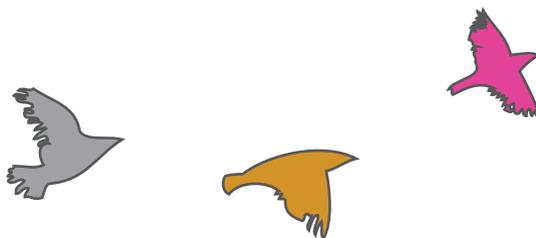
As a group of parents also agree, these concerns change the way they use the city's spaces:

"You can't go out with a small child to the park. This is a serious problem. Babies can't play, it's unsafe. That's why we came here to play in an indoor environment, even though it is summer. If you ask most parents I am sure they will say the same thing. If you look at the children in the park, it is mostly teenagers and druggies smoking."

These fears about crime and safety are shared more widely. While young people are often talked about as perpetrating crime in public space, they believe that they are just as prey to violence or fear as others, if not more so: a teenager sitting in a park in C1 himself thinks of it as so dangerous he doesn't want to be caught outside the house in the evening, *"I daren't leave my house after 10 o'clock"* and when probed to say why, describes: *"People getting attacked. Shooting and killing."*

His friend joins in:

"We see 12 year old kids carrying knives, younger kids smoking and drinking."

These shared fears about public space across the communities and their misuse or under-use speak of underlying values about community – a loss or inability to challenge antisocial behaviour or create a shift in shared values and norms about how to behave. There are concerns particularly in C1 and C3 that poor behaviour is becoming normalized and accepted:

"There is a staggering amount of drug use in the ward, and the amount of dope that you smell – it has become so mainstream: people just light up on the street as if it were a cigarette!"

In these depictions, agency over public space and good normative behaviour becomes a key issue. Space is seen as a symbolic representation of other things: community, interest, control, intent[36]. Others make links between the physical state of spaces, and psychology or motivation to improve them or the expectations people have of the people who live there. In C3:

"It's like you're saying to people, this is what you're worth; this is where you deserve to live."

As a local councillor states,

"The impact on mental and physical health is the most profound – if you live somewhere that's a shit-hole, you feel terrible about your life and yourself."

But when asking people what can be done, it doesn't seem that there is anyone to help and create some agreement around shared use of public space. Tariq, one of the fathers in the parents' group, suggests that there should be a more visible 'helping' presence:

"It could be stopped if the police were around, but there is no community police officer. You never see them, compared with places like [area]."

Doubts arise about why these things happen:

"There is a sense that these places are allowed to deteriorate."

But how do these perceptions that people are being left on their own with problems or feel a sense of loss and deterioration develop? Why do people think places are allowed to deteriorate? Why do people think neglect and decline has become normative?

These narratives call upon and feature what people think are the seemingly underused and unusable resources within a community which feels that it is broadly under-represented, invisible and unheard.

These unusable or underused assets are found in places or resources. **Their power lies in a sense of value to others.** The feeling is that a park could be an asset, fostering wellbeing and a sense of pride. But a park can only fulfil that role if it can be used by people. If public spaces are underused or cannot be accessed because of other people's behaviour – whether that behaviour causes a problem or is a failure to act to solve it – they become symbolic of people's perceptions about the value of them and their community to others.

As the quotes above show, there are also perceptions that there is little interest in improvement because places or communities are seen in a negative way. The concern is that places cannot overcome the negative reputations that they have without common support or interrogation of these ideas by others.

External forces: the market

As well as experiencing uncertainty with relation to resources, and risk, housing is considered one of the most challenging issues for some, which illustrates how inequality is a compounded issue and impacts a community at large. A discussion of housing **illustrates the narrative that market-based forces inequality which is considered to be exogenously driven outside the community provide a level of exposure to risk and lack of control over being able to flourish in place, and that people feel exposed, unjustly.**

The ability to maintain a constant[37] is seen to be a significant part of wellbeing and equally significant to collective or community wellbeing

Housing circumstances demonstrate how people feel that a broader inequality and injustice dynamic has further – reaching impacts on a community's wellbeing and ability to achieve stability, underpinning the extent to which people feel inequalities are compounded.

Despite being broadly considered to be one of the most affordable areas in the city, challenges with the housing market are still seen to be particularly salient for people in C1: both those who live there and experience it, and those who provide services or support to people who live there and observe its impacts on them.

People talked about how this is increasingly experienced through exposure to housing of poor condition and the Private Rented Sector tenure/market.[38] There is a large amount of housing in poor condition which is often Private Rented Sector.[39]

"We have housing in [area] where it's documented that 75% of them are not fit for habitation."

This has significant cost implications.[40] On basic issues such as affordability vis-à-vis the low remuneration of shift work, for example, some report finding it hard to maintain the combined costs of work, training and employment and any other work *alongside* housing costs:

"It's cheaper than everywhere else… but for an apprentice like me earning £150 a week it's not affordable, no." (Apprentice, C1)

This is perceived to undermine your ability to provide for a household without entering into debt:

"There are so many things you have to pay for in a house – tax, rent, water, electric, gas, TV… people can't afford it." (Apprentice, C1)

All of these issues, combined with the shift and contract work which is predominantly available, prevent housing or work from being affordable without dropping further into need, as this conversation suggests:

"Is [another area] affordable?"

"No, not even if you work. I stopped my job because they weren't paying me enough money. They didn't fire me, I left. I couldn't afford to pay my rent and bills." (Former shift worker, C1)

Challenges people perceive with housing also focus on the impact of its market on the neighbourhood around it.

C1 is thought to have high levels of housing churn. This has perceived knock-on impacts on the social fabric and feel of the community:[41]

"Transience is a problem in [C1], people move in and out of the area – many people are in temporary accommodation or private lets and move fairly frequently. They move from necessity, not because they want to."

A local community centre reports that there are also impacts on the services they provide. Services are provided on the basis of ward boundaries, so if someone moves, they may move out of the catchment area of the service. Staff see people who use their services and then 'disappear' and because they have an open door policy, they frequently signpost new people to other services. They relate this movement and apparent transience to the conditions and experiences of renting in the Private Rented Sector:

"Housing has had a massive impact on this area. It is poor in condition and it isn't maintained. The council do oversee it – they work on private lets and landlords and enforcement – but people often don't want to go down that route as it causes problems for them."

The relationship of inequalities to place and to specific corollaries of inequality means that some think that people in C1 leave when they gain more money or improve their socioeconomic status, which doesn't help the area improve. People are perceived to want to leave because it is not a place you stay if your social standing within society improves:

"When people get into work, they move. [C1] is not the same community. It changes. As soon as people come out of poverty, people move away."

There is also a fear, as much as a common perception, that the residents of certain areas are seen to share the characteristics of the housing market in that area, for example in being transient.

Despite an idea of transience or churn, there appear to be things about C1 that remain entrenched: the social standing of its residents vis-à-vis the wider city. Conceptually C1 services the most disadvantaged of the city. Those people who leave when they get work or when they can afford to live somewhere better are replaced by other poor communities:

"Then new communities come in. We have Polish communities and Somali communities."

This is a *social* demarcation of space.
People in each area are able to identify areas which are relatively low in value to others. In C2, two tower blocks are perceived to house the people who don't want to be there but cannot find housing elsewhere in the city:

"Where else are they going to live? There's nowhere else for them to go." (Resident, C2)

A similar perception of a relationship between space and value is raised in C3. As Paul and Susan discuss, many people are found homes in the social housing estate they both live on, and there can be impacts on comfort levels and the feel of the community for newcomers and longer term residents:

"It's always changing. They come from all over the place."

The preoccupation is about value: that these places are cheaper because they are of lower (social as well as economic) worth to the rest of the city.

When discussing these issues, people can specifically attribute the inequality to exogenous forces: they see inequality as driven by the behaviour of private landlords: they charge high rates and keep houses in poor condition. **There is a belief that landlords are not part of the community and don't share its values:** for example, references were made to them living in other parts of the city and exploiting a vulnerable situation in C1. There is also reported fear that the levels of exploitation are unknown because using the help of others such as enforcement agencies will create retaliatory behaviour from landlords.

As this discussion of housing reveals:

"we still have the dreadful problem where… your only choice for housing is to go to one of the letting agents and they will put you in dangerous, unsanitary housing in the south of the ward with no support services whatsoever." (Charity worker, C1)

For those in PRS housing who would otherwise expect social housing or support:

"their life can be very much tougher."

Other reports focus on hidden vulnerabilities, for example tied housing[42] – that landlords pay tenants very little for work on the basis that they give them accommodation:

"I think the first step is cash-in-hand jobs for their landlords, who often aim for those people. Often paying them like £20 for ten hours of work..." (Charity worker, C1)

In the centre, clients and staff between them reflect on the dynamic that the private rental market, its prices and its poor condition cause:

"Landlords profit too much out of people in [C1] but they don't live here. Despite that, [C1] has a lovely community – but if families move away or in (all the time) how can you feel part of that community? There is a lot more movement here than is good. There is an impact on children especially." (Charity worker with children, C1)

Strikingly, people were compassionate about the precarity or position of others. People specifically focus on the vulnerability of the people exposed to the market which is driven by outsider forces, rather than resentment of those experiencing vulnerability.

There are few exceptions, aside from students. In C3, a perceived frequent ebb and flow of students in and out of private rented housing and complaints about their 'dirty front gardens' makes it feel to others that they don't care about the neighbourhood, or are undermining community cohesion. The reported wholesale buying of traditionally family housing by private landlords in C3 meant that there were less children to use a local school. It was shut down, meaning children on a specific social housing estate have to use buses to get to school:

"I was glad when you said the students spoilt it round here, as I agree. It really changed" (Older woman, C3).
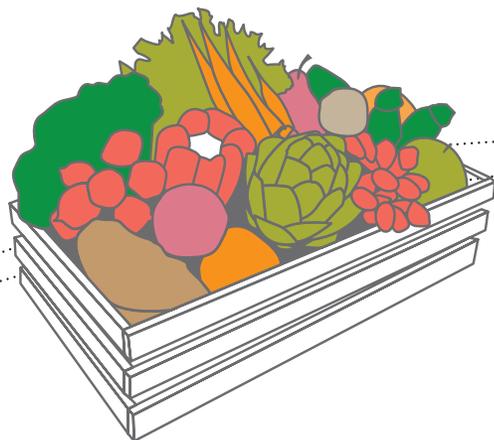
But a local councillor points out that although students may be the visible face of the PRS in C3, as young people paying high rents for housing which can be in poor condition they are just as much prey to poor behaviour by landlords as anyone else.

With these discussions of the compounded impacts of inequality and the ability and capacity to create resilience to it, especially in times of crisis and change, most people have a strong sense of dynamics that the community has little ability to influence. These can be seen as key parts or features of resilience or wellbeing. Here, there is a storytelling arc which positions inequality as a disruptive force on an enduring and growing basis.

Again this draws upon and shares an idea that the system is beyond control. Structural issues are seen to cause churn or instability. On the other hand they speak about the *experience* of the inequality changing and increasing rents, absentee landlords and housing of poor condition. These are all things which appear to be driven by forces external to the communities and places in which people live.

Taken together these factors voice a sense of vulnerability driven by capital markets, and outsider behaviour impacting those who are least resilient to them. People voice concern in particular about vulnerable people, for example families with young children, new immigrants, or people who cannot speak English. These issues are found in other parts of the city.

In particular these concerns dwell on the idea of control and of autonomy that a neighbourhood or community has. They are reflexive narrative exercises in considering people's roles in society: as they consider the body politic at large, and their socioeconomic positions, status and value to broader society.

Decision making

In general, these ideas speak to ideas about community autonomy and control. A theme that has emerged in each area is that people feel that *"decisions are taken without local people having any significant input."*

They have experienced decisions made by other people or institutions that have wide-ranging consequences for the rest of their lives and are considered unfair.

There is a strong feeling of being overlooked in decision making, and left prey to 'market' forces, as the discussion of housing and this description of why the bus only comes to the estate every half an hour (and sometimes not at all) reveal:

"The reason behind it's only every half hour is because they have to make money. They are not going to put on any more service because it's not viable for them financially... it's a capitalist society and it's all about making money, so people cannot get access to these services because it is not financially viable for them to take people to those places."

Why are these types of decisions made? Negative perceptions (rather than the reality) are seen to influence the way that people are dealt with or the interest that is given to any particular community. As a housing worker says of C3:

"This area can be difficult to fund because it's not popular, in the populist media or whatever. People don't want to see the realities of it."

Discussions in C3 about inequality sometimes focused on unequal resource distribution: people feel that the nicest areas get most funding. This is despite the best efforts of local people:

"The posh area gets loads of funding, even though we work really hard."

Likewise, a housing support worker believes that being successful is about the value you have to others. Archie thinks that things get done in neighbourhoods with more value:

"In [other area] you get that feeling that there's more influential people living there, so things are done quickly, or just are done, because of that reason, and because it's probably the high earners that live there that make it more worthwhile for the council to make them happy."

This is an analysis which views improvement and investment as cyclical and unequal. Areas with higher value attract more funding so can be 'better'. Likewise, people in C1 comment that another place has a good community centre which gets funding due to its proximity to town:

"They've got to make [area] look good because it's near to town."

People can also report that funding doesn't just go to some places rather than others, but that it gets spent on the wrong things (that tend to the community to represent loss):

"They are closing all the day centres. Not everyone has the money to pay, so where do they go? But when you hear they spent billions on a cycle highway, it seems that money went to the wrong place."

Funding can be a divisive issue even when it is seen to be supporting other people who need the support. There are questions about why some people get funding and others are told to cope:

"People think that certain sections of society deserve more, and that's the problem, because they do. We have traveller children and they pay a lot for taxis to get them to school.

How did it impact the community?

All the money it meant to them. I know mums who are struggling for bus fares. The system is not fair."

However, in C3 there was acknowledgement of the difference between the C3 of 15 years ago, and today, which some attribute to positive action by the council and others. Yet, they and others also feel that there are multiple challenges in these areas which are hard to overcome as a community:

"Things are improving but it will never be right. It is like a little village, but it takes years to get noticed."

"The posh area gets loads of funding, even though we work really hard."

Case study: how apparently minor decision making by some compounds inequality for others

In the last few years people living in C2 have faced particular challenges with public transport provision and changes to timetables. C2, despite being the closest of the three communities to the city centre, is described as relatively isolated and overlooked. People face difficulties leaving the area and often describe it as an island:

"It's an island with two roads around it and one through the middle!"

Despite its proximity to the centre of the city, there is broad acknowledgement from the community members (and others) that there is very little way to 'get out' of the community on foot or without expense:

"To get out easily you need a car but most people don't own a car."

People in C2 often have to rely on services and shops in neighbouring estates that are challenging for them to get to. Compounding this issue, there is very little available public transport for the estate, because buses are infrequent and reportedly sometimes don't turn up:

"Buses are rubbish and just by-pass the estate. When you want to go to places like [area on the other side of the city] you have to get two buses, one into the centre and another back out again. Buses are limited, and the train only goes once an hour."

This prevents people from being able to leave or to consume goods in other areas:

"Transport isn't affordable and there aren't a good range of local shops so you end up paying more for food. Buses are irregular and sometimes don't bother coming onto the estate in winter."

But 'public' local services are provided elsewhere. Their services are in neighbouring areas and some of their children are in school there, due to a lack of school places in the community, which is challenging to get to. This is especially problematic to manage when people have routines or appointments they need to stick to:

"We have a bus that comes to town every thirty minutes. This is a problem for people who have to go to the doctors in [neighbouring community] because there is no bus there or a CV workshop there. They can't afford to take taxis."

Within the last year of the research, there were also changes to hours of nursery provision for three year olds. This shortened the day to make it three hours a day. This happened without consultation but was reported to have had a dramatic impact on some people's ability to work away from the estate. Added to this, there was very little, if any, childcare available in C2, with reportedly no registered childminders on the estate.

As a result, people reported that they had to give up work or felt unable to work because it was hard to leave the estate.

People reported finding it hard to reach other communities or places via public transport to carry out paid employment. This was compounded by the available work which tended to be shift work that they had little to no control over, was at unsociable, inflexible or irregular hours.

Across each community, voluntary and charity stakeholders who run intermediary or voluntary services are critical of the way matters are dealt with in such a way. These serve people of different religions and nationality, but don't tend to work more broadly than this. In C1, there is no community centre open to everyone:

"People will say there is, but there's not. Everyone says they are open to working with all communities but the clue is in the name of their organisations or centres."

These centres may be perceived to reflect the needs of particular cultures or client groups. This can create a level of discomfort for potential clients too, as well as service providers:

"We don't feel comfortable there because the people who organise the activities will just call their own people, you're not going to walk into a room where you don't know anybody."

The view is that services are targeted because funding provision requests that they be specific to certain groups. Providers then have to prove unique offers, which perpetuate silos between VCS, and reinforce or build divisions between groups.

Funding cuts are seen to create, rather than close, 'gaps':

What has happened, not just in this community, it's happening everywhere, the council and the government are cutting resources i.e. daycentres, we're losing our daycentres. They're putting a lot of stress on the third sector in regards to providing services that will fill them gaps. We're looking at starting another club because there's a need for it. They are pulling everything they can to get money back; they're pulling everything away."

There is a sense of abandonment, of a state 'pulling away' from communities. New or more pressing responsibilities lie on new actors, meeting with an influx of people to serve who may before have had their needs met by statutory services or are increasingly affected. There is a fear that those in the third sector will burn out and that *"those little organisations doing good work will get pushed out and disappear."*

Archie, a housing worker, thinks this is about the relative power people have to get things done – the education or status they have. Some people are taken seriously, or know how to operate:

"[Area] is really nice, the area is nice and clean, but only because people probably moan a lot more. They've got that capacity to be able to go to the council, while C1 people just get on with it and haven't got that clout to be able to make it a better place. If you (can) fill in the boxes you get the grant. Education generally means you get more money. We get money from the council to run the association but we have to pay insurance".

