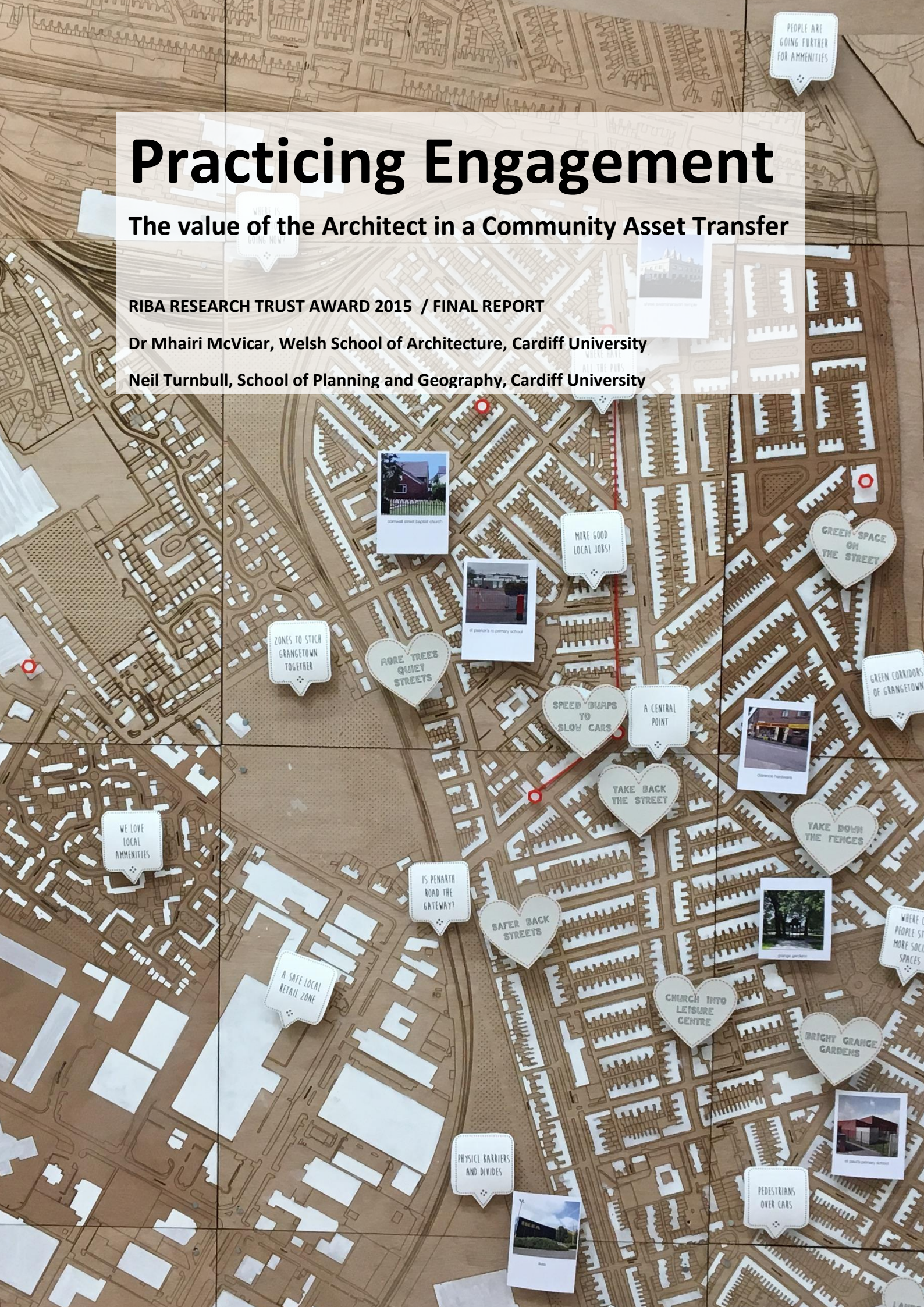


## The value of the Architect in a Community Asset Transfer

**Dr Mhairi McVicar, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University**

**Neil Turnbull, School of Planning and Geography, Cardiff University**





“...it is important for me that the architects do engage with community and whether they have an idea about the specifics of Grangetown [...] You know it is one thing to have post-it notes on the wall, it's another thing to actually look at them and feed that to inform your practice”

better Architects will stick around and genuinely create a relationship

engender a confidence to demand better of everything from the client, the architecture and the funders, and an Architect can raise the game and the quality of thinking to answer the question that has been posed.

**They are orchestrators;** they put lots of different disciplines together and they are creating not just a physical envelope but creating an intellectual envelope in which things occur, spaces or events occur and they have to speak many languages...

the Architect can raise the quality of the question and I think that is where they really start to make the difference

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### Appendices:

**Appendix 1: Analyses of email correspondence related to the Grange Pavilion CAT 2013-2015**, carried out in collaboration with Research Assistant Sarah Ackland.

**Appendix 2:** Questionnaires Stage 1 and Stage 2

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**Appendix 4:** Academic Paper - 'Creating common ground: the value of participatory design in articulating a common ethos for dwelling', Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull, submitted to Architecture\_Media Politics Society (AMPS). Longlisted and currently under second stage peer review for inclusion in Charrette Journal 5(2), and online open access.

**Appendix 5:** Poster presentation presented at 'Public Engagement as Method', University of Sheffield

**Appendix 6:** Guidance notes for students, as a result of research

Films developed during the research can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhprXrTW71w>

Note: Interview and meeting transcripts and ethics applications and approvals are available upon request.





A donut chart illustrating the distribution of the 2019-2020 budget across different council areas. The largest portion is allocated to the Council (blue), followed by the Mayor's Office (red), and then various other departments including the Mayor's Office (green), the Mayor's Office (purple), the Mayor's Office (orange), the Mayor's Office (light blue), and the Mayor's Office (pink).

A pie chart illustrating the distribution of roles in the project. The chart is divided into three main segments: 'PROJECT LEAD' (blue, 33%), 'COMMUNITY LEAD' (green, 33%), and a third segment (light blue, 34%) which represents other roles. The text 'PROJECT LEAD' and 'COMMUNITY LEAD' is written inside their respective segments.



# 1. Practicing Engagement

## The value of the Architect in a Community Asset Transfer

### 1.1 Introduction

Localism needs design professionals to succeed, but the quality of the places created by this new process will be dependent on their ability to appropriately engage with local people and local issues, right from the beginning, designing ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ communities.

*RIBA Guide to Localism: Getting community engagement right, p.2.*

To undertake an initial assessment of the feasibility of your project proposal it may be necessary to employ professionals e.g. an architect, solicitor, accountant or community specialist etc. It is often difficult to finance this aspect of the project as feasibility studies may cost anywhere between £5,000 and £25,000 (or even more for large-scale projects), and of course there is no guarantee that a project will proceed beyond the feasibility stage. Undertaking community fundraising to meet part of the costs of the study will be a good way of demonstrating your organisation’s commitment to the project to other potential funding bodies – including grant giving organisations. You may also be able to secure some ‘pro bono’ work (provided by professionals at no charge).<sup>1</sup>

*Cardiff Council, Stepping Up Toolkit*

In 2014, Cardiff Council launched the ‘Stepping-Up’ program to advise community groups taking on Community Asset Transfers (CAT), a process whereby the management and/or ownership of public buildings or lands are transferred to community or voluntary sector groups or enterprises.<sup>2</sup> Cardiff Council’s Stepping Up Toolkit highlighted the urgency of a program of CATs brought about by an ‘age of austerity’ in which ‘public bodies have been under increasing pressure to find new and more efficient ways of delivering their services.’ The situation, the Toolkit highlighted, ‘demands a creative response’. The Stepping Up program was aimed at encouraging ‘more volunteers to ‘step up’ and take over services and assets in their own communities.’<sup>3</sup> Acknowledging that this represented a daunting task, the Stepping Up Toolkit gave advice on each stage of a CAT, identifying an early ‘Feasibility’ stage for which, as the opening quotation notes, it is difficult to secure funding, and for which communities may be reliant on ‘pro-bono’ work by professionals.

RIBA’s ‘Guide to Localism’ similarly identified a ‘radical devolution of responsibilities to the local level, giving new powers and opportunities to councils and communities to plan and design their

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.30

<sup>2</sup> Locality. *What are community assets?* (UK, Locality.org.uk, 2017) < <http://locality.org.uk/our-work/assets/what-are-community-assets/> > [accessed 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017].

<sup>3</sup> Cardiff Council, *STEPPING UP: a toolkit for developing and managing services and asset* < <https://www.Cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Council-finance/Council-Budget/2017-18/Pages/get-involved.aspx> > [accessed 1 September 2017], p.4.



places.’<sup>4</sup> Architects, the Guide noted, ‘have exceptional opportunities to use their skills within this new context. They can emerge as integral design enablers and facilitators of localised plan-making, helping communities and local authorities to maximise the potential of their places.’ While RIBA here advocates for the Architectural profession to take on a leadership role as ‘enablers of successful community engagement’,<sup>5</sup> Cardiff Council’s recommendation in *Stepping Up* that community organisations ‘may be able to secure some ‘pro-bono’ work’ highlights logistical challenges facing both community organisations and professional Architects in terms of engaging at a meaningful level. Recognising the challenges of accessing funding at the earliest stages of CAT projects, the recourse to pro-bono work might begin with an assumption that working with a CAT at a feasibility stage might not require significant levels of work; or that significant levels of work are to be offered on a voluntary basis. This raises a question of value, both in terms of the value of voluntary work given by community groups and of professionals engaged to support CAT processes.