Here again we return to the connection made between living in communities and places which feel isolated, and the services available to you or recognition from the people you believe are nominated to help you: authority figures outside the community.

A central question is: why us? Why does this happen here? Why is this allowed here?

People ask why money lenders are allowed to flyer aggressively or door knock. Would other communities experience this? Why are buses better elsewhere? Why don't they turn up? They are not uniformly bad across the city. Why is there only one shop? Why is there no childcare provision? Why does anti-social behaviour stop us using our green spaces?

These decisions made elsewhere perpetuate an inability to work or engage in the fabric of city life that lies outside the confines of a bordered community. This inequality is one of participation.

This kind of suspicion is consistently raised in what people think is the basis of decisions made about how to serve a community, and the ways in which people from each community are dealt with. It also appears to be generally cultural normative that the 'state' – represented by authority figures, is mandated to intercede or guide this process.

Decision making also relates to expectation and knowledge exchange – who is sharing knowledge or considering what is really going on in each place? For example, people think the lack of childcare provision in C2 is because providers don't think anyone there works, so they don't need to provide childcare:

"They don't think you're capable of holding down a job, they think you're on benefits. Yeah, it's council, but a lot of us work. But we can't work without childcare!"

Crucially this is less an indictment of service provision and more about relative power struggles and issues. In a community worldview, these things signify and evidence to people how little regard there is felt to be for or interest in the realities of people's lives. Lack of knowledge of communities can be explicitly voiced.

Looking at a computer, not us

In C3, there is a particular narrative that poor decisions are made when working off the ward geography, with no idea of the demographics (e.g. transport infrastructure decisions) or local people's needs, rather than asking them or working with local knowledge:

"If you sit on a computer, then you're not talking to people. There doesn't seem to be a lot of things now based around people."

For example, a scheme on wellbeing had had a "slow start" because it worked on the basis of Super Output Areas[43] which, *"in the area don't conform to local geography"*. There are two major communities which are served by the same scheme and grouped into the same 'local area' but are not connected – by road or foot or socially or psychologically. The population of one estate use a different GP surgery and school and use a different bus service. Because there is no perceived connection between the community and the service, it is *"really hard for the process to develop any sense of community"*.

The articulation that there is little appreciation of local needs relates to the perceived relationship between the relative standing of a community and the recognised or felt interest in it. As we have seen this is felt or manifested in several ways.

One particular issue is that if there is a lack of interest in wellbeing and the realities of people's lives, then there is also a deep-rooted fear that this is not just about where people live, but people. Their contributions to society or their motivations to work are not understood or addressed, and this has been particularly difficult around benefit assessments.

In a discussion between six women, two reveal that they don't claim the full benefits they are entitled to, because they have been told there are people in deeper need, and they feel guilty about needing benefits at all.

Equally, a health worker in one of the communities reflects that people are intimately aware of their changing role vis-à-vis the state, in terms of their perceived (lack of) contribution to society:

"The benefit cuts have left many feeling victimised, I get asked to support their applications in writing, with sick notes, who then go through appeal process. It's causing a lot of hassle to local people."

Elsewhere, another woman shares a story of having benefit support suspended because the benefit is for health reasons and she was reported for taking her granddaughter to school. The suggestion from the sanction she had imposed on her was that if she was healthy enough to be taking her granddaughter to school, she should be healthy enough to work:

"I got my benefits stopped for taking my granddaughter to school, because I get carers' allowance and they said if I need a carer then I can't be caring for anybody else. As a grandma I have a right to spend time with my granddaughter, to take her to school sometimes when I am up to it. When I got reported, I felt like I'd done something wrong. I won the appeal but it was having to go to the appointment, knowing that somebody had reported me. It makes me reluctant to get involved in volunteering. I love looking after kids but I'm worried I will get reported again."

That permissions apparatus in the form of welfare sanctioning is used to make a judgement on whether actions are valid or not seems to people to be fundamentally inappropriate, as if the system is unequally accounting for time and contribution.

These episodes and scenarios also create and compound the feeling of being undervalued or distrusted, as if places and people are not recognised as worth something or of value despite what appears to be the valuable work that they do for *society or within their networks* which elsewhere would have an economic or socioeconomic value and prestige.

These examples tell us that in a community worldview, inequality has strong social markers which are deeply embedded in narratives about value and difference.

Opportunity and aspiration

These narratives about community, services and fairness are about struggle between different things, no matter how small they seem to others. They are questions about and contestations over knowledge and reality: they make claims and they correct.[44]

One question people have is about the 'framing' of what people's or communities' perceived needs are vis-à-vis or versus the communities' or people's explanation of why there is a problem (or if there is a problem at all), or how inequalities and disadvantage is driven. People actively question them when considering their options and what could help them or others progress in life.

While there are clear dominant ideas about why people are unequal, disadvantaged and how they behave, a community worldview is likely to contest dominant ideas about why communities don't thrive in particular. For example, ideas about young people do not necessarily coalesce with what young people, parents or communities believe about what is happening, or where people should actually look to identify and to locate inequality and solutions. This means that there are contestations and questions raised in discussions about the treatment people receive or the options they have.

Martha feels that some of this fight is about narrative, a struggle over how people are seen and talked about. Martha is a single parent living in C2 and says that a local school has sent parents a letter telling them that they are disadvantaged and that it wants to improve the outcomes of their children. She believes that this approach is sending a poor signal rather than encouraging people:

"I got a letter home saying 'we are trying to provide positive outcomes for people who are living in a disadvantaged council estate', and I'm thinking why do you have to state that on what you're doing? It's a constant rhetoric that is going round – we're all living in it, but for children to grow up in that environment, it can be self-fulfilling. If they are constantly told in this area you can't thrive, and you can't amount to anything, it's not a good environment in which to learn, I don't think."

She feels these messages contain an implicit message to children and their parents. They introduce a sense of crisis and failure into people's lives at an early age. These narratives are found in different mediums, but most often popular and dominant culture rather than within communities, as a community organiser in C1 reflects:

"The media is constantly telling BME groups that they don't fit in. Society and services are not built for us."

As we saw in the previous chapter, a concern is that expectations or perceptions of communities influence the treatment and opportunities they get access to. This is also a tool of communication to communities about themselves:

"The high school is seen as rubbish and it's the only one locals can get in. It damages the community as people think, 'I live in a rubbish area, I must be rubbish, as they don't give us good schools cos they don't think we're worth it'... We don't do education around here." (Parent of primary school child, C3).

They see that they get 'served' or treated in a particular way which results from the expectation. Saima is concerned about this and the way it is reflected in her children's schooling. She thinks that this is an issue of stigma: stigma engenders a lack of expectation of children to succeed, which dictates the treatment or services they receive, which corresponds to any way they prepare themselves for the world and engage with opportunities – or fail to see what is offered to them as an opportunity. Her viewpoint offers a powerful insight into how people engage with formal opportunities.

Correspondingly, David and Martin (like others) say that it was the jobcentre in particular, the institution supposed to help them, that didn't seem to care whether they got valued or developmental roles or not:

"Job centres – they just don't care what job you get. They just want you to get a job and that's it. They don't guide you. They put you on lots of courses but they are not helpful. For lots of jobs they ask for experience – even for my apprenticeship they asked for experience which makes no sense whatsoever."

The things being asked of people are impossible without some help. This should not be a market-based issue but a citizen-focused issue:

"If you call a warehouse to see if they have work, they say have you got two years' experience. Two years to lift a box?!"

This is important because they feel that they could be helped. What is ostensibly a market-based issue escalates into civil society, into the regional economy, demonstrating to young people that there will be few people available to mentor their progression into employment:

"There's not enough help. You're just left to it y ourself. The Government doesn't help, there are no opportunities, no courses."

As Saima shares how many CVs her son and his friends send for unskilled work, without receiving any interest, she argues that the perception to others is that:

"It doesn't matter if these Pakistani kids fail. Nobody had aspirations for them."

Perceived expectations of people can be undermining to their sense of worth and value to others. This is a very strong shared narrative which focuses on not being seen as having enough value to others to facilitate progression or greater success in life.

This is a resource-based narrative focusing on inputs and outputs, seeing people as valued resources or with value to give.[45]

The concern is how some people are perceived as a drain on collective city or society-wide resources or are enabled to follow their aspirations.

These inabilities to act on aspirations 'live with' people longer term, as much as they are experienced by them.

Marie's risk

Marie, a woman in her late 30's, who claims benefits with her partner and has three children, reflects on her troubling experiences trying to progress into further education. Twelve years ago when pregnant with her second daughter she wanted to continue her further education by studying science and maths at the Open University, but she didn't apply in the end because she was receiving benefits and because the jobcentre would have stopped those benefits if she had begun a course.

She feels she got no help or guidance from the job centre to explore her possible options: her second baby was due on the day of her 'back to work' interview. When she asked them to reschedule as she didn't want to have to cancel last minute and risk the suspension of payments that are part of benefit reassessments. But they wouldn't re-arrange it. With two young children to provide for, she couldn't risk losing payments.

She suggests that, had she been in a position to go to university, she could have been in a different place now. When she had aspirations, she had no way to explore them and could not meet the risks of being unable to feed her children. Today, she and her partner make a joint benefits claim:

"I have no help, no options, and no worth… young mums should get more support, someone to hold their hand, someone to say that there is a life out there other than having kids!"

Between them people who struggle to make changes in their lives because of societal or structural factors – childcare, perception of gender roles, lack of resources, schooling, racism and aspiration – tend to share a viewpoint that they are considered to be problematic and not important enough to invest in.

Many report endlessly applying for jobs without call-backs. As one parent says:

"My son and his friends apply for hundreds of jobs. They have experience. They are not getting interviews."

One did music and production at an FE college, which he enjoyed and felt he had a talent for but has no way of facilitating his interest further to make something of himself. He thinks that there should be potential. But he cannot see how to act on it:

"There's nothing round here, I've got nowhere to go, no opportunity."

He and his friends think there is little to no consideration for the facts of their lives or what holds young people back. They don't sit in the park to create trouble but because they have nowhere else to go like, they feel, most of the other young adults sitting in groups focused around benches in the park:

"Look around this park, none of these people are working."

Here, they talk about why they sit in the park day after day,

"We're lost. I see this too much. I sit here because there's nothing else to do."

"It doesn't matter if the Pakistani kids fail. Nobody had aspirations for them."

PART 1:

Conclusions

Our research showed us that people share considerable common ground when they think about how to challenge inequality. They tend to agree on what drives the struggles of their daily lives, in their belief in fairness and in their aspirations for themselves and their communities.

One particularly striking challenge for people relates to choice and resources – how there are restraints on how you live your life and how certain dynamics create exposure which undermine your resilience and create risks. People believe that the workings of inequality are so deep-rooted because the power structures and agency which hold it in place as a force are beyond their control. When they think about their specific inequalities and their micro-dynamics they relate them to broader societal dynamics, such as market forces.

Here inequality is expressed and found in the power and control that other people have. Most strikingly, people feel that there seems to have been a shift in how inequality is accounted for or noticed in national politics, or with powerful stakeholders. When people discuss it, they feel it is so obvious in people's lives that it cannot be disguised, nor do people want it to be.

These views on inequality indicate that people view it as something that others don't want to act on or interrogate, and suggest something of how they feel about how governance and power operate in wider society. They also re-make power a key part of the discussion about inequality.

Conceptualising inequality as relating to 'power' also suggests something to us about people's feelings about the extent of inequality: how people are engaged with and how they feel they can use current participatory and governance structures to have a voice, and why, if they don't engage with them, or why schemes 'fail', this might be. Specific experiences of inequality also focus on being thought to be of such low value to others that they are not worth good treatment. The idea is that nobody has any aspiration for them, so they cannot engage.

In this conceptualisation inequality is not only in every dynamic and every interaction you make with others and with your environment, it is and becomes a pervasive narrative about what you mean in that environment too.

Specific issues that people faced were the experience of stigma, particularly racism and negative perceptions of people who are receiving state benefits. People reported increased surveillance and sanctioning measures. Some communities felt isolated from help and interest, which they could analyse as influencing the access to resources they got, and the type of resources their communities were provided with or not. Many of the participants were struggling with exposure to risk and the costs and expenses of undertaking ad hoc insecure work and caring for family or meeting responsibilities. In particular a lack of control over housing and public space was felt to impact places and communities, not just individuals, and create unsustainable dynamics.

People shared a sense of a state or help pulling away, not just being less visible, but less available. A loss of funding and funding protocols were felt to establish divisions. People often questioned decision making, particularly where seemingly small decisions by others had a ripple effect of impacts on their daily lives, impacting their ability to work or look after children. They also questioned why they felt left alone with issues such as aggressive moneylending on estates or antisocial behaviour and how fair or just this was. They doubted others got the same treatment, or that the same things were allowed to happen in other areas. This also concerned the market provision of services. A key question was around whether they lacked service provision because nobody had any aspiration to help them improve their lives or for young people, in particular, to flourish.

At the same time when they tried to care for others or to make changes they experienced the further onset of permission apparatus in their lives. They reported having benefits sanctioned for caring for small children, or for volunteering in their communities. They also reported that their efforts to improve the places they lived for broader social benefit went unrecognised, were stopped as they didn't have the right permissions such as health and safety or accountability, or were merely characterised as being 'neighbourly' rather than innovative and valued activity. People were also concerned with not being allowed to do something.

We found that people consider themselves often to be struggling, for different reasons, and there are compounded impacts on their lives. For those who identify struggle, they feel vulnerable and precarious to different types of economic and social dynamics, and their resilience is consistently undermined by the lack of provision of services or support which could help them lead better lives. Struggle is also about relative power differentials, the ability to have agency and control, make choices and be heard.[46] Standing describes this status as "denizens, in that they lack rights of some kind that are possessed by other, more privileged, groups in society. They lack security and they lack agency, or Voice."[47]

Perhaps most importantly our study tells us that inequality is social, and people expect or want support with it and feel that some of the ways they might mediate it are also social. But many feel lost or that the things they face go unrecognised. Recognition and redistribution are both powerful types of request to be contested.

All of these areas give us powerful insight into how communities think about their roles in the city, their relative value to the city, and their ability to change the situation. In what follows, we will look at how people attempt to challenge and act on inequality in their lives, and what this might tell us about change in the city.

The tale of the second city: countering inequality and reflections on change-making

In part 1, we explored how inequality is described as a confining narrative: it influences characterisations of people, what they think they can make of life and the opportunities they believe people have. **We particularly focused on the ideas of power and agency people have, and their desire that other people recognise and act on the issues they communicate.** We explored feelings of positionality in the city. These issues are explicitly connected to wellbeing.

In part 2, we will explore two aspects. Presenting what first appears to be an oppositional depiction of the city from part 1, **we will explore what people value about the communities they live in, how they describe them and how they identify their shared values.**[48] **We do not think this is necessarily a binary, just a tale rarely heard.**

We will also explore how people act to counter inequality – both through describing and rejecting it, and creating alternative forms of organising or action. We will look at people's attempts to change and innovate for social good and for the wider benefit of their communities and consider how they might be better supported. We will explore how change happens and how community action is often blocked by the inequalities at work, and how they could be better supported to innovate.

Below we share some key findings we will go on to discuss in more detail.

Sharing different stories

Despite what appears to be a totalizing experience, people are not passively 'just coping' with inequality and it does not wholly define their action in the world. Sometimes they are not defining this explicitly. It is acknowledged that social innovators or those making change rarely frame themselves in this way.

More broadly, we found that across the city people share values that help them think about ways to try to improve their lives, both individually and collectively, despite the levels of inequality they face which can at times seem overwhelming to them (and to others).

One way **in which communities engage with inequality narratives is by actively countering them. They tell a different story, share a different vision, and ascribe different meaning about reality and communities.** Even though they do internalise and invoke dominant narratives,[49] they do strongly counter them. Thinking about the same events and interactions, they will make knowledge differently or suggest a different meaning or interpretation of events or relevance.[50]

In doing this, we argue that people are actively resisting or struggling with perceptions of communities and narratives about them. To do this the focus is often on what is positive or different about them.

People focus on the idea that shared culture, such as humour and a sense of grounded self, based in anti-hierarchy give a degree of resilience and adaptability in difficult times. These values allow people to conform to as well as reject or challenge inequality dynamics and inequality 'values'.

As we will go on to see, these ripostes or counters tend to be locally based: they draw on community knowledge and community-centric values as a source of wellbeing. They are counter narratives because they exist independently of the dominant narrative *and* in spite of it.

This research shows that they are not particularly visible or engaged outside the social circles in which they are shared. However, counter-narratives are essential to understanding communities, and particularly their resilience, resistance, struggle and change.
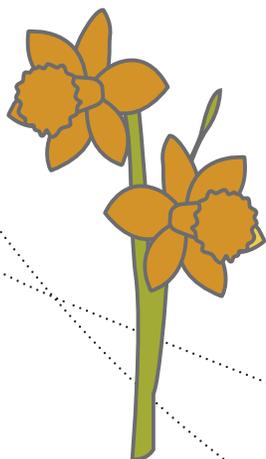
We will go on to show in some detail that they help provide a way to understand and rationalise the social world that people live in and give it meaning that helps create resilience in challenging scenarios.

Taking different actions

Just as importantly perhaps, our research shows us how **people also act on their values** in different ways and at different scales. These actions are both every day challenges to inequality – small, micro-level, dynamic at times, bearing some similarities to studies of resistance, but often invisible to others – or they can be explicitly change-making. But they are noticeably mission or value-based and there are some commonalities between them. This, we argue, makes them social innovations: new actions for broader social good.[51] They have social means and ends.

Much of the reasoning behind these actions are based in shared values and cultural beliefs about the role of community and people within society; like counter narratives they are not just a challenge to something else, but a way of trying to remake the world.[52]

What draws them together is that they are trying to improve things for people in the city. They can be formalised or recognised actions: for example, the voluntary sector is particularly vibrant and effective, and the social economy is burgeoning, and many recognise the support of the council and creative and proactive councillors and other authority figures such as community police in their lives. Across the city, many people are giving their time or scaling their support for others via voluntary organisations, external funding, or establishing socially innovative ways to create change.

Recognising actions as different and resistant

The focus of the next part of the report will be to argue that **we also need to recognise or narrativise the way in which people are *also* acting in very informal and tacit ways to provide support for each other, or to make things better.** The challenge, as we will go on to outline, is that these actions aren't often recognised by others as change-making, and they can be invisible and under supported. They remain in a tacit practice field. Across the city, examples indicate that when examined more closely, **people are not inactive or passive agents in change: they are not just coping.** This confronts many dominant perceptions of communities as lacking agency or ideas for change.

Often these things are different from the norm or from the normative values current to change-making, which is where their efforts can be misrecognised: we have found examples of innovation at community level which those communities would not have voiced as innovation or even recognised themselves,[53] let alone outsiders to the community, because at times they do not conform to ideas about change, who makes it happen, or because they are often blocked when they try to scale their change and build momentum around it. These actions are not often codified or formalised, but we understand that they can be very powerful bases for change. In fact, in reviewing the potential for an ecology or ecosystem of change, it is notable that a value-map[54] reveals that they often share the same values and bases for action as the more formal and larger scale innovations and voluntary organisations.
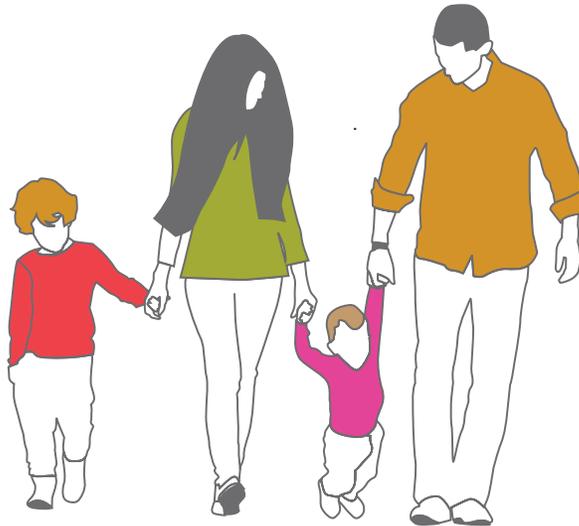
We will go on to explore how change happens in communities through these shared levels of action based on shared values. We review what might help facilitate change and what can hinder or undermine it. **Some of these undermining blocking processes are caused or related to the very thing they seek to change: inequality, which we will explore.**

Notably, it has been easier for people to conceptualise the problems that they face and the ways in which inequality works than recognise themselves as agents of change. Again, we argue that this viewpoint or belief may partly be explained as relating to the operation of inequality in their lives and the narratives which perpetuate it, rather than their potential or actual contribution to society (points which they consistently make about the way their aspiration is misinterpreted or goes unheard or unrecognised).

However, we also outline that motivation to act or recognition of action, is culturally informed and stems from or is informed by a set of experiences, habitus and prescribed roles within society.[55]

As we have indicated, people believe the defining characteristics of inequality are its social impacts, which are interdependent with socioeconomic and material contexts. **And as a result, as we will argue here, most attempts to challenge inequality also have both social means and ends – whether explicitly or implicitly.** The impacts of inequality that people most want to address are both (socio)economic *and* social. These attempts see inequality as operating in a stigmatic way to influence and structure access to resources, and are keen to fight it. They argue both for redistribution and recognition.

In what follows we will outline ways in which people reflect on challenging inequality, attempt to create change in their city, and the values that they share and raise up about their city which help them to draw upon them as a blueprint for sustainable change. This also influences the way people work together and some experimentation in what we might term the social innovation practice field which is essentially, 'acting on values'.

Countering inequality: changing narratives and actions about people and place

Key findings

- Despite considerable resource and power differentials, **people do not passively accept the impact of inequality**. Instead they try to mediate and tackle the impacts.

- **People are keen to contest the knowledge others share about their communities** and people they share interests with, despite the relative differences in power each community feels it has to influence others or effect change.

- **A key part of resisting or contesting the social impacts of inequality is a process of counter-narrativisation:** readjusting depictions, sharing alternatives or using alternative sources to challenge dominant ideas about communities.

- These counter-narratives often focus on finding alternative forms of value in each other and provides an alternative to dominant perceptions of communities, while also being aware of them. They can also give the same events, features and dynamics a different meaning.[56]

- This articulation helps underpin resilience and a sense of worth that is alternative and different; sharing that people have positive lives which are worth living.[57]

- This is to counter **the injustice of representation by others.** However it is also important to note that these ideas and narratives are not just counter to something, but are alternative, existing independent of and in spite of dominant ideas. They are different ways of thinking about and sharing something.

- Narratives are dialogue-based. That is, they have (and should have) an audience. People would like others to hear and acknowledge, not just listen to, what they have to say, and start a conversation in which they are valid contributors. **Being heard is a subject of some struggle.**

- **There is a close link between counter-narrative and 'counter conduct'.** On an everyday basis people are making small, tacit, 'every day' steps to improving people's lives.[58] These actions have meaningfulness beyond their immediate impact: they are symbolic of how people feel about social responsibilities and mutual aid and are a charismatic demonstration of their values.

In what follows we explore the idea that narratives help and reinvigorate people, providing them with a sense of certainty and control, and confirm a sense of sociality. We also explore the idea that people are consciously trying to say and do things which challenge dominant narratives. We see narratives here as social actions in their own right. Narratives are performative and embodied.

We begin with a review of how people are trying to alternatively account for their own value, as well as trying to support others, particularly young people. We also work with the idea that narratives are action-based and give the example of place-making as a narrative-action based tool for reclaiming 'place'. Here we acknowledge that narratives are often aimed at transforming[59] social relations, as much as they may be used to validate them.

Our community values

In each community and more widely across the city, shared ideas about a close-knit culture and level of support for others within your community of interest were particularly voiced.

In what follows, we review values which emphasise a mutualistic culture, and we also connect them to how people speak about how they should act on their practices – how values should align with action.[60]

A conceptual and narrative challenge to inequality is made on the basis that people share an internal sense of social capital and value with each other which relates to their belief in the city and their sense of being close-knit and supportive of each other.[61]

In this narrative depiction, the city has a mutualistic and 'down to earth' culture which rejects the value of broad hierarchies and difference despite the fact that people feel the influence of them in their lives. Despite acknowledging status differences and inequality as expressed by the two-track city narrative, in this worldview hierarchy and status based on differentials is not perceived to be a local value.

Relationships are important

It is described as 'close knit', which broadly translates to being trusting and close when people know each other. Descriptions often return to and focus on strong and supportive social networks and close social ties. Relationships are important as are the values and practices you exercise in them. Being grounded can refer to the sense that belonging comes from the community of interest you associate with, as well as have appropriate social values and think realistically.

A strong positive and shared narrative cites it to be a special place with a lot going for it: "*so much is unique, it's always been a welcoming and friendly place.*"

Being part of a friendly community and feeling closely connected with others in that community has a high value, as for some, does being deeply connected to people:

*"**Love for each other. It's not about the place, it's about family and community.** My daughter is friends with the girls she went school with. It is the core values. We fight and argue, but the bottom line is don't mess with us if we are in trouble."*

Kinship networks between women are perceived to be particularly important ways of coping or supporting each other, usually between parents and their adult children with children of their own. This also extends into community or place-based/proximate ties which we could also think of as analogous to fictive kin – social ties that replicate and provide the closeness of consanguineal ties.[62]

Coping mechanisms and resilience are found with mutual support

When discussing the city at large, people would often name the warmth and friendship amongst people and their close ties as giving them much-needed coping mechanisms against the worst impacts of inequality. Cultural practices help:

"We're humorous people, a good sense of humour is needed now in austerity."

This positive angle which focuses, informally, on 'resilience',[63] is evidenced by the actions people describe they take when they value, cooperate and work together:

"It's a city of people helping other people if they need help with anything, like getting around."

In this conceptualisation, the way people behave gives the city body politic its resilience to change and adaptability, surviving different labour-based manifestations of economic growth or decline:

"People […] are resilient, and can withstand change. *[City] has changed its face a lot over the years, from a city of mills, to banking and now the arts sustains it!"*

The city is compassionate

It is also described as a distinctively compassionate place to live. Our survey of residents[64] asked them to pick their top priorities for the future of their neighbourhood. **The top priority for residents is that their neighbourhood is a 'place that prioritises caring for neighbours'.**[65]

This prioritisation of compassion is born out in how people think about and explain inequality too. For example, as we have explored, very few people attempted to attribute its impacts (such as poverty, debt or unemployment) to individual fault or behaviour,[66] Discussions that people have about poverty across the city, for example, tended to evidence a high degree of compassion (and at times injustice or expressed outrage) for other people's situations and the dynamics that economic inequality can produce, such as the poverty premium or worklessness.[67]

More broadly, the city is described as an accepting place where people are open to and understand others. People explained that their knowledge about how bad a situation could be and having experienced the impacts of having few resources influenced how they would act to support others. People felt that even if they had personally dealt with and overcome challenges, the embodied knowledge they developed through this gave them the insight they needed to know how to understand others. Most importantly this was considered to influence the way they would act to support others:[78]

"Sometimes people who are poorer are more willing to give money, because they understand the situation more than those with money."

For others this acceptance is also located in the feeling that the city is a 'down-to-earth' place where hierarchies and outsiders are not as important as the community or social ties you have.

While this is a specific vision of the city, with little relative assessment provided here of how people weigh things up in narrative terms when they experience hierarchy, people strongly coalesce around the idea that the city is 'down to earth', and survey data indicates this is a highly held value. It arose in each community and our survey shows that 87% of the population strongly agree that it summarises city values.

Holding a 'down to earth' value and expressing this as a narrative was consistently used to suggest that people were more concerned about finding value from the proximate community than others, and less interested in hierarchy than they thought others were. Here they sometimes identified community-based, city-based or class-based positionality which overlay intersectional or specific area or identity-based characteristics:

"People are proud of being from [region] and identifying with that. On a very base level – even just like the football fans. The [city] identity is quite working class. It prides itself on just getting on with things and being hard-skinned".

People are keen to express their desire to work together to create change:

"We have a lot of goodwill in this community. I think there will be something positive to follow… people will work together. [City] is a good place to work with."

Community (informal) networks are seen to be a good site for activity:

"It is a good community spirit, especially with the elderly. They know one another. My mother knows her neighbours, and they keep an eye on her. Everybody looks after one another. If someone is ill, they will enquire [after them]. Here they can get all the help they want."

In different communities, people are proud of these values:

"You know, and it's just about the older people having someone that they can call on and say I need help. Or we've got a couple with early stages of dementia, so because everybody knows them, everybody's keeping an eye out for them."

These expressed community-centric values both turn towards their communities and are drawn from them. Although there may at times be disagreements or internal divisions, people feel that they turn out to support each other when needed, as several people reflect on:

"In settings where we are doing something as a community, we all come together and we sort of forget things that separate us, and do things together. So if there is a funeral…here hundreds of people attend. We will come together and have a drink. Because we are still respectful of each other and the choices you make in life, and I don't necessarily see that in other places."

This narrative funnels difference of background and experience into a communally shared experience in an interesting way. Although it might be seen as a homogenising narrative, it is expressed with positive intent to represent the things that people share: the positionality and action based on appreciating and supporting 'the community' (as well as acknowledging the support the community gives you). People also reflect that there are those in their communities who have been consistent and role models in their lives, who have helped them learn about how to overcome a poor sense of worth or connect with others. They look towards providing that care for others in return.

These acts are social in their import and they have social, transactional and relational impacts too. Here people reflect on the importance of visibly showing others you care for them.

One key area that has arisen from the research is the feeling that in changing times, with an experience of growing and deepening inequality, resilience is fundamentally important. Resilience is socially facilitated (and as part 1 showed, socially undermined).

"In settings where we are doing something as a community, we all come together and we sort of forget things that seperate us, and do things together."

Caring for others in C1

Ange describes what C1 means to her. She arrived in the area as a young white woman fleeing from an abusive parent. She moved into private rented accommodation but was given notice and became homeless, having to sleep rough. She describes how when this happened, the community-at-large reached out to her:

*"Because I knew a lot of people down in [C1], I got left alone. Because I knew a lot of the shop-owners, I knew quite a lot of the families that lived down there, and it was the case that **when they knew that I was hungry, they'd feed me. If they knew that I needed a shower, they'd let me use their shower.***

So how did you make those connections, how did it happen? Because you were very vulnerable weren't you?

*I don't know – **I think because I was very vulnerable, I think people saw that and especially the older generation of [C1] were like 'this is a young girl, she's harmless – just keep an eye out on her'.***

So they looked after you, in a way?

Yeah they did, they kept me safe. In probably an environment where other people would look in and think – 'she's a white girl, she wouldn't be safe, sleeping rough.' And I was.** Just walking up and down [C1] Road, going into different shops – say if I was buying a pint of milk or a tin of cat food – you would get to just know the people who were in the shops, and the dogs say hello so you ask about them, and **that's how relationships and rapport build."

Although Ange now lives in C3 she has a very strong positive feeling about C3 as a result. To her it's a vibrant, friendly, welcoming community:

*"And to this day I can go down and **I'll still get people coming up to me, shaking my hand, giving me loads of kisses on my face. People are close down [C1]. Everybody talks and they know each other."***

Communally focused change

One aspect of the discussions people have about inequality or change is focused on the societal and social: as previously suggested, when people talk about inequality and challenge it, in general terms they appear to focus on action which is centred around the places they live, the groups, collectives, communities and people they share interests with.

Communally facilitating resilience by thinking about mutual needs or in solidaristic ways is a particularly important feature of the way people want to act to support others. Significantly a key feature of the way people talk about this is quite similar to the theory of 'organic solidarity',[69] focused on value-based actions which are communally focused and socially networked.

These actions directly deal with perceived inequalities of resource and attention. If everyday life is hard, and inequality is compounded by a systematic lack of access to resources, then ways of creating resilience to it are also small and regular, occurring and practiced every day, addressing a lack of resources and recognition.

Underlying descriptions of the everyday ways in which people support each other is a broader meaningful narrativisation of how they would structure social and mutual responsibilities. Distinctively, people talk about 'generosity' towards others and community-focused action as one of the defining areas value-based action hinges around.

As noted, these actions are not just described as what people might do, they describe themselves doing them already.

People focus on the idea of local caring. Social networks and connections are particularly strongly cited as a site of belonging, value and a point of focal interest for people.[70]

For example, these actions commonly focus on 'looking out for' others and pooling resources. These can range in scale but are often focused on the everyday: whether it is handing around leftovers if others don't have enough, sharing a taxi, swapping goods, cooking a community meal and not making a charge for it, and so on.

Here people describe pooling their limited resources to create access to the things other people might have. For example in C2, with its transport issues and accessibility challenges, people frequently share taxis to enable them to leave the estate:

"People share taxis a lot. Buses are rubbish and just by-pass the estate."

People choose to pool resources at times as a social response to a lack of access to resources. Sharing these resources does not automatically happen, it has to be voiced, organised and carried out.

This activity does not overcome the inequality at hand and is not considered a solution. It is a way in which people talk about trying to buffer inequality, not to give up, to create limited access to mobility and choices.

When discussing how and why people try to make choices in these confined settings and with few resources, they cite the need to try and support others:

"It's not a wealthy area, clearly. A lot of people are struggling – financially especially because of economy stuff that I don't understand. But some of the older people especially – it's difficult to afford all bills and have the food – especially if you've got some kind of disability – that just makes everything harder."

Actions people take focus on small daily contributions to address these challenges:

"So the idea is that every little thing you do helps a lot. I know whenever there's an event or whatever, there's a couple of people around, you give them the leftovers because they're having hard times – and it helps out a lot I think. It's not much but it's a lot to some people around here, yeah. None of it's a lot, but every little bit helps."
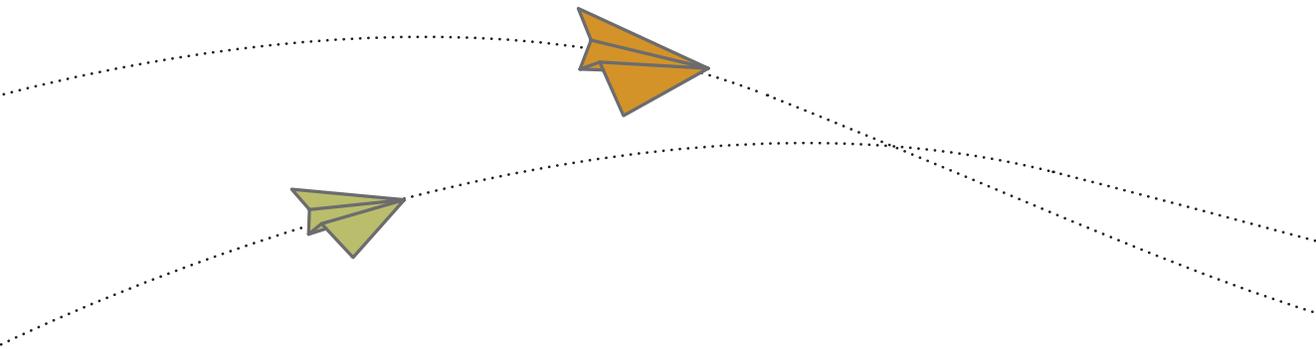
While the scale of action people take is apparently very small it signals tangible material support for each other and a sense of mutual aid. The fact that these actions are facilitated through social ties, face to face, and are informal and outside of the normal market economy of exchange or 'charity' also suggests that they are a charismatic social form of support too.[71] They stem from a sense of solidarity and an idea that the community should support each other. The social support given through material gifts is arguably as important as the economic and/ or material support these things provide.