Our research proposal to the RIBA Research Trust Award in 2016 began with this question of value. What is really asked of those who step up to take on the long term management of civic infrastructure? What value can or should the architect bring in supporting a CAT, and the emergence of new community-led organisations taking on civic infrastructure? What needs might an emerging community organisation have, and how might these differ to the assumptions made of a client in a RIBA plan of work? What expectations do such client groups have of the value architects and their role in a Community Asset Transfer, and how might architectural skills be deployed beyond that of the role of designer?<sup>6</sup> Our research investigates value in a CAT in three senses:

- the value an architect can add to a CAT, from considerations of the building in its physical and programmatic forms to its impact upon wider urban ambitions;
- the economic demands a CAT places upon the resources and skills of architectural practice;
- the perceptions of the value of architects and architecture held by community representatives engaged in CAT processes.

We investigate these questions and themes through a longitudinal and micro-study of the daily processes of the in-process CAT of a Bowls Pavilion and Green in Grangetown, Cardiff. We have been involved with this project in various roles as residents, educators, researchers, and Trustees since a resident first approached a local councillor in 2012 to investigate the possibility of a group of residents taking on a vacant facility in a popular neighbourhood park. Working with a group of residents as they evolved from casual meetings around kitchen tables to a constituted Charitable Incorporated Organisation preparing to take on a 99-year lease, our research tracks the incremental gathering of a community through the activation of a civic space, mapping the communications and actions between the group and through the community to reach a better understanding of the demands and expectations placed on all those who become involved in the project. The endeavour, the residents had forewarned, could ‘become an all-consuming project that could overpower those who were tempted to step in.’<sup>7</sup>

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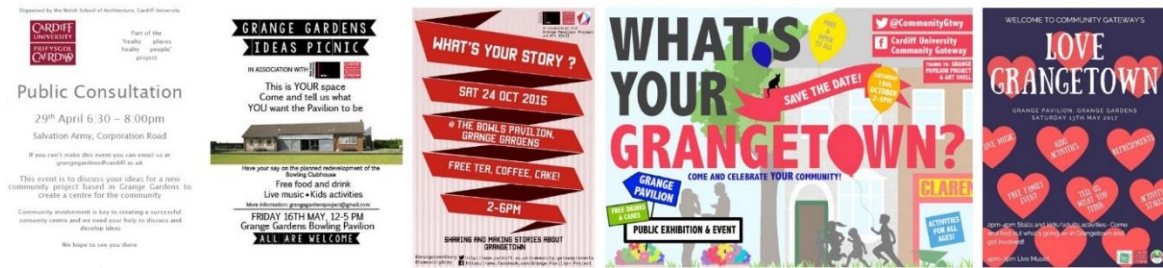
<sup>4</sup> Royal Institute of British Architects, ‘Guide to Localism - Opportunities for architects: Part two: Getting community engagement right’, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Awan, Schneider, Till write: ‘This does not mean abandoning the skills and ways of thinking that go into the production of buildings; instead we argue that they can be deployed and developed in other settings as well.’ Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p.28.

<sup>7</sup> Resident email, August 2013.





*Evolution of event communications over a five year period*

## 1.2 Research Summary (see Final Progress Report)

The wider context of the research sits within a Cardiff University-Grangetown communities partnership, Community Gateway, which launched in 2014 as an internally-funded University engagement platform, and from our role as architectural educators. Both enabled long-term engagement and the testing of architectural investigations prior to securing external funding to engage a design team for a CAT. This gave a unique opportunity to explore what architectural approaches might offer community engagement *before* Stage 0, prior to Strategic Definition, prior to the formation of the client's Business case or Strategic Brief, and, in this case, at the point where a client was in the early stages of formation, as a loose and un-constituted group of residents responding to the challenges and opportunity offered by an emerging CAT program.