Importantly this doesn't always mean that this is viewed as ideal. These are spoken of as managing and buffering mechanisms against inequality. They remain politically charged. However these actions should be understood as intentional value-based action, when there are few formal economy options. If deployed as part of the formal economy, these resources would have an economic value, but in an alternative community-based economy they become gift based and network-replicating, and indicative of informal types of cooperation and collaboration.

However, as part 1 showed, people talk often and frequently about inclusion, wanting to work and to be employed and take part in the formal economy, but as we have heard, there are often barriers blocking their engagement or disrupting it.

There is also, however, a strong sense of local value for each other's contributions, actions and worth sitting outside the formal economy or job market, as well as a recognition that this is not traditionally recognised elsewhere and outside the community. Similarly, people also express interest in pooling other resources to provide mutual aid: their time, talents and skills.

As we saw, it is possible to argue that these types of actions are not just 'coping' or creating resilience. One important aspect of this change-making is, as we have seen, the counter-narrative that is part of this change.

Telling the value in ourselves: new narratives

One particular way in which people counter exclusionary processes or mediate their worst impacts is to engage with resources in interesting ways and experiment with different kinds of meaning and value.

For example, the idea of a community which feels it represents a lack or even loss or deficit of value to others is experienced as a major challenge. Ways to tackle this idea work on a similar basis in that actions have intentional symbolic meaning.

For example, if economic need or poverty is experienced in a very social way, ways to challenge that need are also very social in their means and intent too. As we go on to see in the next few chapters, examples include sharing or reclaiming resources (such as public space or 'waste' food) by intentionally working with people in collaborative, empowering ways that also 'reclaim' or re-value them, for example, giving everybody a responsibility regardless of their background.

As we will go on to argue, people turn this narrative contestation of inequality into an act of reclamation – into a new space for those experiencing it. Reclaiming themselves or others – or spaces in the city: by narrativising value in people and things where dominant narratives do not.

One way in which people first appear to do and negotiate this is to think about their own role and contributions to society. Many of these people experience daily the idea that they don't contribute to society, that they are a drain or deficit.

As a volunteer community organiser suggests,

"Volunteering can balance out the feeling of being a problem, and top social capital back up to an even keel. But people only have that attitude if they know they have something to give in the first place."

While interestingly the idea of social capital as a top up system for people working with disadvantaged communities is raised by people who work with groups, people tend to identify alternative sources of value to be pre-existent in themselves. For many, it is hard not to conform to this idea or for it to influence them, but they do challenge this depiction that they don't already have something to offer.

People felt or argued that their contribution to the community, particularly as part of formal or informal volunteering processes, isn't currently recognised and should be better recognised by others. Not only that, it should be seen and interpreted as valuable. Better yet, it should be recognised by the state, especially for those receiving benefits.

They also see this as a source of ingenuity or entrepreneurial behaviour rather than *"just sitting around doing nothing."*

One issue which becomes very pressing is that of trying to persuade others or maintain a narrative that they have something to give.

A group of women sitting in a community centre who volunteer informally and between themselves to keep it open reflect on financial exclusion and the ways in which they feel alienated from or not part of mainstream economics.

Many of them have felt under scrutiny for the benefits claims they make or the way they think they are judged by society, and some have had to go through sanctions appeals relating to their benefits.

However, while this feeling of stigma has a heavy impact on them, narratively they reject and contest this depiction.

They do so by describing and talking about the ways in which they care and contribute.

They have a solution, which is to suggest that society better recognise the possible alternative sources of value in the community in the skills or interests they do have, and they believe that they could better exploit that, to value each other's contribution and assets and make contributions together. Some of these suggestions are about greater participation in the formal economy through facilitated support. Other suggestions are to suggest a skills or labour swap sitting outside the formal economy. They suggest it is a tangible contribution they can make to each other which recognises their talents:

"We need to bring the community back together, because it's got capabilities, everybody's got something. Like this lady here hates ironing, I love ironing, she can bring her ironing round!

Another woman shouts out, laughingly *'I love gardening!'*
In agreement, they join in together*:*

"You see what I mean? You don't know what people can do."

Potentially, this idea has both an economic and social outcome. It provides a service they might otherwise have to pay for or can't facilitate themselves, and values the skills they have, by recognising there is value in swapping them.

This activity doesn't rest on recognition of the value from those outside the sharing network but if it did, it would potentially accelerate and catalyse it.

As we will go on to see, lack of recognition and permissive sanctions block those aspirations and ways of working, such as the jobcentre not recognising volunteering to be a valid form of community contribution.

Across each neighbourhood, people were experimenting cautiously with the idea of alternative valuations of their time and contribution.[72] These are predominantly internal mechanisms of value for each other, which reposition people as actively or valuably contributing in their community or social network in places where people are experiencing the opposite narratives from outsiders or others about their lack of social worth.

In C2, some of the women have been tentatively exploring how to provide childcare for the estate based on working together to pool their resources. A gradual move towards volunteering at the community centre has generated a social network of people cooperating together to provide a service that while social when it started, became a way of raising money to get the centre going.

This bond, commitment and purpose is changing the image of the centre and has taken it from a dusty space with very little community engagement which nobody used and didn't look open, to a functioning place for the community, and a place that they might hire out for groups. Between five and ten members of the community turn out as volunteers on an almost daily basis to open up the community centre so that the community at large can use it, and to improve its financial viability by ensuring it is open and can be available for paid bookings like slimming clubs.
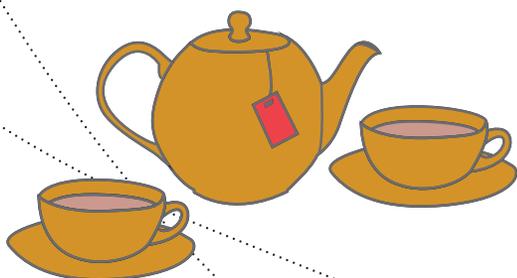
"We need to bring the community back together, because it's got capabilities, everybody's got something. Like this lady here hates ironing, I love ironing, she can bring her ironing round!"

They have gone from only keeping the centre open a few hours a week of shared community use to starting to hire it out for others to run classes. While they are slowly exploring this idea of keeping the centre open, they feel that they could build on this open and shared space to challenge the problem many of the estate's parents have with a lack of childcare. They would like to ensure greater social impact by enabling themselves to work by providing childcare. They have ideas for helping spread the costs and implications of childcare that are focused around pooling their resources together:

"I need childcare. I'd be willing to help out at an after school club on a Monday or Tuesday if I could get childcare on a Thursday or Friday."

These resources are social and relational, in that they are time based, care based or skill based expressions, gifts towards others. They build on what people know to do, and they work on the level of trust that others know what to do to and are doing it for the right reasons. The social implications are key to understanding them.

The time that this takes, or the interpersonal transactions involved in such organisation, isn't formally recognised more widely and is little known about outside the community. It is largely invisible outside the community and seldom narrativised – a tale rarely told.

Despite this, it is actively engaged in and generates a sense of value for those inside the community. This type of activity provides and is facilitated by a sense of mutualism and solidarity, that for those within the network perpetuates it and provides a strong sense of belonging and feeling of making a contribution.

Sitting to discuss volunteering and involvement at the centre, a group of volunteers reflect on what involvement brings for them. They chat back and forth and in doing this, business is done and arrangements are made. Trying to organise arrangements between themselves, they do things informally, they negotiate and sort things out. They don't have a schedule but they always find someone prepared to try and keep the centre open. When the centre leader calls out to the group to cover a particular time that week, they negotiate between themselves to make arrangements. This collaboration is informal and friendly.

The centre is run in a trust-based way, so that it is informal and tacit, and based on the value of the social networks which sustain its slow momentum, but generating changes in the local area and in the value of the centre nonetheless.

Likewise, in C3 an informal grouping of crafters meet in the community centre every week. They are self-taught, sharing crafting skills with each other. The current group was born out of an accidental timetabling error when two different groups turned up at the same place. As the conversation flows, the closeness of the group becomes evident as they try to explain how they came about:

"Both groups decided to meet at one place and discovered there was the wrong teacher. But because we went together we said why don't you come and join and that's how we started Thursday afternoon group. We teach each other."

However, the group started as a formally run training session, and was convened by trained teachers who lost their funding. It used to provide a context for both men and women to come together and be trained in new skills:

"They taught us how to quilt and we also come up with the ideas. We don't have a teacher any more. They were trained teachers who taught us patchwork – woodwork for the men – a variety of things… we made boxes, covers and many things"

They feel a loss for what the classes facilitated and created – an alternative way to use and gain new skills, socialise and provide a hub for the community:

"There were lots of different classes – woodwork for men and many things for women – but now they can't afford it it's all gone. Lot of people got very put off about it. They closed down so much. They even closed down the church hall where people had meetings."

They also lost members. Ending the formal council-provided funding for the centre 'put people off' and they stopped going to or investing in the centre themselves, discouraged by the end of the formal funding or formal provision of support, or unable to afford it.

But as the conversation flows about the loss and the impact it had, remaining members of the group are busy making cards and sharing what they have done with each other. Admiring each other's work and showing each other what they can do, they are working hard to try and keep the group going:

"We pay £2 a week to keep it going and we sell them for donations for charity."

This support creates and affirms an alternative source of value and relationship to goods and productivity for this group of retired people who are outside of the labour market but want to produce something of value. They make their goods because ultimately they learn new things, but they do this together and for charity rather than alone because the social good or social value they gain by doing something worthwhile together affirms their community with each other. It also confirms that they can work at a nexus of loss of resources to preserve them.

This is an alternative source of value, offering a small but powerful rejection to the idea that through cutting the funding in this centre (but not others), the council is possibly suggesting these activities aren't worthy of support or of value to others.

In both cases, doing things with others results in what they report are strengthened social bonds and a sustainable source of value.

Across the city, similar small initiatives have sprung up across the city to experiment with the notion of value.

Many of these actions rest on people themselves countering inequality narratives. However, there are other clear ways that people who are perceived as outside these community networks can take action. As this community police offer reflects, he consciously wanted to work in a community that nobody else did, because he felt it was probably misunderstood and had many issues to cope with that were unfair. He feels the best way to overcome stigma is to create a solid and fair normative base for action that people can trust in:

"A lot of people don't work, for various reasons. It is quite difficult sometimes, people think you will be judgemental. But I work for the police, I treat everyone exactly the same no matter who they are, whether they're a criminal, whether they don't work, whether they've got a job, whether they're earning X amount, it doesn't matter, you still treat people the same."

There are also volunteer organisations, charities and social innovations which are creating strategies for transforming community contributions to alternative sources of value, and modelling the potential for community engagement with dynamics that create alternatives challenging the systems and exclusion around them. Again these counter-narrativise the potential lack of value in various resources, people and places by finding alternative sources of value in them.

A café model sources and distributes food waste by cooking and providing it to people in locations. This openly contests and challenges the idea that some food is waste and shows people how to experiment with it in a way that gives it value, even marketises it to create economic and financial sustainability. The model is based on distribution of skills and resources – people donate on behalf of others, or pay only what they can afford. If they can't afford to pay, they don't have to. There is no requirement for reciprocity.

Perhaps more importantly, the action is social in means as well as in ends. People who want to take part get training if they would like to donate their time to the cafe. The value of the contribution by anyone is made in intention, not expertise or goods – for people who would like to take part, someone will teach you to cook or to do any of the other things you're asked to do. Time is taken or donated freely, but people get given a responsibility.

"When you come to the café, [name] will show you how to cook, and you're immediately given a responsibility."

The idea of responsibility is a very interesting one to contest the idea that without experience people cannot contribute. In responsibility, they are being given a signal that they are worthy of value and that they can learn by doing.

Because of its open approach to valuing skills and contributions, and because it is welcoming to those who may not traditionally be thought of to have skills or be valuable to the concept of 'enterprise', the café has been able to attract a diverse 'workforce' and 'clientele'. In fact, because of the café model, these terms are interchangeable – the consumption is also a different kind of model from a traditional business.

People pay to go because they are actively consuming and want to support 'good social' values, articulated through reclaiming waste food, valuing other people who cook, making their own choices, and paying for something other than straightforwardly consuming food. They are donating towards a concept. Each café attracts a certain kind of clientele who likewise will generate revenue for all cafés. All cafés are able to help people make ends meet across the city and for what they consider social good. The redistribution of waste food, the partnerships the café has created with supermarkets and the impact on the local community have been complex and at the time of research were growing.

These activities overcome the stigma people feel about getting involved in things if they don't have the right skills and enabling inclusion, in sometimes surprising ways. One of the directors started as a secret volunteer on benefits and was then made a director on living wage.

They give us an indication of what is needed to scale change-making activities or develop community resilience: recognising the scale of informal support and resilience people within communities provide for each other *and* as a result bringing more people into social and co-operative networks and creating a pathway to do this.

Explicitly, this is based on the idea of value as a concept which, while drawn from the formal economy, has a counter-basis in the informal and social economy that characterises the activist community.

While this action has reached recognition status, in informal, tacit and explicitly value-countering ways, other people are trying to take the same kinds of actions.

"There were lots of different classes – woodwork for men and many things for women – but now they can't afford it it's all gone."

The way we care

Many conversations about change focus on the need to practice re-valuing activities with other people too. These extend towards therapeutic and empowering nurturing and helping them broaden their personal development or see themselves as acting in ways which challenge stigma.

One particular area in which these actions gain most relevance is around a powerful sense of dismay relating to lost (control of) safe community space. People vary in their beliefs about safety, and why insecurity has such a stronghold, particularly in C1: some blame the male-oriented households of some communities, and feel that young men in particular feel they do not have to listen to their mothers as a result.

But there are many actions being taken to try and counter this lack of care or attention for young people and they draw heavily on what people think about community. Actions they have been able to take to create change speak about a sense of finding and re-making places or reconnecting with neighbours; using this sense of tolerance or acceptance to create connections or support others.

These accounts often invoke the idea that it takes a person of strong values and a broader community acting together to raise a young person and of cooperative and collaborative parenting; as well as finding new value in young people through new narratives about them and their potential. As one social innovation worker describes about her work with young people, *"we see young people as at promise, not risk."*

While these values may not be new, people do feel alienated or distanced from them. They are trying to do something they think doesn't exist in current society, not necessarily nostalgically, but to reflect on their shared values for community and raising young people. They are also trying to combat a perceived change.

Likewise, people reflect that those places with stigmatising perceptions actually hold strong values within the community and do have an alternative sense of worth, whether or not it is recognised by others. For some, what eithers might see as inappropriate or unhealthy actions can be them taking care of each other in other ways. For example, people understand why some people deal drugs as income, or dealing with crime without involving police, or not using public areas for antisocial behaviour can be valued behaviour:

"Everybody looks after everybody, that's what it was like. You just knew everybody — what happens, like, rumours gets around really quickly on this estate, somebody had done something and it's been found out straight away — it was like that. We were that close."

Some of these actions are about challenging perceptions of young people as problematic and helping make change by generating new perceptions, new sources of value for them. They feel that there should and could be new roles and statuses available for young people.

People perceive that as well as the community, community organisations especially have a role in teaching young people to take a place in society. They feel that this can be facilitated and taught with the right role models. Although there are some challenging conceptualisations of the role of the school in each different community, the school is perceived as the best potential route to help students and young people learn how to be part of community and create aspirations to change things for themselves.

As a primary school teacher in C1 says, expectations create change in themselves, and once this is understood, a key part of creating change is subverting dominant narratives:

"My mission is to expect the best for and from everyone, to empower and serve the community too."

At the school, they have tried to take education policy about what constitutes British values taught as part of the curriculum and engage with it in innovative and inclusive ways, countering the thrust of the dominant narrative. To do this the school also recognises there are several bases on which children gain and understand value. They have tried to challenge ideas in education policy about British values being different or in contrast to the values of their schoolchildren, many of whom are from a Pakistani or Bangladeshi background. They have tried to find a sense of mutual belonging. When they discussed shared values with their children they were able to recognise they were commonly based in caring for each other and mutual respect and together they were able to recognise the benefits of having a voice or being represented as being part of a shared community.

While the school feels the area represents many challenges in terms of facilitating their children learning, they feel this approach has helped them manage crisis moments, such as riots that occurred locally. The children were able to create some distance between themselves and the adult role models they have.

Likewise a local community centre tries to have as a purposeful part of its operating narrative the idea that people should be able to come together:

"We don't live in one community, there are many communities. We are all British. We can be open. That's what I like. My intention from the beginning is to bring everyone together. I want people to see you as a person, and not your background and where you came from."

By doing so those running the centre believe that they have succeeded in bringing people together to collaborate, creating a significant ecosystem around it.[77]

Now, *"we've got an eclectic mix in here of public sector, private sector and third sector. If we can connect people for better business then we will do."*

In having this as its aim, the centre is intentionally disrupting and countering a more traditional narrative for community centres that they serve just one group or type of community, or that importance or value cannot be found in the city's periphery.

Likewise, a tenants' association in C3 works hard to facilitate a connective role: from services to social activities. They focus on providing Wi-Fi and free internet connections for job seeking, benefit checks and general information gathering or social networking. They also work with other local groups and a key part of what they do is redistributive: they help local people access funding:

"We're very small, and a bit tatty, but we're quite ambitious."

These actions intentionally counter experienced inequalities of disconnection and a lack of useful services.

Equally a police officer in the area works hard to be comforting as well as firm with young people to overturn and change the relationships he feels young people and police have. He tries to change the narrative about police and young people in the community. He has tried to show them a different side of the police by taking them out with him to try and reassure them about what police do:

"Last week I was joined by a very hard-to-reach young person with concerns over use of 'Stop and Search' who thought police only go into [area] and C1 to pick a fight. He went with us on patrol to a call in North [city] about an elderly lady hearing voices in her garden. We were sat with her 15–20 minutes, and we could see she wanted someone to talk to about her mental state at time; all she seemed to need was a conversation. We made sure her doors were locked and that she felt secure before we left in the early hours. So,

this young person said, 'I didn't realise police did that, comforting old grannies'... you should see the impact of him telling that to his friends and peer group; seeing that police have a softer side compared to just dealing with burglaries and violence."

He says that although historically the relationships between the police and community have been very difficult, taking action that supports the community breaks down barriers, which he has also done by setting up what is now a well-known community group.

"We don't live in one community, there are many communities. We are all British. We can be open."

Martha's community role model

Martha, who now volunteers at a community centre, reflects on how she found role models within her community as a teenager when she was forced to become her mother's care because of mental health. She had a difficult upbringing, with very little adult support. She talks about a consistent role model in her life:

"If a man walked past me, I would cross over. Aside from the shopkeeper, Mr Patel, I could talk to him. He was the only one. I knew him from being a baby, he saw me grow up… He was the only man I could trust."

Martha aims to raise her children and reach out to their children in a similar way, by providing a safe space for them and having firm aspirations for them. To her it is really important that there are things they know about her love for them, that it is consistent:

"They know they are not allowed to go wherever, and with whoever. I always say "no matter what, I will always be your mum, no matter what you do". I never had those words. When they go to the wrong track, I will fetch them back. They could try drugs, but I will fetch them back from it. I never had that."

In other ways, she talks about reaching out to other young people to nurture who are part of her community. She wants to do this as she has a strong belief in the power of the community, and wants to support young people. She is currently researching on need and wants to set up a place for young people in her community to learn in a non-educational environment. She wants to 'give back' what she has learnt about having a role model she can trust and who is consistent in her life.

Likewise, Saima tries to provide strong guidance for her children because she wants to be a strong female role model in a place where there are few expectations about young women having any power in their lives:

"You said your girls are growing up structured. Is it about control?

No, it is not about control. It is about keeping them safe... Girls on the street don't get respected. I don't understand the way some of these families work. My children tell me everything, and they know where to come. A lot of it is about keeping them safe, it is not about control."

In these conceptualisations, the community is intrinsically important to reminding you of a shared value for each other, that you can make, create and re-make value in others as you act. This is akin to a sense of intentional action or praxis.

As well as reaching out to young people, making them feel safe and valued conceptually, and creating safe spaces, overturning their conceptualisations of authority figures, overturning the use of some spaces to create other uses, or exploring different clientele or use can also be transformative in itself to facilitate their belonging. This should and needs also to be physical, and about place itself – location becomes very important. To feel situated and welcomed is very important. Young people especially need to feel that there is somewhere to be and belong.

Attempts to counteract a feeling of being lost for others, can be simply be focused on providing welcoming space. As Sian, one of the volunteers in a community centre, says:

"Three times a week we've done stuff for t' kids. They don't all come to everything, sometimes if they're doing other things they don't come. And they do a dinner for them then for about a pound or one fifty or something. Like toasties and hotdogs and stuff like that they do. So they usually do that in school holidays.

It is quite popular isn't it, that teatime…?

But it's not like a babysitting thing if the little kids have got to come and stop with them. We're not looking after kids. And if they're older and they're behaved we don't mind them coming.

So they just hang around here and play…?

Yeah. There's all toys in t' cupboards so little ones play on t' toys and we get all craft stuff out on a Monday and we do painting or something with them. But then last time – oh and we did bingo with them. Kids like bingo! We did bingo at youth club last week."

The community centre gives young people and other members of the community a powerfully mobilising space to be themselves – to do nothing, to do something, to hang out with others – without having to have an agenda. They don't have to learn anything or do anything if they don't want to. They do have to "behave themselves". Aside from that they can hang out and play, and once a week the community comes together to cook a meal using the centre's facilities that anyone can come along to. This gives them somewhere to be that they belong and feel welcome and has the additional effect of providing a meal which helps with household finances.

As a place – and as many communities are so defined – which has a reputation for being intolerant and closed, this collective activity overturns and rejects this narrative – it provides an alternative for young people.

Changing spaces: sending a signal that our places are not wastelands

Another focus for action can be in the idea of reclaiming space, and re-making it. There are particularly examples of activism focused around place. Classically known as **place-making**, the motivation often channels the idea of disrupting values about waste and space.

Some of these actions are led by people who have recognised a need and formalised it, for example small local groups. Others are strongly community-led, guerrilla-like in their informality and small scale; the way they experiment with use of space is radical, and may sometimes take advantage of a lack of apparent social care over authority-owned land.

Others still have become intentional social innovations, which explicitly reach out to others. One scheme teaches residents of an old people's home and children in C1 to make a plant pot out of discarded milk bottles, as part of a way of connecting people to sustainable lifestyles. This type of activity 'greens' urban landscape, re-uses things considered to be of little value, and teaches people about sustainable lifestyles. The counter-narrative is that anything is possible with effort and goodwill.

In C1, there is also an organisation working to 'green' urban environments. They work with the run-down houses that are found in some neighbourhoods and other neglected spaces.

The explicit aim of the initiative is to see beauty in the urban environment and to see value in densely urban areas as: *"areas of outstanding urban beauty"*:

"That's one thing you can say about [C1], there is a lot of housing and very little green. Having a little greenery outside your front door, is something that would uplift you, and potentially give you longer life expectancy".

The project also seeks to reclaim urban spaces and 'green' them, or to encourage people to revisit growing vegetables in their front gardens, something that was common years ago. It gives value to a different way of using space. The idea for the project came out of an investigation of health and wellness in the area, which involved door knocking.

It became obvious to the women who now run the project when they were knocking on the door of a house with Bangladeshi residents as: *"Bangladeshi gardens were easy to spot, they were always full of garlic, full of beans, coriander, Bangladeshi goats, you name it!"*

This productive use of gardens gave the idea for the project. But why didn't everyone use this space this way? They reflect:

"In the past a big front lawn was an expression of wealth, while to be seen to be growing vegetables was seen as very needy, desperate and making ends meet. In back-to-back housing however it's the most logical thing to do."

There was a stigma behind home-based horticulture which has been both associated with class and ethnicity. Historically such domestic urban gardens were associated with the people within houses. So the resilience of local people against the stigma of front garden horticulture was inspiring:

"She didn't take notice when people said 'that won't grow there' – she just grew it!"

This movement fundamentally seeks to challenge a stigmatic narrative, and revalue something on different lines. Instead of seeing these acts as chaotic, desperate or devaluing the area by being untidy, she recognises that they are in fact valuable strategic wellbeing mechanisms, creating what she sees as community-based economic and nutritional resilience.

Doing this more frequently, recognising it or growing a network around it becomes a change-making mechanism because it explores a sense of value that has been denied to the community, and does something different with land and resources. This activity is another example of a countering narrative: it re-values the concept of 'class' or 'distinction' governing dominant perceptions of what you should do with your garden, those narratives of inequality invoked to indicate that garden agriculture or horticulture is stigmatising – and most importantly think about how to take these strategies beyond status quo, or as system-based responses.

There are various levels this type of activity works on – again it can be explicitly organised, or ad hoc but it is also social.[74]

Ange's vegetable beds

Ange, who looks after her Housing Association vegetable beds, has started to grow vegetables after seeking the permission of the Housing Association to create raised beds and use some communal land for planting to help her fellow tenants afford vegetables that they will share. **She got the idea after visiting a food bank and being turned away because she was single and didn't have children:**

"It kind of upset me because I thought- well there are other single people like me that have come across this situation – what are we supposed to do? I kind of thought to myself- if I can grow my own vegetables, I can make soup. Stick 'em in the freezer they'll last for a lifetime. And I can do that for Karen in the bottom flat. We get the nutrient that we need, and we're growing our own so it's cost effective. And again, I can put back, and anybody who's been in the situation I have, knows that they're going to get something to eat. I just think you've got to give back what you get out."

As she says, she has made a place for herself and gained attention and help from the neighbours, who are in private occupancy housing, in a place she previously thought was unwelcoming.

Working together on something tangible has given them a point of contact and developed their mutual social networks:

"The gentleman next door is going to help us plant stuff because he's avid, avid – he's got a beautiful garden! But he said he's going to come round and help – but again it builds a good rapport with the neighbours."

Essentially, these activities are investing space with different and alternative value and activities – much of which is social as well as material. This innovative behaviour is a way of changing perceptions. While they are often not verbal, they are narrative communication devices within the community and to those outside it.[75]
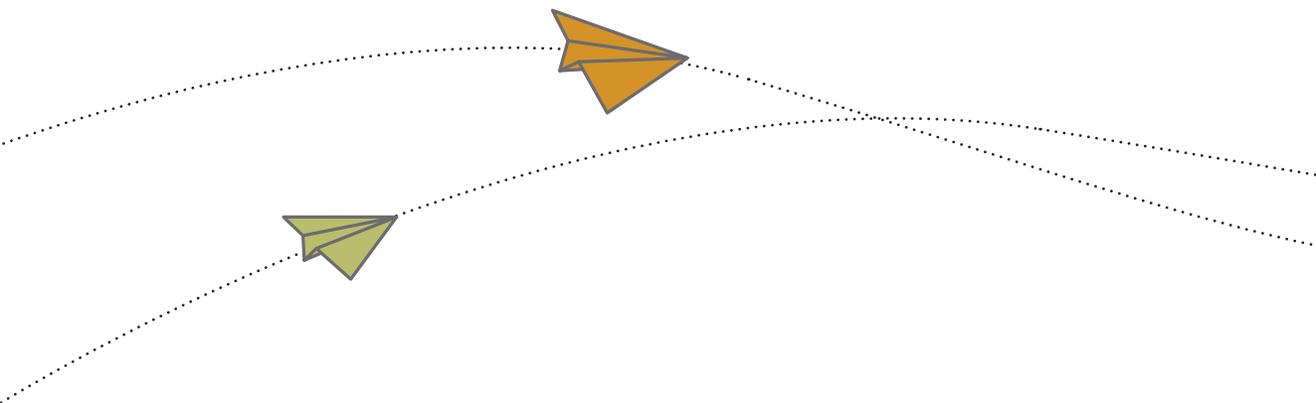
In addition to activities explicitly doing something different with space, there are also acts across the city to give value to what has been thought of as negative space and place. They work on common shared values, but they seek to revalue waste land in a way which reclaims it for the community.

A community garden in old vicarage grounds in C1 was an 'eyesore' and considered wasted space near streets where the houses don't have gardens of their own. A group of local people decided that local people needed a space and took responsibility for it.

In developing it they took it from overgrown and derelict space with four-foot high meadow grass into a garden space serving community needs. They pay a small rent to the diocese and given the success are now looking for more places to turn into usable land:

"What's been really nice is this is the first summer that the garden's actually been a usable space, before it was a space in development. I live very close to the garden and it's been nice to walk past and see people sat in there with a drink, or sat reading books, and doing things that they would do if they had a garden of their own – even sunbathing a few weeks ago when the weather was really hot. I can see people using it and enjoying it and it's really, really nice."

Some of the city's most transformative actions are found in place-making. These can be rejections of other people's disinterest, imbuing something with value. Equally they can actively resist or challenge an idea that it is ok to leave spaces in poor condition for certain communities of the city. As we saw in chapter 2, fears about public space and safety are significant, and reclaiming them in this way is a substantial act.

Reclaiming waste land

Saima shares her experience of helping re-claim a small piece of land next to the school:

"I was pushing my pushchair behind the school, I saw drug dealing going on. I was seeing people getting their fixes by the school. There was no doubt that they were shooting up on, and that ginnel land was for four year olds to play on. I said "you can't let children play there because there will be needles there."

She raised this with the head teacher, who was allowing young children to play on the same land people were taking and dealing drugs on. But despite her protests, she found that:

"The next day my child was playing there!"

To Saima and others in the community it wasn't acceptable to think of children's land as waste: *"I started a petition. Everyone got together, thousands. It was a three year battle. Three to five thousand needles were found on that land."*

The community came together to make something of the space. They 'begged and borrowed' resources, borrowing a digger to clear the land, working with the local police to create a space for people to use, and now with funding from the council it is a thriving community centre.

Reflections on change, communities and barriers

Key findings

- There are widely accepted ideas about which actors in society can make change happen.

- People are innovating in civic spaces for what they see as common good, but the actions or intent is rarely recognised by others, especially as it can easily be blocked.

- The presence of permission apparatus – such as legislation, accountability, resource use or ownership of space blocks change-making or activism can lead to change.

- Permission is also social. When people who don't have this 'social permission' try to make change, they can be rejected by others, made uncomfortable, their contribution de-valued or simply go unrecognised.

- Social relationships and trust in intentions underpin sustainable change-making and any success it has.

- Some change is resisted as it appears to be an articulation of power which is seen as a key feature of inequality.

- This helps us understand that change has 'credible messengers' *and* is based on a dialogue: any scheme, action, plan or intention has an *audience* in the community it is designed for – and also will be negotiated by the community in unexpected ways.[76]

- When people drive change themselves for themselves, they are both challenging inequality and making their lives liveable,[77] but also making change in alternative ways.

- By acting with intent, people are also changing the way they think about their own role, agency and successes and the importance of acting this way.

- People are often concerned with spaces, and taught to provide ventures, but much of what is valuable about their actions are transformations in behaviour, self and practice as well.

As we have explored, people across the community explicitly contest the stigma that they identify as flowing from dominant narratives about what they have to offer. They see this as a central expression of inequality. They do this by counter-narrativising their value or focusing on alternatives, often presenting alternatives to be of value or beyond normative value. These contestations often focus around solidarity or social values of 'community' or proximity.

Our research in the city shows us how people also act in ways which are consistent with their narratives and reported values and worldviews.

At large, across the city there is reported to be a burgeoning ecology of change-making or palliative challenges to inequality. Despite an experience of silos and divisions between actors in this field, some attribute this change to the context of austerity, in which people are better prepared or more open to working together. For example, the voluntary sector is particularly large, and the social economy is growing. People recognise the support of the council and identify individuals such as proactive councillors or community police at times. Across the city, many people are giving their time or scaling their support for others via voluntary organisations, external funding, or sharing expertise.

However, this chapter deals specifically with the idea that many change-making activities also exist, but are not recognised especially when they are at a community level. We see them as misrecognised or invisible. We found and it was reported to us that people are consistently acting to generate change and find new ways of tackling the inequalities they experience. These actions are consistent daily practice-based challenges to inequality. They are often informal, networked, micro-level activities which are about daily acting to resist inequality. Or they can be explicitly change-making- making a change which is more explicit and project-focused. But they are noticeably value-based and there are some commonalities between them.

What draws these actions together is that they are trying to improve things for people in the city and that they are innovative in their context. The challenge, as we will go on to outline, is that if these actions are seen at all by others they are usually seen as neighbourly or just coping. They are often blocked because people do not have the right set of expertise, social networks, accountability, funding, and so on.

As we go on to argue, there are clear reasons why these actions represent socially innovative approaches to tackling inequality, because they generate a change process which transcends a tangible output or artefact. Through the process of involvement in change people reflect that something else happens: they identify themselves as agents having success and impact in the world. There are therapeutic and empowering outcomes beyond the tangible outputs. As we have seen, the link between values and action are key for what might otherwise be termed a learning and experimentation process.

In what follows we go on to explore how people think change happens and their reflections on change. We also explore how, through action, people start to recognise and shape intentional actions. We begin with community support for change.

Why some change fails or succeeds from the community perspective

Reflections on how people try to make change happen, or how they think about inequality and how others might be trying to mediate it, often draw upon failure and success, and the factors that drive them.

There are some differences with how change-making is perceived when change is made from within compared to when it appears from outside. Despite the well-intentioned activities of those people who do not live or associate in the community, communities reflect that outsiders leading change often doesn't work:

"They had another lady who were in charge. I don't know what happened to her, whether they finished her or she left or whatever. And she tried to get things going she said. But she could never get things going."

Likewise community development officers reflect that certain communities won't engage with them and the likelihood of change is low. Beautifying attempts may also be subverted or regarded with suspicion such as when flowers are planted in new communal troughs and young people pull them up.

A challenge with community engagement with specific communities has organisers puzzling over why people don't turn up:

"I think they are quite hard to engage in activities. On one hand they are asking for them, but on the other hand… it is a common problem, when you organise something to attract them, to make them come."

In one particular case, having worked carefully and, having talked over why an event with different organisations talking to each other would be a good idea, the specific targeted community just didn't turn up:

"No, no they didn't see any point in going there. It was meant to be a discussion between the [ethnic community] and the city council, and some representatives from the police. It was meant to be a discussion, so what you don't like, how this could be changed and all that- and the people kind of failed to see the point and they just wouldn't come…"

People door knocking or leafleting are regarded with suspicion, as if they are trying to enforce something. Likewise, people who want to help may equally be regarded as suspicious, with several examples of people being blocked or shut down when they attempt to do things:

"It's just trying to break down those barriers. I think people don't tend to like the police. If there's a problem, people tend to sort it out themselves rather than phone us. It's that kind of area. We sometimes find out about things way after it's all been done and dusted… It's a tight knit community."

What makes people turn others who want to make change away? There is a connection with doubt about commensurate or shared values. People who knock on doors with leaflets or who are seen to be pushing an agenda. In C2, a couple of years ago someone tried door knocking for health and wellbeing schemes and was regarded as someone who was campaigning for a political party. Health schemes can often be resisted because people don't recognise the same need they identify.

People who haven't recognised shared values, fitted in with how the community works or haven't appeared to want to listen to communities, find their success limited, according to the community. This is a process of resistance to false or top down change.

If you cannot be from the community, then establishing a longer-term contact with the community on their terms that appears to make you want to be part of the community rather than serve or change it, and, attempting to work on people's own terms, has helped many people's actions to be taken on trust and has created a level of goodwill.

In addition being visibly seen to choose and value areas which have previously not had interest in them proves a sense of value and commitment. Although people are extremely thankful to a few key councillors within each area, even they are not perceived to be as 'bottom up' or as grounded as others who have had more grassroots level success at getting people motivated, engaged and behind the causes they support.

However, some in particular are viewed to try hard. In C3, councillors engage people by, at least four times a year, putting out a newsletter which reaches most households in the ward. It tells them the issues identified by people last time and what's being done about it. What is happening at a regional and national level and the impact it is having on the city and the ward, and asks them what they think and for their ideas:

"That's a very good, effective system. It keeps people engaged, all the time."