RIBA-funded research from Sept 2015-Sept 2017 enabled us to map out the quantitative demands of a CAT as the project evolved, through tracking communications over the first three years of the project. Qualitative analysis emerged from visual and written analysis the of language used in emails, meeting minutes, notes, mission statements, and draft expressions of interest and funding applications (*see Appendix 1*) as well as interviews with five key resident stakeholders at two key stages in the process: pre-Stage 0 (before appointing a professional architect) and as the project moved into Stages 0-1 (*see Appendix 2*), as well as interviews with Cardiff Council's CAT team. We recorded, transcribed and analysed discussions at resident meetings at key stages, including 'Selecting the Architect' and 'Meeting the Architect (Feasibility)'. Research funding supported three key public workshop events, 'Storytelling' (Oct 2015), Love Grangetown (May 2016) and 'My Vision of Grangetown' (Oct 2017), each of which gathered stories and ideas with residents to support the development of a design brief according to an asset-based, appreciative inquiry approach to co-production. Evidence and feedback was gathered through photography, film making, twitter, Facebook, and marketing materials, as well as postcards of stories and ideas collected at the events.

Our research analysis to date as funded by RIBA Research Trust, and as evidenced in two academic papers, focuses on the role of the Architect primarily in pre-Stage 0 and as Stage 0-1 work commences. The research is currently ongoing as the project continues beyond the RIBA-funded phase, applying the same methods of co-production, appreciative inquiry and reflection-in-action to monitor and analyse the ongoing development of the Pavilion beyond RIBA Stage.

### Reporting to community partners

Our research has been fed back to our community partners on a continual basis, as the lessons gained from the research have impacted on the way our partnership now holds meetings and the way we consult through events and workshops. The research has informed the development of invitations to tender at Feasibility stage, the development of Qualitative criteria for a mini-competition at development stage, and the ongoing co-production of a design brief at each stage of the project.

### **Reporting to the Architectural profession**

Within the architectural profession and architectural educators, our research has been presented at three international architectural conferences, including the Association of Architectural Educators, two national symposiums, and has resulted in two academic papers, both of which have been selected for stage 2 peer-review for academic journals, and which are available online as open-access conference proceedings (*See Appendices 3,4,5*) The research has impacted directly on the way we teach architecture, and has directly led to the development of an Induction for all students working with our community partners, which includes guidelines and training introducing students and community partners to the ethos of Asset-based and co-produced appreciative inquiry methods (*See Appendix 6*). This year (2018) we will pilot an appreciative inquiry training workshop for architectural professionals at an international conference.

### **Reporting to external partners – Cardiff Council CAT Team and Big Lottery Fund**

Big Lottery Fund have selected Community Gateway's submission, which included evidence from this research, to develop a case study exemplar of an asset-based approach to community development. Given the ongoing and very much 'live' nature of the project, and the positive relationship we have developed with Cardiff Council's CAT team and Big Lottery, as well as with the appointed design team with whom design development will proceed, we feel it is premature to complete a final report, and propose to do this collaboratively with input from a newly-formed Community Charitable Incorporated Organisation for the Pavilion, a design team including the Architects, Cardiff Council representatives, and Big Lottery Fund.

## **1.3 Key findings**

Our key findings can be summarised in relation to the three identified themes of 'Value';

- **The value an architect can add to a CAT, from considerations of the building in its physical and programmatic forms to its impact upon wider urban ambitions**

### **Gathering community**

Feedback from community members focused on the role an architect can play in supporting the gathering of, and definitions of, community long before the design of a building or even the design of a brief begins. In December 2013, a resident instigating the project wrote:

Establishing such a venue in Grange Gardens requires a clear awareness of the demographic and social conditions faced by the various Grangetown communities. To succeed the partnership has to fulfill a twofold requirement, to secure the venue, and devise a economic and social programme in which these communities would, feel secure, feel able to create and participate in the programme of their and others devising, and in which they feel pride.<sup>8</sup>

With a group of residents wary of claiming to speak for 'the' community, an initial task was identified as that of gathering community:

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<sup>8</sup> Resident email, December 2013



Firstly we should get to know the local population to find out what they want. We should involve them in every part of the project so that they feel ownership + ultimately run the place.<sup>9</sup>

In our research analysis, we relate this to the work of philosopher Karsten Harries, who writes that 'To be experienced as a genuine centre, a place must be experienced as gathering a multitude into a community'<sup>10</sup> a task recognised as pertinent to the project.