Consistency is key. When it doesn't happen, people can feel lost:

"Charities like them only fund things for a couple of weeks. They give you a certificate and then you're on your way, because they need money coming in as well as out, there's not the funding."

Likewise, Dennis, who provides services in C1, says that trust can be built through being visible, being known in the community and remaining consistent.

What emerges very strongly from any discussion of participation in change is that change happens within communities on certain terms, and that they may connect and engage with the priorities for change in unexpected ways if the change is top-down or seems to be introduced from elsewhere. Likewise, health projects are seen to fail when they want to deliver something specific because people doesn't recognise them as needed or beneficial.

This suggests that ideas or motivations for change have to come from communities, from their motivation and from their narratives for change. It has to connect with values and a narrative they hold about themselves. Otherwise, change is perceived as analogous to colonizing practice, whereby the community must change for the good or experimentation of others.[78]

But comparing the difference between an old and a new community leader and the failure one had, compared to the success the new facilitator has, is that although the latter has much less experience than the former, the latter is from the community, she knows people and wants to work with them to create change, not change them. People felt that the previous community centre facilitator just didn't understand the community and they felt she could never get people involved, by comparison to the new facilitator, who is deeply embedded:

"But you see [name of newer person], she's at school [parent at school], so she meets a lot of people at school. She knows quite a lot of people. As I said, I don't really see people cos I'm not involved with the 'school anymore. And [name] she knows a lot of people from school and stuff with her grandkids you know."

This use of social and kin networks helps people get involved and sustain that involvement. Sustaining low-level involvement appears to be key to developing trust.

What makes it so successful? In difficult scenarios where trust can be an issue, people get involved to accept support, change places or nurture them because of their own social networks and because they trust or respect them, and they know that they share similar values which appreciate the community. Discussing why things don't take off or lack participation, David thinks that it is not because the things on offer aren't good. It is because of the social relationships:

"Yeah… I think it's hit and miss. Because they're really good things, but sometimes, no one comes. That's not really happened here, but I can totally see it happening. And then it doesn't change anything."

His mum is from the community, has experienced many of the same issues others have, and has become known as someone supportive in her community, so he reflects on the difference with how she gets people involved:

"She's great with people- you know, she's great with talking to people, she's good with kids. And you know, she's just very accommodating, she just wants to help people out. And she's just very determined in what she does. When she sets her mind towards something, she'll get it done somehow. And I think she's set her mind towards this. She's always got different ideas,- for community things, or for changing things or whatever."

These examples indicate that being from the community and communicating your success both through verbal and non-verbal narratives pulls in a powerful social and kin-based network that you have that motivates others in the network to join you:[79]

"I'm always willing to help her out, because I think it's a really good thing, that she's doing it – and I want to be a part of it. Not to the extent to she is, because I've got things to do in my life! But, I think the stuff that she does do is really great, and I think if more people were like her, we'd live in a much friendlier world."

In addition, doing something different from the norm also helps, to actively use counter narrative as a tool.[80] As Shannon reflects, her aim is to find something good in what you hate, and use it to create something positive. Her aim is to break the normative way of facilitating young people's voices:

"I want people to express their problems without the conventional way. Growing up I didn't have that. My whole organisation is built on voice. No dream is too big or small. It is about what makes you glad, mad or sad. We want to give people pride back into their community."

This happens across the city. As Dennis reflects about C2, his service is successful and works because he is visible in the community and because his main referrals come from the community rather than being imposed:

"It's the trust element… a lot of the referrals we get are from friends and neighbours."

When asked to reflect on why they volunteer or do something for others, people underscore the importance of personal and community connections. They believe in the person doing something good and share values; they join their action based on their social network. As Elaine says, she 'helps out' at the centre because she knows the person who is already doing something:

"I know [name of centre leader]. And I believe a lot of what she believes in.

Like what?

Trying to make a purpose. Exactly right way of putting it. Yeah. Trying to achieve something for the estate as a whole. I don't know. Just something to do. Cos I'm ill, and it were better than staying in house.

When saying how she has stayed involved, she cites the community spirit and the mutual caring:

"When I moved here I saw [centre leader]. She invited me for a coffee. I was a bit scared to come in, and I came in – and everyone just cared for everybody."

This activity is intentional but not necessarily directional. It is driven by shared trust, and social networks. It doesn't have to have a direction, it just has to be enough of an action, taken with others, to evidence goodwill or shared concerns and values to them:

"So what are you doing here?

Whatever we can."

When Sunny, a centre leader, describes the change he and others made to a derelict piece of wasteland, he describes that people saw him doing something, and joined in because they saw him doing it. In this example, change is action based and socially networked:

"Well it was just through what I was doing really, it wasn't… I didn't go out there and advertise, I didn't go out there and ask people to come. They saw what was going on, they saw me down there, some people got involved, they went back and told other people and then they brought other people down. It was just like that."

When Sunny explains the process of how the community took a piece of derelict wasteland, clearing it of syringes and trees, and establishing a community centre there, he explains that change was never completely directional but was incremental, based on building social support:

"So every time I finished work, I'd go there to the land and just cut down some bushes, trees, pick up some syringes that were on the land. And we just started clearing it. It was like day by day, week by week, let's just see how much we can clear. Then my mate who's a tree surgeon came down, we cut all the trees that were there, eighty odd trees. The community started joining in, young people started joining in, teachers started joining in. We had fires on there to burn all the stuff that we'd cut down and this took like seven-eight months to actually do all that."

The process didn't start with the idea of creating a community centre. It started with the commonly held anger or upset that something should be done about a derelict space that authority figures seemed to be ok with leaving to go downhill. In acting, he and others created momentum that drew other people in, because they could see what was happening and its efficacy.

Where social networks exist, they are a powerful force for change and community resilience in each of the communities we have listened to. People get involved to make change happen and to share or reframe positive narratives of community when they trust in it.

But they often want to make alternative kinds of change happen: they do not necessarily agree or coalesce with what they see as formal priorities for change. They do not always feel well-served by top-down, infrastructural planning or policy. They see and identify 'different' people – a councillor who seems to listen, a person who tried to help them – as exceptional people, people who are exceptions for having listened to them or worked with them. But life is spent for the most part feeling under-appreciated and under-served, with value and aspiration actually coming from your own community rather than from 'outside'.

"I think it's hit and miss because they're really good things, but sometimes, no one comes."

Social permission to act

So far reflections from each community focus on keenness to improve their lives and others, tackling inequality by a variety of means. We also saw that community action was socially networked and was more likely to be sustainable if so. In the next section we will go on to explore the benefits of community-led change and how it is deeply valued for what it could achieve, both in terms of the outputs but also in terms of the outcomes for people and their feeling of agency in the context of challenges.

However, this research has also found that a dominant challenge for people who appear to be on the 'outside' of change-making concerns permission.

Those who have not necessarily been thought of as people who make decisions or have transformative powers have strong concerns about legislation and 'formality' and how they might guarantee the level of protection or scrutiny that they believe is required for these kinds of activities: *"we want to do more but we haven't got an education have we?"*[81]

These fears and identified barriers are not unrealistic or insignificant. They are informed by experiences, interactions and narratives about community expertise and agency, and what happens to them when they try and make change happen.[82]

The narratives which are possibly hardest to contend with suggest that some people are *"just sitting around doing nothing"*, as we were told is the way people think about the community in C2.

These ideas are not just discouraging or stigmatising. As we have seen throughout this report they have real impacts on action[83] – for example in one case by sanctioning someone's benefits because she was on Carer's Allowance but took her grandchildren to school. Other people cite not having valuable volunteering work and experience recognised as a key part of their experience receiving JSA. One person speaks of having to secretly/ illegally volunteer for a social innovation in case her benefits officer finds out about it.

These narratives suggest that only legislatively endowed and formalised state or top-down 'socially good' action is valid.[84] These narratives also express, to a less explicit extent, the idea that people in some communities won't engage with changes (services, schemes or permissibility) *in the right way*.[85]

The formality or permission that people feel they need to make changes is both a legislative reality and also an issue of social capital. Permission is a strong factor in extending your values to (certified) action. When those in C2 first started thinking about the community centre being able to provide services, they would say and think: *"we'd never be allowed to do it."*

This is because people like them don't make change happen, because, they say: *"people like us don't do things like that."*

These issues of permissibility have serious consequences for community-led change and innovation. In C2, the small but consistent group of volunteers want to use the community centre for childcare or other activities that might traditionally be provided by registered bodies, but aren't sure they would be let do it, or how they would go about it. They cannot afford DBS checks, and haven't got health and safety certificates. These are considerable issues, because not only do they speak of a degree of formality, but reinforce the challenges that people feel around the way that they are perceived by others, as non-actors:

"When you say [C2], you see shock and horror. Yeah, we might be council, but a lot of us work."

Those in this community lack the formality or 'know how' inherent to the process. They are not familiar with legal language or the social capital potentially required to make this happen. As the following quote describes, having qualifications is seen to be a necessary goal to achieve aims but is also an impediment, as it is a challenging hurdle to overcome. Constance speaks of how she initially tried to avoid 'bureaucracy' to create a support network in her community:

"And I was really against – cos I asked the housing association if they would support that financially and they were happy to do that so they funded the food. But I was really against starting up the residents' association cos it's another layer of difficulty… anyway, it turned out we had to do it for whatever reason."

The problem is not the motivation, but the legislation:

"We've done kids groups, haven't we? Crafts, playing. We were gonna do more but we want more qualifications. It's getting the qualifications, know what I mean? It's health and safety, food hygiene with COSSH for definite…"

This isn't just a self-perception, or a narrative they form and communicate to perpetuate itself. This experience is a result of interactions with formal agencies. Some initiatives or attempts at change simply cannot be legally facilitated unless by a sponsor or alternative pathway:

"My volunteer ladies wanted to start buddy schemes visiting isolated people on the estate but encountered barriers. They said, 'if you call it a scheme it has to have certificates, if you don't you can be a 'neighbour'."

The buddy scheme did not take off and was given up on because there was no way to make it work in the way it was wanted. The health and safety narrative presented an idea that people might be at risk even if people tried to be neighbourly – they would have no protection. It was not recognised and could not be acted on because they did not have the appropriate 'certificates' or support and it was dropped fairly quickly. This indicates again that people needed a degree of social and legislative permission to continue it. People also wanted more recognition in their actions than that they were being good neighbours. Other people doing such work have frames, terms and titles, why not those in the community?

People frequently focus on the idea that, to start to create change, they need to have a tangible facilitated forum, to help them connect with each other: a focal point of the community or a recognised semi-public institution or space like that a school or community centre provide is valued. Again, this is permissive because these spaces are often formally legitimated (often ownership sits outside the community):

"We need to find a forum for us to come together and that takes work, it can balance back to a capacity thing for any of us, it takes a lot of passion and a lot of work and we already do a lot of that, everybody is putting that in, but how to direct it is a different question."

It can also be challenging when being invited into spaces, and given permission to move between spaces. Constance, a tenant representative on the housing association board, reflects on the difficulties she had in the first six months of being on the board, because she was described as having only a certain type of contribution to make. She had joined the board to get herself out of the house and because a friend had said she'd be good at it, but once on it, she felt she wasn't taken seriously and that her involvement was tokenistic as a result rather than properly valued:

"I just really struggled because the problem with having tenants as board members is that your only qualification is: you live there. So people don't take you that seriously. You know, it's a tick-box and I hate tick-box."
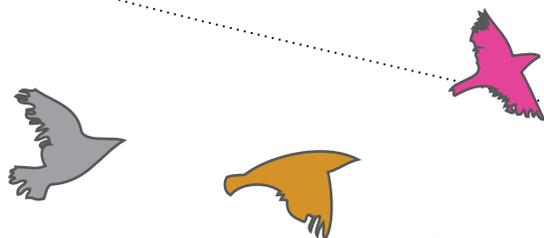
"People like us don't do things like that."

However, as she says below, she began to see value in what she did through doing it. Unlike those who didn't take her seriously, she began to learn and thereby decide that her positionality was, rather than a flaw, a valuable way of serving herself and her community better. She could value herself for what she was: someone who knew how things could go wrong and why people need social housing tenancies:

"So I had to carve out a role for myself really. You know, and I finally came to realise, it took some time to realise what that was – the thing I am is the tenants' voice. I understand what people are going through, I understand how things can go really wrong."

These assessments of action – again we argue dominated by dominant narratives about communities – create a barrier to recognising the powerful change which can happen within communities and how innovation can be informally led or led and experimented with in different guises and levels.

As a result, the aspects that appear to be necessary to underpinning social initiatives creating change – establishing formality and accountability, scaling activities and developing them to extend them past social networks (e.g. to provide for people who are not in a known or trusted network), continuing them on a longer basis – or even making them financially viable – also appear to be something which people living in certain communities cannot do, but others can.

As we have seen across each community there was a perception that other places where people were able to generate this kind of support for change, because they knew how to do things, or got support from various formal agencies, or were within the right 'networks'.[86]

For example, a centre leader who was a community support officer thinks that he was able to establish a charity because he was known and had networks, but that this can disbar others from entry:

"A lot of people give up. I go back to that scenario where I said to you, if I was 'Joe Bloggs' doing this right now – no connection to the police, no connection to the local authority – if I was just a man on the street and I wanted to do this, it'd be very, very difficult for me. Very difficult – I probably would never have achieved it. But that's the problem. That's inequality in itself, because how can someone achieve what I've achieved here?" (Centre leader, C1)

These examples suggest that when attempting to innovate and make changes happen many people experience a level of formality or 'permission barrier that blocks them'.

It is also important to note that people also want recognition, something that values their attempts above and beyond what is already the highly valued recognition of being a good neighbour. This touches on the idea of being of value or being recognised for the good you do in a place in the same way that other organisations or people are.

In practical terms they also need that recognition to sign the necessary forms, attract funding, or get permission to open or operate. This is extremely complex and difficult task to navigate for some, and for others, it is impossible due to the operation of stigma and inequality, and because it requires an engagement with a knowledge regime which is inconsistent, or does not chime, with the knowledge they have.

We use the word 'permission' as a deliberately problematic concept which should make us consider power and control.[87]

The term 'permission' speaks to a latent equality issue about power which taps into challenges made to concepts of civic participation and democracy and allows us to understand and articulate continuing power differentials.

Across the UK there are examples of people who have successfully created different levels of change which has become recognised and sustainable. This shows us that it is possible.[88]

Examples of successful scaled and recognised change appear often to be the premise of people who have been community leaders, but now want to provide a service that 'bridges' to others. These innovations are often the result of community-led action, or of working in a community. When these appear to be most effective for the community, they appear to be based on commonly shared values, and provide a degree of connectivity or commonality.

This motivation to connect people beyond existing social or community networks – to get those who didn't previously know or collaborate together working together – is voiced across the city. These attempts at connecting to others have different layers. People expressed interest in a range of connective practices- from the neighbour they didn't know to the nearby communities – or different status figures – for example the council.

People reported that they felt better able to make connections with others when they felt they had a similar status – when the other people were community groups or possibly similarly disadvantaged and experiencing similar stigma. They identified a certain level of experience that they shared which helped them to act in certain ways, and also identified as a motivation their solidarity gained from common experiences.

However, connecting with others outside your community to make change happen in a permissible way was largely aspirational rather than an acted-on area.
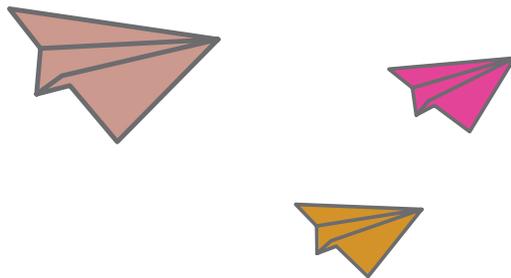
This is where differentials in social permission are significantly social, in line with how people experience inequality. If you can counter or overturn stigmatic narratives within your community, you also need to connect to and communicate them to others, to represent your value to others and have them recognise your value, contribution and action as valid. Not getting that recognition thwarts a sense of agency and change-making action.[89]

A key part of validity for community-led or community-relevant change, or not feeling that validity or recognition, is provided via funding for services and infrastructure, or practices and projects that recognise your community-led priorities. Here, resources are inherently linked to the ability to innovate or act with sustainability or permission. To back new sources and actors in innovation you have to be prepared to re-distribute resources.

As this example in C1 alternatively illustrates, when you can mobilise support from outsiders or from external (re)sources, the results can both resource and facilitate your action but also send a message which confirms your worth to the community:

"I think the council's been brilliant, the council's put their money where their mouth is really. They have put money in. And I'm not gonna doubt them… And their sort of area support team and area communities team has been fantastic. I can't criticise the council at all. We've got the fire service working as well on board. The fire service are helping out with inspections and things. There's a lot of people that are helping us out. And I've gotta say that it's quite overwhelming at times when you get that support. But don't get me wrong, their support comes… it's very limited support, very specialist support. But then you've got to do everything else yourself, which is where it takes a lot of effort and energy to do that."

Recognition is often voiced through funding. Councils or other formal sources often give this funding when the level of change reaches a certain level of visibility or broader social recognition, which is also hard to create the momentum for. But many people can't make this happen, don't have the first step behind them or cannot scale their actions to the point at which they would be recognised as successful or valuable.

The benefits of leading change

As we saw in the previous sections, permissibility and support for change can be a relational and dynamic process. This is key to understand. Change is a dialogic process whatever the power imbalances. All agents can be involved in making change permissible.

We saw that people's efforts were more likely to be supported by a community 'at large' when they felt certain key elements of change were present: trust, social networks, community values, opportunity, inclusion, and so on. Communal or mutual acceptance or 'permission' appears to be a key area across the board.

We saw that change-making or interventions trying to improve people's lives, were at times seen as articulations of power that people resisted or didn't 'recognise' or support.