### **'Creating a belief in the people, in the area'**

From the start, residents placed a priority on the notion of beginning an engaged relationship by 'creating belief in the people, in the area,'<sup>11</sup> a theme repeated recently in a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) discussion regarding budget and value, in which a CIO member expressed that architects 'should seek to demonstrate 'that Quality exists in Grangetown; that Quality can come out of Grangetown.'<sup>12</sup> From resident direction, the co-produced briefs for early scoping studies with architectural students began by identifying the value of what already existed, in terms of physical conditions and in terms of the skills and expertise present and latent within the area. For our research approach, this direction culminated in adopting Appreciative Inquiry methods which focused on celebrating the value of existing conditions and building on strengths, in lieu of identifying problems to be solved.<sup>13</sup> The role of the architect was anticipated as supporting the desire to be ambitious in terms of value and quality:

'They should engender a confidence to demand better of everything from the client, the Architecture and the funders, and an Architect can raise the game and the quality of thinking to answer the question that has been posed [...] the Architect can raise the quality of the question and I think that is where they really start to make the difference.'<sup>14</sup>

### **• The economic demands a CAT places upon the resources and skills of architectural practice;**

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<sup>9</sup> Resident comment at first co-produced consultation event, May 2014

<sup>10</sup> Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), p.199

<sup>11</sup> Resident comment at first co-produced consultation event, May 2014

<sup>12</sup> CIO member comment, March 2018

<sup>13</sup> Appreciative Inquiry, introduced to the Project by Community Gateway Project manager Rosie Cripps, is defined by Mathie et al as 'a process that promotes positive change (in organisations or communities) by focusing on peak experiences and successes of the past. It relies on interviews and storytelling that draw out these positive memories, and on a collective analysis of the elements of success. This analysis becomes the reference for further community action.' Alison Mathie and Gord Cunningham, "From clients to citizens: Asset Based Community-Development as a Strategy for Community-Driven Development" *Development in Practice*, 13, No 5 (Nov 2003) pp.474-486.

<sup>14</sup> Resident E interview, Dec 2014

### **A relationship with a community before and after design:**

Our research found that it took a three year period (2012-2015) to start to build trust and relationships across a community and to reach a point where a community group had identified its aims and values, before it could start to define a design brief. While this may be related to the nature of this particular project, in which neither client nor brief were not defined at the start of the project, the pace of a community gathering correlates with other examples which similarly identify a three year start-up period of relationship building. Participatory Cities' work in Lambeth suggests that building and maintaining what they call a 'dense participatory ecology' with approximately 50,000 residents is estimated to take three years and £300,000-£400,000 per annum, which they contextualised in Lambeth as 2% of local council tax and 0.1% of local area public spending.<sup>15</sup>

A similar pace of engagement was published in *Academic Medicine* as an engagement 'steps' model, which recommended at least one year of 'no engagement' to allow trusted relationships to form before piloting preliminary projects in years two and three, initial partnerships by year four and full partnerships following year five.<sup>16</sup> These echoed the pace of our partnership development, and provide evidence for the need for long-term commitment, and realistic levels of financial resourcing if the aim is pursue a meaningful level of co-production with communities in the development and management of civic infrastructure.

Residents also expressed expectations that architects would be involved not only before, but after the design stages of a CAT. Given that many CAT client groups will have no prior experience in developing and managing a facility, residents expressed concern that architects could leave them with an unmanageable facility.

'Better Architects will stick around and create a relationship' one resident noted when discussing criteria for selecting an Architect, highlighting fears that Architects would 'move on and leave the inhabitants and the residents behind picking up the pieces.' 'Who would we trust to come and sort out the mess the year afterwards?' the group questioned.<sup>17</sup>

To 'appropriately engage with local people and local issues, right from the beginning' as RIBA advocate may, this project suggests, demand more than the scope that pro-bono services might offer. Our research emphasised the length of time needed getting to know a community would take, with residents, from very first conversations, voicing expectations that partnerships should be based on 'a relationship and not an affair.'<sup>18</sup>

### **The unexpected role of the Live Project**

An unexpected outcome of the research was the realisation of the extent to which Live Teaching with architectural students could support the evolution of a project for several years before

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<sup>15</sup> Maurice Sprecht, 'Designed to Scale: Mass participation to build resilient neighbourhoods', *Participatory City* <<http://www.participatorycity.org/report-the-research/>> [accessed 20th June 2017], p.23.

<sup>16</sup> Alexandra Adams MD, PhD; Amy Williamson MPP; Christine Sorkness, Christine Pharm; Peggy Hatfield, PhD, CCHE, ICTR; Amanda Eggen, PhD; Sarah Esmond, MS, CCHE, ICTR, 'The Steps Model: A Practical Tool for Engaging Communities to Improve Health Outcomes', *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 92, Issue 6 (June 2017), p 890.

<sup>17</sup> Resident comment, 'Choosing the Architect' meeting, February 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Resident comment, first open session with residents, December 2012.



architectural design began, and specifically of the extent to which architectural skills could support the gathering of community and the activation of civic space before design briefs or development began. This seemed to us to support Community Asset Transfers in several ways, accessing the ability of a University to commit to several years of engagement to match the pace of a community-led project, and supporting residents by conducting early stage research into urban and sociological conditions as a 'growing catalogue of local knowledge.' Precedent studies and the conceptual testing of ideas by students did not make any claim to represent resolved solutions by a professional team, and as such, were received in a more informal and open-minded way by residents, allowing for questions to be raised and tested before a professional design team were appointed. A significant role offered by the students was that of crucially helping to maintain the momentum of the project, often bogged down and regularly stalled by complex funding and legal paperwork, supporting a regular cycle of large-scale public events -parties – to help celebrate progress made, outreach further year on year into the wider community, and to bring in new and external partners. 'Any project of this diverse constituency (community) kind needs to maintain public momentum and cohesion when things are apparently not happening', a resident wrote in Jan 2015. 'As a community', a resident wrote following a public event in May 2014,

'we are beginning to find and have 'voice', but as yet we have little or no authority to ensure a positive outcome. Your students' work helps reinforce identity and so provides authority, giving 'us' a further means or power to complete. This is real and valuable work they do.'

This reinforces a role for Architects in the early stages of a CAT as simply supporting public events to gather community and maintain momentum, and to develop engagement partnerships before design decisions start to be made. Ash Sakula's Peckham co-design offers an exemplar precedent of this pre-design work, and the pace of this CAT project suggests an extended period of engagement.

## **• Perceptions of the value of architects and architecture held by community representatives engaged in CAT processes.**

### **Jargon and understanding the 'us' of us**

When asked what the residents wanted from architects at the Feasibility stage, 'inspiration' 'good dialogue', 'communication with the wider community' and being 'personal' were highlighted as key to the selection process. Residents, however, were sceptical of claims Architects made in terms of engaging with communities and listening to their needs, particularly evident when reviewing feasibility Study proposals put forward by architects. A first key point which came up was the language used by architects, described by the residents as too full of jargon. 'There is something that really seems very jargony', a resident noted: 'there is a certain sort of language that I just seem to cut off from and I seem to go a bit blank.' Another noted 'I think the first thing I would do is go away and strip out the adjectives.' As well as jargon, the architectural proposals were viewed as not providing concrete evidence of claims to engagement: 'in an application for a job', a resident noted, '

you can't just say I'm great, you say I'm great because I did this, you know, ok, so I can write "I work with communities, communities are really important to me", but what does that mean? It doesn't mean anything anybody can say that.<sup>19</sup>

The ability of the Architect to get to know the community, to listen, and to act on the communities' views were consistently highlighted, with skepticism expressed that architects would do so:

consideration of community for me is important and not just, well two things, for me, is the architects do engage with community and whether they have an idea about the specifics of Grangetown, actually what does that mean when they consult? With community members, how do they act upon that? You know it is one thing to have post-it notes on the wall, it's another thing to actually look at them and feed that to inform your practice.<sup>20</sup>

As an emerging group of clients, the residents leading the CAT also expressed concerns about the expectations architects might have of them, and the extent to which an architect could guide them through an unfamiliar process, with implication on the quality of the results. 'How do you get the information into the architect to get them to produce the best results imaginable, is it their skills in listening? Their skills in community engagement?' one resident noted. The idea of establishing a personal relationship was emphasised, particularly in terms of the Architect representing the community in decision making. 'Who would we say, who would we feel comfortable with to say that they could speak for us?' a resident observed, with another summarising the key criteria for Feasibility stage selection as:

it's not about the visions but how they understand the us of us.<sup>21</sup>

### **It shouldn't get more complicated**

Fears that Architects would over-complicate the project were consistently expressed, with concerns that a relatively small and simple project would be compromised by over-ambitious architectural proposals. 'It was a straight forward idea at the beginning', a resident noted, 'it shouldn't get more complicated because we have been told it should be more complicated.'<sup>22</sup> One resident noted:

the one that finds simplicity would be the one that gets, that would get my preference. The one who has understood the simplicity of the project and underneath that simplicity there is a complexity but just getting that simple thing, is important. It's a café, with a space, with some growing space, and if that's the priorities then we can work with them. People who overelaborate it.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Resident comment, 'Choosing the Architect' meeting, February 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Resident comment, 'Choosing the Architect' meeting, February 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Resident comment, 'Choosing the Architect' meeting, February 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Resident comment, 'Choosing the Architect' meeting, February 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Resident comment, 'Choosing the Architect' meeting, February 2016.