We also saw that change-making efforts could be thwarted or developed by what we call permission apparatus from external agents: support from others in the shape of legislation and funding, a lack of experience for work, or the normative calculation that something is illegal or 'not allowed'.

We have seen interesting counter-attempts to give support to the community to change and recognise the value of its activities by external groups or organisations: they put 'trust' in people to take their pathways to change in different ways. We recognised that when these activities got this support they had likely reached a level of scale where they became visible to others or were more likely normatively acceptable to them – or that they were forced to accept them through broader community support.

We saw that endogenous change might be facilitated or blocked through networks, at which point it potentially falters, based on the size of the network or its boundedness, or the degree of familiarity with broader systems or funding people have. Importantly the examples of successful community-led change we used, show they received external funding by the time they became more visible and scaled – they were recognised only when they got the support or were led by someone who already had a level of recognition from others.

While more research is needed on providing support for scaling change-making momentum,[90] and whether it is appropriate or not, we suggest that these examples help us think about involvement in and support for community-led (social) innovation and the extent of its ability to disrupt power differentials. They also help us recognise the existence of pre-existing ecologies of action taking place which do not have formal activist labels, or have scaled into visibility or got other levels of patronage outside communities. This report should also help us understand that the language of scaling and growth surrounding (social) innovation risks replicating existing inequalities.

These are both permissive activities, narratives and actions suggesting some learning for tackling inequality.

What we have also explored is that change-making (especially that which emerges from communities without support), appears to be learning-focused and experiential. Here change-making occupies a practice- based and tacit field of innovation and aligns with a narrative.

We argue that it is also possible that permission can come from the community, through action, reflection and learning, expressed as 'learning by doing', and with the help of others. In so doing it may be a more sustainable type of change, because it carries with it a truly transformative narrative about community agency and efficacy. It is egalitarian in its means as well as its ends. That is to say the way it works challenges inequality as much as the impacts of it do.

Reflections on how social change has happened within communities and the impacts of community-led change develop a notion while values are considered inherent or timeless, actions are presented as something new and dynamic: learning is a state of being which has changed because of an individual and social interaction with societal change or the impacts of inequality over time.

Learning by doing

People also acknowledge a transition of self and a sense of support for others developed through proximity.[91]

All of these people have learnt something about the way they operate in a community and what the values of their actions are and can be, resisting a stigmatic narrative of self and place.

Here there are strong social and therapeutic or self-empowering implications.[92] As Sian, one of the volunteers at the community centre reflects, getting involved helped develop her self-esteem, and sense of value. Because the centre is informal she has developed her role there, becoming a key part of it. Now she thinks about the centre and how she could improve it all the time:

"And now I can't stay in the house cos I think of this place. So I can't win. When I'm supposed to be resting I just think about this place."

People generally agreed, recognising that connecting with others and supporting them has strong positive impacts on their own wellbeing. By getting involved, people genuinely feel that they feel better themselves. By reaching out to others and helping them feel more included, they now feel more included too.

Constance, who has become a source of inspiration for many in C3, talks about how her realisation of her agency and efficacy came through being engaged in starting small levels of change, seeing its impacts in the community, and becoming more confident about her agency continued to spur Constance into action and help her build further momentum. Like other community innovators, she talks about how the scale of action was at first very small:

"So I organised a cream tea just to see if there was any interest, so we got a lot of people attending that.

And so I said well stuff it, I'm just gonna do some lunches, and that's how the lunches started…

So I said if we're gonna do it, we're gonna have to do it right, so we started doing the big events. So we did a barbecue in summer and a teddy-bears' picnic… And I just realised how much need there were and how a tiny bit of support can make a massive difference you know."

Perceptions of what it might take to create change appear to be larger in scale, but in actuality changes can be small, incremental and profoundly connected to values. To Constance, people are now starting to know that they have someone to be with, someone to call if things go wrong and they can't sort them out for themselves:

"So that's what it's about. It's just about creating a support network. But it works in lots of ways cos you know, people do support each other. It's not all about me. There's all sorts of little bits and pieces going on. One of the old ladies that I'd never met before, but comes to the lunch club rang me up saying 'Constance, my doorbell's not working'. And it's massive to her cos she can't hear someone knocking necessarily, so my son went round. And it couldn't be fixed cos the batteries had leaked and everything so we just ordered her another one online and my son went and fitted it for her."

Likewise, Sunny, who set up and now runs a centre, feels that one of the impacts on the community of establishing a change was them seeing the benefits of taking part and the growth of an innovative network. He also feels that the centre established itself because it was so vested in and driven by the people in the community. When he describes how the community centre was set up, he considers that change was incremental and accidental before growing and developing momentum based on social recognition and support from others in the community.

He explains that first there was a derelict space. He and others decided the derelict space was dangerous and unacceptable, but it was hard to overcome the permissions they needed to change it. As it was community land, they started to try and change it. Change happened day by day to create this new space, but importantly it happened with and was driven by and with other people in the area:

"So every time I finished work, I'd go there to the land and just cut down some bushes, trees, pick up some syringes that were on the land and we just started clearing it. It was like day by day, week by week, let's just see how much we can clear. Then my mate who's a tree surgeon came down, we cut all the trees that were there, eighty odd trees. The community started joining in, young people started joining in, teachers started joining in. We had fires on there to burn all the stuff that we'd cut down and this took like seven-eight months to actually do all that."

The process was incremental, and wasn't intentionally directed to create the community centre. Rather, it started with the commonly held idea something should be done about the derelict space, that it was not good enough for the community. In acting, he and others created momentum that drew other people in. Other people became key to the change, and the fact he was doing it helped it grow.

He says that he has found that this is likely to create a more sustainable endeavour, one which will pull in engagement. He thinks what works best is when people are mentored and coached to take action on the things they want to do and as a result realise those actions have value and are recognised by others:

"We've used people from the community to set up something for the community. It's a perfect example of sustainability, it can't be police and council putting stuff on; sometimes you just need to develop and guide people, tell them you've got value and you're worth it."

Once the change begins to happen, as we have noted, other people begin to recognise that it could come through their own actions. As Martha from C2 reflects, she has been learning while she has been helping out at the community centre. This has helped her think about what else she could do and how else she could personally change things in the area:

"My main aim is kids with disability, learning, ADHD and behavioural. There is nothing for them. If I can get a youth club for them or something for the kids, I would be happy.

"What are your ideas and what do you want to do?

I want to bring all the community together, no matter if you have a disability or not. I just want to do stuff like family fun, and do something of that here. That's why I got on board."

She has learnt that maintaining and explicitly sharing through narrative a community-focused presence in the community will help others:

"Different things to try and get the community together. If that doesn't work then I have failed, me, personally. My aim is to walk around the estate – not everyone knowing you, but everyone talking and getting along. Because I have had the help I have had."

This aim happens with the community-at-large as the focal point of the action. This shows us that socially innovative activities can be about relationships transforming, and do not have to be artefact or venture based, or based around a formal given space:

"It just takes one thing – one day someone knocks on the door and introduces themselves, the next day you accept a parcel for them, then you might watch their kids for them, next thing you're having a BBQ together."

Constance outlines that you don't have to give or get something back to have an impact, be helped or help others. There is a broader networked impact to be aware of:

"So you help people when you can and they help you when they can, and if it's part of a community it's not just a reciprocal arrangement because your neighbours might be old and might be able to do very little, but that doesn't matter because if someone else is doing for Ange what she needs it all just passes on, so that's what we're aiming to achieve."

This broader sense of community acknowledges and narrativises shared values to collaborate with. These are positive (counter) narratives of community based on the idea of counter-conduct. For example, C2 has a very positive narrative of self in its conceptualisation of itself as tight knit and close: while to others this can thwart their attempts to know it better, this has helped it create socially networked change which, however small, is building its momentum. It could be scaled if better understood and celebrated as a basis for collective action.

David thinks there have been real changes in C3 as a result of the small steps that the local community have been taking towards supporting each other socially:

"It's like if you needed a favour: before it's like 'ah I'd better ask a family member or something, or a friend' and that's a nuisance because they live far away. But now, it's just like – 'ah I'll go next door and ask whoever', if I need to borrow a hammer or something, because you know them."

"We've used people from the community to set up something for the community. It's a perfect example of sustainability."

Likewise, Laura, who has little family support and has felt very socially isolated in the past as a result, has recently moved into C3, and is gradually starting to find life different through being part of the community and seeing its activity. She reflects on how her neighbours have recently been able to help her feel like she has more resilience in emergencies, especially given a challenging childcare scenario:

"Next door – she's nice. She knocked on the door and introduced herself when I moved in. [One of the children] had a seizure a couple of months back. Well, he had four, they was one straight after the other and I didn't want to phone an ambulance because what do I do with the other three, it was like four o'clock in the morning, they've got school – what do you do? I said well you're not gonna leave your child in the back of an ambulance by himself while he's fitting, not knowing if he's gonna be dead at the other end. You're just not gonna do it, and no parent would. Or the other is they can get a police officer to sit in my house with the kids so I can go with him, which for me is more plausible. But then my neighbour, bless her, stepped in. She went, 'ring me, and I'll come round and watch the kids'. So that were really nice of her. It's nice to have because I've nobody you see, it's just me and the kids. It's hard."

This activity and its introduction into the community helped her personally to start to think about her own meaning in the community. She has gone from feeling like a very isolated resident to someone who knows people, and who others value:

"I used to go to pick up my kids from school with my head down, as I had no confidence. But around here everyone says hi, and I feel totally different – people actually want to know me."

The actions have been indicative of social change that has helped wellbeing and a sense of purpose, a renewed sense of how the community 'sees each other'. For participants, there is a reflection that when they see themselves as interlinked and having common objectives and values, they understand each other differently, and they have a new value-based narrative about the community and their agency. They are able to celebrate and give more importance to the counter-narrative they already had. As David goes on to describe about the changes locally:
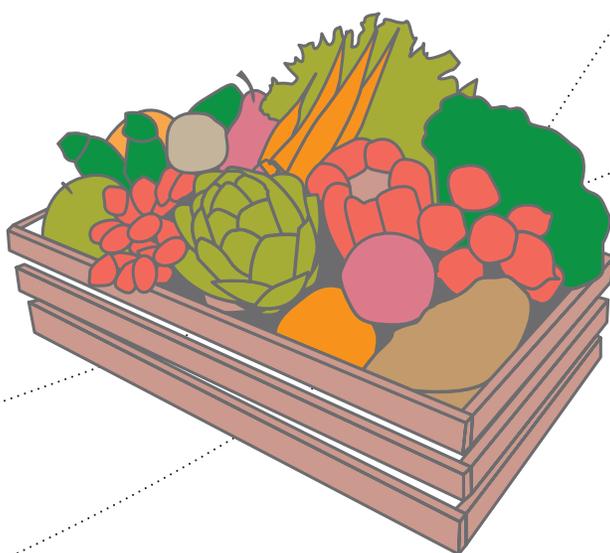
"I think… the kids who live around always played together somewhat, but I think they definitely do more now. Because they all hang out at these events, and they're always playing in the streets together. At the same time it lets them gets to know the adults more, which is safer for them – because they've got people looking out for them. And the whole thing is just more friendly."

As Constance says about Ange's aim to set up a community-garden and get her neighbours more involved, there have been therapeutic benefits to the community, but also to Ange's sense of self, through doing this. Place-making has helped a sense of identity:

"It's just nice for Ange to feel part of something, you know, that she's valued, that she's got an opinion. Self-esteem is such an amazing thing – her esteem's raised, she's got more people that she's got links to. And you know, Ange's such a generous and willing person- lets harness that and give her a role, but also value her! And that puts her in a better place as well- so we all benefit from that!

Here there is a sense of community solidarity, a solidarity of proximity, common experience and civic values. The changes to a sense of self- realisation that people describe come through action and narrative. They are akin to praxis:[93] the idea that through action and reflection with intent to change society people can come to a better intentional understanding of a situation. Importantly, the narrative actions that people take also challenge inequalities of distribution and recognition.[94] Whether or not they achieve something more fundamental is unclear, but appears possible, even when facing great inequality and challenges.

The benefits of community action have been looked into and also clearly need to be further explored and unpicked. Although significant, it is important to note most of these actions appear to remain fairly invisible. They are not to replace the state or needed support. Instead, people are generally working together in a rejection of what they see as dominant normative behaviour or dominant narratives. They are creating resilience by resisting – quietly, tacitly, invisibly. These are challenges to dominant ways of doing things. They are trying to change something that is unequal, something that is wrong, and make it better, not in the form or mode that already exists, but in new normative ways.

PART 2:

Conclusion: thoughts on how to support community-led innovation

We found that amongst 'ordinary people', ideas and analysis about inequality but also how to change it are current, constantly invoked, and exist beyond the realms of specific policy experts or issues.

However, we also found, and people articulated, that they were hopeful, that they daily act on these issues to cope with them. People constantly set out to tackle the inequality they perceived. We found, and people reported, an ecology of activism and change-making that was small in scale, but made a profound difference to the way people felt. People reported an increased sense of resilience and wellbeing which was social in nature.

We also recognised the presence of collective strategies at community level, where groups of people, women in particular, worked together informally to provide a service or support which would tackle the inequality they saw. Recognising that they did not have resources or power/ control over the neighbourhood, they nonetheless did what they could to change the way things were. For example, if diagnosing nobody in authority to care about the outcomes of young people, they would both outwardly strategize to overcome that sense of abandonment by setting up meals, mentoring and support and creating expectations of young people that they achieve or be included. These strategies and innovations set out to make a change and work in a new way. They were explicitly directed at change, not just coping.

In tackling inequality, it is really important to note that people would also tackle all the sources of inequality, not just work to mediate impact. For example, if inequality was perceived to be social, the means and ends of tackling it would be socially inclusive or considerate too, involving more people in decision making and responsibility. While we first recognised the presence of an active sharing economy, there was also a social transaction taking place, which sought to re-value and give a sense of worth to people who felt dispossessed. Counter narratives or different stories of place, community, solidarity and care became a central part of the struggle for recognition and an explicit connection made between recognition and redistribution of resource. Here, people were consciously not replicating inequality by re-enacting it in decision making or their strategies, but thinking about the dynamics and structures of inequality, then challenging that in their everyday practice. Here there was a significant link between narratives, values and intentional practice.

However, the power and resource differentials make this a struggle. We saw that despite this consistent and micro dynamic community change-making, it was often blocked. An expectation that people without 'expertise' do not make change happen, or cannot contribute was strong. While people questioned it, they rarely had the influence to show or articulate a difference.

However, we saw that the benefits of community-led change were strong. Firstly, change had credible messengers and was a relational, dialogic process. Like the way we receive and interpret what someone says and decide if it is valid or not, people reported that outsiders trying to make change happen in their communities didn't often work. Trust, social networks and efficacy were seen to be key components of change and were not often described to be present where the change was not connected with as a community priority. This meant that the community could give or withhold permission too.

Where change was led by a community member, or the community member provided the point of connection to it, people also reported that change was catching, infectious: it would be joined in with if the change was being led by people they knew and could be seen as efficacious. People joined others they knew when they could see that their actions were having an effect and they supported their intentions and values, seeing a shared mutual commitment. Here, they enjoyed the process of change as much as the outcome of the change. This developed momentum and participation which was significant, especially given the lack of resources. **We have called this the social permission to act.**

Significantly, by being involved in change, people reported that they were 'learning by doing'. They were reflecting and experimenting as they went, learning that their actions had impact and worth, learning that they could have impact in the setting and through seeing the positive effects with people they knew. There were wellbeing impacts here, as people reported an increased sense of self, community and control and described the changes in their self-perception and social relationships. They were also able to describe the changes in their communities.

Importantly, most change wasn't originally directional in intent, it came through experimentation and trial. However, it was intentional: people attempted to challenge something they thought was unacceptable and undermining community wellbeing. This was strongly self-empowering, improving wellbeing and participation.

Distinctly, it is important to note that people recognised that these actions fell into the realm of struggle. These were narratives of people who were not prepared to accept inequality was inevitable, who were barred from engagement in other usual or normative ways. Sometimes they reached visibility and scale and were recognised by others, with support, resources and encouragement from formal institutions, in which case the change became far more dramatic, scaled and 'acceptable'.

But people also reported that they were blocked or sanctioned too by other formal institutions. Here people were also concerned with being recognised by others and having a space to congregate in (especially if that space had a status to it).

We think that hearing this way from community voices teaches us a powerful lesson about inequality and change-making, and teaches us lessons for how to support it. This research shows us that change is happening in each community, as a matter of personal and collective endeavour but is often missed, goes unrecognised or is undervalued.

We argue that our aim should be to understand these values to help catalyse the actions relating to them and to create sustainable action.

Fair societies are built on equitable distribution of wealth and resources, development of skills and recognition of potential and aspiration. Too much work to incubate social innovation currently depends on support being provided when the momentum has already built, when the action has built a degree of recognition. Without building blocks or pathways, recognition of a valuable contribution to society, permission to innovate, communities are under-served in terms of facilitating sustainable change, until they make change happen. When this happens, examples show that at a certain level of formal or scaled innovation they receive support.

Recognising the different types of activities inherent to and found in communities as degrees of social innovations in their own right would help us understand more about people's agency and the ways in which they interact with services or others to create change that could be better understood and supported. Recognising agency to be an inherent part of community dynamics would be essential to thinking about sustainability. Recognising that for many people the desire to change and its active momentum and progression is based around **their connectivity, common values and desire to achieve 'social good',** would help facilitate a longer lasting and growing base for change.

Further acknowledging that change-making creates and generates social networks even as it works on them would have true potential to create and grow wider scaled networks for change.

"Where change was led by a community member, or the community member provided the point of connection to it, people also reported that change was catching, infectious...we have called this the social permission to act."