Fears were expressed that, after several years of working to gather community, an over-emphasis on architectural complexity could turn community away;

What you have said actually really resonates with my experience the other day where nobody is afraid to walk through the doors and if this was just big glass shiny box would people be afraid to walk through the doors all of a sudden? It is a really really valid question, we want to keep what has happened today in that people of all different ages, backgrounds, faiths, genders, have, you know, walked through the door, have been happy to fill out a card, have been happy to what's going on it.<sup>24</sup>

While architects were expected to raise the quality of the question, to promote belief in the area, and to bring ambition and inspiration, there was a clear sense from residents of the need to commit to long term, personal relationships when engaging in the complexity of a CAT, and to incrementally get to know a community through long term and personal engagement. This particularly applied to the way that consultations and meetings were held:

It's the actual culture of the machineries the way that the meeting happens I think is for me quite difficult and draining. If you for a walk and you had a rant or you go for, I don't know. You're making something or if you're gardening. It's, you might spend longer having a cup of tea than you do in your gardening and that's the way to, do the meeting. But I would say that both the community group, we think that's the way we're displayed as being serious and to demonstrate our properness, we go to a meeting.<sup>25</sup>

The ability of the architect to engage and to do something with the community in an informal setting, and with no objective in mind other than just getting to know people was expressed several times:

I sort of plot it out as being about going to a place, being alongside people, getting to know them and doing something together which is something different which is the other thing we're trying to do. And in that being attentive and open minded as possible to each other both relationally, I mean that's very important. That's the first thing that's it relationally and with the curiosity and the creativity about the sparks in there. And it's only once we got to the relationship bit that we can start to find the sparks. And then the sparks will then be the fuel, the seed for that we'd make together. But it's really important to not know beforehand what even colours spark we're looking for. And therefore not feeling judged about not knowing what it is that we're looking for. I have no idea if that's workable in this context.<sup>26</sup>

'it's a really delicate thing, isn't it?', a resident summarised.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Resident comment, 'Choosing the Architect' meeting, February 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Resident D interview, December 2016

<sup>26</sup> Resident D interview, December 2016

<sup>27</sup> Resident D interview, December 2016

## 1.4 Conclusions to date

To return to the opening quote from RIBA's *Guide to Localism*;

Localism needs design professionals to succeed, but the quality of the places created by this new process will be dependent on their ability to appropriately engage with local people and local issues, right from the beginning, designing 'with' rather than 'for' communities.

Several years of being involved with, supporting, tracking and analysing the incremental process of a CAT from inception to RIBA Stage 3 has highlighted the depth of engagement needed to 'appropriately engage' with local people, and the extent to which this extends beyond the scope of pro-bono work which an architect might be able to offer.

We set out this project with a view to assessing the value of the role of the architect in Community asset transfer in three senses. Here we draw on the evidence collected throughout the study and reflect on each in turn:

- the value an architect can add to a CAT, from considerations of the building in its physical and programmatic forms to its impact upon wider urban ambitions;

An important findings of this project relates to an approach to community participation that highlighted the importance of the ethos of Asset-based and co-produced appreciative inquiry methods. This approach placed the community at the centre of any functional or operational ideas of what they wanted and/or needed. This was based on the idea that the community would understand what was required of the building but also that they would be ultimately responsible for the maintenance and management of the space. In drawing out these requirements a careful act of interpreting the communities wants together with fostering their explicit 'ownership' of the decisions being made emerged as a key task. While it may be true that in most architectural projects the architectural programme should always be driven by the client, in this case the complexity of the client, a community, is perhaps a special case. Issues such as Gathering community and 'creating a belief in the people in the area' emerged which placed significant demands on the team to help define the 'client', how this might play out in different circumstances and if other communities would require a similar 'service' is an interesting issues that may require further development and research in the field of architecture practice and education.

- the economic demands a CAT places upon the resources and skills of architectural practice;

The long and significant commitment given to this project is very difficult to quantify empirically in terms of its financial impact. A relationship with the community was expected before the project took place 'we want them to understand the us of us' and there is also an expectation that the architect will be available afterwards, 'better architects will stick around and create a relationship'. This constitutes a significant time commitment for architects throughout the life of the project and beyond.

By its nature, in the context of voluntary groups taking on the management and redevelopment of a community asset, all those involved were primarily driven not by economic return but a sense of social and community 'civic mindedness'. In this case, while the community were happy for the Architects to be paid for their work since they thought professional services should be remunerated



because ‘this is their work’, ideas of what constituted a reasonable fee were more subjective. In addition, with construction costs of community assets likely to be reasonably low then the fees become higher and perhaps more difficult to negotiate. Also these types of asset are likely to be highly diverse, libraries, sport centres, swimming pools, or abandoned bowls pavilions, and as such any idea of an economy of scale, or in experience, in working with these assets is difficult to predict. These projects may then be attractive to new practices looking to establish their reputation or improve their social responsibility credentials through acts of ‘voluntary’ work which mirror those of the community members but have not financial gain.