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Zelizer, V. (1994). *The Social Meanings of Money*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press

Jones et al, 2004

Notes

1. For additional reference points to our work see 'Valuing Place: The Importance of Place for Understanding Inequality and Taking Action in Wales' (2017) and 'Humanity at Work: Mondragon, a Social Innovation Ecosystem Case Study' (2017), 'Adapting to Change: the Role of Community Resilience' (2012). Young Foundation.

2. See Smith et al (2015: 308), who reviews who the ideal person is to share stories in order to achieve impact.

3. For example, see work on Oscar Lewis' Culture of Poverty thesis, the defining meta-narrative of the 20th century. It outlines that poor people perpetuate their own poverty, and was particularly popular with both Thatcher and Reagan administrations. It shaped perceptions, problems, and was part of solution identification. Bourgois provides a good criticism of this in his work with Puerto Ricans in New York (see 1997/2003). For another more recent example see work on 'Learned Helplessness', a more recent discourse that has developed traction in the UK in the past few years, now being applied to homelessness. See Skeggs & Loveday on 'New Labour' (2012).

4. See Jensen, T (2014) on poverty porn in the media, presenting poverty porn as doxic.

5. See Laura Nader's seminal piece Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up (1972). More recently see Dorling, D 2014. He argues that 'Inequality is more than just economics'.

6. Nader (1972), ibid.

7. See Standing, 2012 on precariat.

8. Maynard et al (2015) p. 27

9. Lister has continually noted the voicelessness of 'the poor' in the UK and attempts to reconstruct poverty as a human rights issue (see for example 2013 'Power, not Pity': Poverty and Human Rights. Ethics and Social Welfare. 7 (2). Pp: 109–123). There is also a wealth of literature internationally on indigeneity and subalternism that speaks to many of these themes.

10. According to ONS data specific to the city in question. Full references have been redacted here and from the bibliography in order to maintain the anonymity of the city and authority involved.

11. Stapleton, K, Wilson, J 2017. Telling the Story: Meaning making in a community narrative. Journal of Pragmatics. Vol.108. Pp.60–80. Herzfield (1997- see pages 112–114) also warns against structural nostalgia here, noting that ordinary actors can manipulate and idealize historiography, and narratives can be contingent.

12. Narratives are often 'unstable', that is they are changeable expressions, often of the need for change or in the context of potential change (Jackson 2006, in Araugo, 2016).

13. This view is also present in other research observations, for example, see Skeggs, B & Loveday, V 2012, 473)

14. Eizaguirre et al remark that a policy focus on social cohesion and social capital mask differentials of power and political participation (2004).

15. Wilson, J & Stapleton, K 2017 Telling the Story: Meaning making in a community narrative. Journal of Pragmatics. Pp. 60–80. Pg. 74.

16. It would also be true that even in describing this report outcome to people the author has heard on multiple occasions a particular place is racist, for example. Also see Mackenzie, L 2013 for descriptions of the stigmatization of people and certain places.

17. Anthropologists have long argued that money and its exchange is socially imbued and that transactions underpin social relationships. See Mauss 1925, Hart 1973. More recently, Lister argues "the experience of poverty is about more than this. It is not just a disadvantaged and insecure economic condition but it is also a shameful social relation, corrosive of human dignity and flourishing, which is experienced in interactions with the wider society and in the way people in poverty are talked about and treated by politicians, officials, professionals, the media, and sometimes academics" (Lister 2013 referencing Lister 2004).

18. For more references to place and its characterisation see 'Valuing Place' Green, H & Hodgson, M 2017. Young Foundation.

19. See Furniss 1999:13. She argues that huge energy is devoted towards conceptualising difference and why it exists, as negating its difference.

20. We have also looked at this, although not to the same detail, in our work 'Valuing Place:

21. Othering of peoples, individuals, places and cultures is well-established. It refers to the idea of conceiving of others as containing difference or distinction (Said 1975). It has also been well-treated in ideas about poverty, or class in the UK (see Shildrick, Mackenzie or Lister's work for example). Here we are focusing on how the community perceive it.

22. It is not the point of this research to corroborate people's perceptions but the researchers did note various descriptions of each community that characterised them in certain ways.

23. There is a large body of work on the representations of the poor in the UK and internationally. Here we are more focused on how people recognise this scrutiny.

24. However, as Shildrick & MacDonald (2013) have noted about discussion of poverty, people found it more amenable to discuss 'inequality' than say that they were living in poverty, although descriptions of household income and their situation would also make implicit and explicit acknowledgement of being 'poor'.

25. Prepayment meters may be installed in houses with residents who have poor credit or payment histories, or don't have bank accounts. Pre-payment meters tend to be a more expensive way of paying for energy than those who can access direct debit.

26. This has also been seen by 'experts' to be a well-established inequality issue. It has been noted that it should be essential to regulate to "ensure universal service for things like telecoms and post (average geographical pricing) and to serve specific less profitable segments (social tariffs, light user tariffs, basic bank accounts etc)" because often these are provided on a market basis and considered on the basis of profitability. (Hirsch, D, 2013 Addressing the Poverty Premium: Approaches to Regulation). It is also important to note that the poverty premium has been viewed by companies to be a way of attracting market share in new economies (Kay & Lewenstein 2013).

27. Financial exclusion is a means of thinking about the exclusionary processes of socioeconomic inequality. As a concept it examines and outlines some of the processes of exclusion of having limited financial capability. Exclusionary forces include barriers to accessing mainstream financial services, for example being unable to get a bank account with a high street bank, or increased likelihood of usage of high cost credit, or paying more money than others might to access services, what is referred to as a poverty premium. In general this makes it a good perspective to use as a baseline guide to understanding the detail and context of how people's lives are prejudiced by the factors and services they interact with every day.

28. People living in specific areas are forced to pay more for the services they use and consume (Hirsch, D 2013).

29. A study by the Resolution Foundation found that charging cash points are very commonly found *(Resolution Foundation, 2014; In Brief: Financial Exclusion)*.

30. Ungar (2011) cites studies (Skinner, Matthews Burton (2005), which note the inability of economically disadvantaged families to access community resources without privately owned transport, describing the 'intense effort' that goes into accessing and maintaining a network of services, and the relative ease of accessing healthcare anywhere with private transport.

31. Resilience has been a contested term in the UK. It can be referred to as a state of adaptability or endurance to ongoing and new circumstances and is being further broadened to review the ecology of resilience, and the interplay between people and their communities. See the Young Foundation's report on the complexity of the term resilience in Community Change and resilience (2012). Also see Ungar (2011) on community resilience in adversity which describes the different features of resilience in any community setting, and Pfefferbaum et al (2017), both definitions of which open out the idea of resilience to the things which people do jointly in adverse circumstances to respond, adapt and limit threat. In particular Ungar argues that: "resilience is best understood not as an individual's capacity to withstand adversity, but instead as the capacity of individuals to access the resources they need to sustain well-being *and* the capacity of their communities and governments to provide them with what they need in ways that are meaningful (2011).

32. Positioning oneself relatively to perceived victimhood is not considered unusual and is, like racism, complex. There are much – studied reasons given for people who others would consider 'victims' to deny victimhood or to position themselves relatively. See, for example, Shildrick & MacDonald on poverty narratives (2013:288) and bell hooks on refusal to position as victims (1992:18). Positioning things this way could also arguably be viewed as a source of resistance (see bell hooks 1992). It should also be noted as a potential and probable researcher effect.

33. See, for example, 'In Search of Respect in El Barrio', then a ground-breaking ethnography of inner-city Puerto Ricans in New York. Bourgois describes how the community is daily faced by a cultural assault on their dignity when they leave their neighbourhood. (see methodology chapter, 'Introduction' Pp: 1–18.) Also see bell hooks 1992 on racist assaults and pain Pp:15–18.

34. Ungar (2011: 1745), has noted that studies show that people living in economically deprived communities are less likely to be unable to influence social discourse regardless of the state of play or evidence. Ungar specifically focuses on deviance and educational attainment. Also see Fraser (1995:280) quoted in Skeggs, on recognition which relates to the idea of being denied full participation in social life (Skeggs,)

35. Our survey shows that in 2016, fears about anti-social behaviour in public spaces were shared by people in each ward of the city, with 17% of people feeling it is one of its biggest challenges for their area.

36. For other examples, see Main, K & Sandoval, G (2015).

37. Referred to as homeostasis in wellbeing and community wellbeing literature.

38. Links to the PRS and poverty are well documented. See research by the JRF (2017) on poverty and forced moves.

39. Private Rented Sector housing is housing provided on the private housing market as part of a rental agreement.

40. (see Jones et al, 2004). Poor conditions make houses colder, so they have to be heated, to name but one issue. This is more expensive. Fuel poverty more generally is a significant issue for households in the city.

41. Churn is a term used to describe the take up and ending of tenancies or housing occupancy. It is especially relevant to the Private Rented Sector, which has a high level of churn by comparison to other housing tenures. There is still some uncertainty about what causes churn. See Kemp, P. and Keoghan, M. Movement Into and Out of the Private Rental Sector in England, Housing Studies 16 (1) pp. 21–37, 2001 for a discussion of the possible causes.

42. Tied housing is accommodation linked to labour; generally found in agricultural economies, childcare or in the informal economy. Your accommodation needs are met in return for work.

43. A Super Output Area is a specific way of aggregating data re: place. They are geographical and designed to help reporting of needs in places.

44. See James C Scott. 1985. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. London & New Haven. Yale University Press. p. 178.

45. Mayer has noted how the framing of capital as social and the labelling of asset in community development suggests that like economic capital this can grow through utilization. The challenge is the belief that the community as a whole stands to gain economically from the presence of social capital. Mayer, M 2003, The Onward Sweep of Social Capital: Causes and Consequences for Understanding Cities, Communities and Urban Movements. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research Vol 21 (1). 110–32.

46. Maynard et al (2015) argue that analysing the relationship between an ecosystem of services in any given area and the impacts on human wellbeing is complicated, but necessary.

47. Standing (2012) p. 603

48. We have taken a similar binary approach before, in Valuing Place (2017), to introduce clarity in appreciation of the idea communities, places and people are complex. However, this report focuses more on the idea of counter-narrative and resistance. It also appreciates that it is necessary to understand people's values (for example, see Dunn (2010) on how values affect actions.)

49. See Shildrick & MacDonald's treatment of poverty discourse and 'managing' where people deny poverty and invoke dominant discourse about the poor (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013).

50. Narratives and knowledge are constantly being made and remade (see Freire, chapter 2, Pedagogy of the Oppressed).

51. TEPSIE (2014). Building the Social Innovation Ecosystem. A deliverable of the project: The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research.

52. See Scott's classic work on peasant resistance: he argued that there are many everyday ways that people can resist dominant forces in their behaviour. Yet he also argues that it would be a mistake to believe that these alternatives or forms of resistance to dominant culture exist in opposition to a dominant culture; they exist in spite of it. Scott, J 1985 Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

53. It is often said that social innovators are more compelled by the practicality of the mission than recognising and framing themselves as making change (Heales, Hodgson, Rich 2017 'Humanity at Work' London. Young Foundation).

54. See Hodgson, M 2016 'A Story of Leeds: Changing the World Every Day. London. Young Foundation.

55. For a discussion of habitus and prescriptive roles within society, as well as social capital, see Bourdieu's seminal works (Bourdieu, P 1997 Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. & Bourdieu, P. 1991 Language and Symbolic Power. J. Thompson (transl.). Cambridge: Polity Press).

56. Narratives have a specific emplotment quality to them, making events and everyday occurrences related and giving them meaning and temporality (Bushell et al 2017)

57. Studies of narrative in therapeutic sessions suggest narratives can reinvigorate and reassure (see Smith et al 2015)

58. See James C Scott's seminal observation that people could engage in everyday acts of invisible, tacit or quiet resistance, behave in contingent or conforming ways, especially when there were dangers of openly or violently resisting or challenging, or when they did not have the luxury of doing so. This work has been built on by a body of theorists and has m.

59. Araujo, N 2016: 3.

60. We have not explicitly asked people about democracy and participation in this research, however themes of democracy, participation and recognition surface as routes which should be explored in future work. In as much as discussions of inequality were not 'qualified' or questioned by researchers, so too we have not qualified any discussion of the city's celebratory narrative. Instead we talk about why these alternative narrative depictions are important and how they are significant.

61. Chatterton refers to this as 'commons': "at its most basic level is a commonly understood spatial motif, evoking bounded entities, which exist to nurture and sustain particular groups." Pp: 626.

62. Consanguineal ties are blood- or marriage based ties which conform to kinship norms in each society.

63. Resilience is the ability to adapt or maintain consistency in response to challenges or change. As with many other concepts it is politicised, and contested, but it remains relevant here to the way people think about their ability to face challenges and change that happens to, rather than with, them.

64. Our survey took place 2/3 of the way through the research, with the aim of establishing the extent to which people agreed with values which had been identified through qualitative research.

65. 54% picked this as one of their top 3 priorities.

66. This is quite different to narratives or discourses identified elsewhere by others. See, for example, Shildrick & MacDonald or Skeggs.

67. This is partly attributed to the shared experience of inequality in each of the communities we worked closely in. However, survey data also suggests that a view of the city being caring is shared across each ward.

68. We explain this element of praxis in more detail later in the report.

69. Organic solidarity or solidarism is the idea that a collective experiences shared aspects of human experience and has a viewpoint to put forward which differs from individual viewpoints. Organic solidarity refers to the transition from capital, 'mechanical solidarity' which causes anomie, to organize differently.

70. In our survey of all wards, 83% of residents agree that issues facing their neighbourhood are important to them.

71. The idea that gifts and economic transactions are a form of social transaction underpinning social relationships and solidarity as much as a form of economic transaction are very well documented in anthropological literature (for first and early examples see Mauss, M. Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques [An Essay on the Gift: the Form and Reason of Exchange in Archaic Societies] 1925, transl. 1954 by Cunnison, I. Or Malinowski, B 1922. Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea: London. Routledge.) Zelizer has argued that philanthropists are 'charismatic givers', because they make visible gifts to poor communities (Zelizer, V. 1994. The social Meanings of Money. New Jersey: Princeton University Press). Using this conceptualisation of charisma we argue that charismatic gifts strengthen social bonds.

72. It is important to note that at times this was invited through participatory action research (PAR) so at this points there is clearly a researcher effect. However, many times actions or reflections were raised independently of and before PAR stages of work, in initial or in-depth conversations.

73. An ecosystem is a biological term relating to the interactions of different organisms in an environment especially how each enables other aspects of the ecosystem to survive or flourish. It is of much interest in Social Innovation, partly because it is recognised that social innovation needs support. See 'Humanity at Work' (2017) for a description of different treatments of ecosystems.

74. It appears that some of the less formal or scaled activities which lean more towards collective solutions tend to involve women. However more research would be needed here.

75. Arauga argues that narrative acts do not have to be verbalised to be performed. See Arauga 2016, pg 3. Araujo, N., Engendering cosmopolitanism: Gendered narratives of instability and agency, Women's Studies International Forum (2016), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2017.06.001 1–8

76. Many people agree that narrative is a social dialogue act based at an intersection of dialogue space, text and performance (See Andrews, 2014, Smith et al 2015;). Here we are reading change-making as having the same properties

77. See Skeggs, B (2012, Skeggs, B & Loveday, V 2012).

78. TRUE data 2017.

79. Here we could also refer to the idea of a 'credible messenger', someone who is trusted in, who may have more efficacy in communicating ideas or being accepted than others (Smith, B 2015: 308).

80. In organisational studies it is noted that narratives can be a tool for what is referred to as 'behavioural contagion', where normative or deviant behaviour can change on the sharing of narrative. As noted elsewhere, the credibility and influence depends on the storyteller (see Martin, S. 2016 Stories about Values and Valuable Stories: A Field Experiment of the Power of Narratives to Shape Newcomers' Actions. Academy of Management Journal. 59 (5), p.1707–1725.

81. A report by the JRF noted that fear of regulation and 'risk' litigation held people back from activism. It notes the active regulation of everyday life and saw it as holding people back in terms of their anxieties but cites research that people are not actually held back by decisions being turned down. Allen, M, Clement, S & Prendergast, Y 2014 A Can-Do Approach to Community Action: What Role for Risk, Trust and Confidence? Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

82. Chatterton has noted that when considering change-making there are highly uneven outcomes for those trying to put down markers against the status-quo" (2016:412).

83. Wolf has given a theoretical treatment to the links between the possibilities of certain types of action and others, structured and determined by power differentials (1990).

84. Interestingly, in a discussion of citizenship and participation, Eizaguirre et al (2012) note that while there has been a growth of participatory organisations and methods, which diffuse the appearance of power, the state still has most, if not all, of its power.

85. It is also worth considering that what James C Scott calls 'Metis', potentially unknowable and hidden or intangible community knowledge, is an asset of resistance because although not connected to the allocation of resources, it does thwart some intentions related to state control and normative behaviour (see 'Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed' 1998:334–336).

86. This is also a notable outcome for the TRUE project, as a participant stated, "we live in a permission based society"

87. Other people writing on similar issues may use confidence but this potentially speaks too much of an assumed deficit to be overcome on behalf of communities or something to be made up (see, for example, Mayer 2013 on the metaphor of capital).

88. For examples of innovators refer to 'A Story of Leeds' (2016); Amplify Cymru Storybook (2016), Valuing Place (2017), or Paul Chatterton's work on cooperatives (2016).

89. In cases we reviewed or were told about, the legislative environment had a significant impact on blocking change, but as a JRF report establishes, in an interview with nearly 600 health & safety officials permission was rarely not given, suggesting that the fear or concern that some have may also play a significant part, or that people in the communities we spoke to lack significant networks, social capital or competence with applications. However, permission here is about more than a form- it is wholly social. We are also exploring what happens before the form is filled out. Chatterton (2016) also notes that 'risk' is an issue, which can be overcome by leveraging accepted alternative economy or ownership models such as co-operatives.

90. The obvious link between social innovation and social movements is most evident in a discussion of collective or community-led innovation. This is not the subject of this work but should be of future interest for study.

91. This we could describe as solidarity, although this term was rarely used by people we researched with.

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