- the perceptions of the value of architects and architecture held by community representatives engaged in CAT processes.

The data shows that the community group benefited from having an architect on board in order to guide them through the design and tender process. Less positively the architect was seen as both generator and translator of architectural ‘jargon’ which brings into question the way in which architects communicate with the public and the extent to which they should and can demystify the design and construction process. In addition, there was also an idea that exclusionary practices were not limited to process, but also might be inherent in the architectural product. One community member questioned if new architecture could respond to creating a place of ‘difference’ and plurality that took place in the existing building. These are very important questions and although the answers lie beyond the scope of this study it does reveal an important challenge for architects.

Finally, this micro-study suggests a few key approaches and priorities raised by community partners;

- The need to engage early, being present over a long period of time and participating in actions with community members as a way of genuinely getting to know people before making any attempt to begin design;
- The expectation that, in supporting a CAT and a client group who may have little or no experience in developing and managing civic infrastructure, a relationship should extend before and after design, particularly in terms of the Architects’ availability post-occupancy to help ‘correct the corrections which need to be made’;
- The importance of describing the community positively, with written and visual language, as a means of raising belief in the community and in the area; and the importance of visual communications in accurately portraying the resident community;
- The role architectural skills can play in visually celebrating and communicating existing value in a community; in visually capturing and analysing resident feedback to evidence genuine listening; and in engaging with community through actions which avoid formal meetings;
- The need to balance ambition and inspiration with concerns that architectural projects will be over-complicated and off-putting to the communities they serve;

- The role architectural students and live projects can potentially play in the extended and open-ended engagement in the early stages of a CAT, both in terms of filling a gap in funding for professional services, but, more pertinently, in terms of being able to explore ideas and ask questions in an open-ended dialogue with community before decisions have to be made;
- The scope of work and resources involved in engaging and getting to know a community – our experience correlates with existing research which suggests a three-year period of developing partnerships and piloting small-scale projects before proceeding to longer term projects.

If an argument is to be made for architects to appropriately engage with communities who are 'stepping-up' to take on the development and long term management of civic infrastructure, the pace and scope of even this relatively small project evidences an argument to be made for appropriate recognition of the time and resources asked of all involved in the development of meaningful and long term relationships with communities.



**WHAT'S YOUR STORY ?**

**SAT 24 OCT 2015**

**@ THE BOWLS PAVILION, GRANGE GARDENS**

**FREE TEA, COFFEE, CAKE!**

**2-6PM**

**SHARING AND MAKING STORIES ABOUT GRANGETOWN**

**@GrangetownStory** <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/community-gateway/event>  
**@CommunityStory** <https://www.facebook.com/Grange-Pavilion-Project>



**Community Gateway** @CommunityGateway · 7 Dec 2015  
 Lucy @C15BRG lets people know about the projects & activities they are running across the BRG area #MentalHealth15  
 BRG Communities 1st, Cardiff Engagement, Cardiff Uni Comms and Grangetown community

**Chichara Smith** @ChicharaSmith · 24 Oct 2015  
 And this is stunning. Crmon community #Grangetown #GrangetownProject @grangecardiff

**Chris Kirk Young** @KirkMusic · 19 Dec 2015  
 Top night in #grangetown listening to people's stories in #Cardiff and beyond! A foundation for future things!  
 L Ice Cream Passion, The Cornwal Pub, Grangetown community and 7 others





Love Grangetown June 2016





# Practicing Engagement – the value of the Architect in a Community Asset Transfer

RIBA RESEARCH TRUST AWARD 2015 / FINAL PROGRESS REPORT

## 1. Outcomes and Objectives of Research

### Objectives of the Research:

‘Practicing Engagement – The Value of the Architect in a Community Asset Transfer’ questions how ‘value’ might be defined, both quantitatively and qualitatively, when applied to the role of the Architect in the context of a Community Asset Transfer. The research, submitted as a proposal to the RIBA Research Trust on 1 June 2015, was undertaken as part of a residency (March 2016-ongoing) in a vacant Bowls Pavilion and Bowling Green which has been prioritised by community representatives for redevelopment as a community hub. In collaboration with Cardiff University’s Community Gateway, of which Dr McVicar is academic lead, and residents forming the Grange Pavilion project, chaired by Richard Powell, the research programme included;

- Architectural workshops, exhibitions and feedback events supporting the co-production of programmatic and architectural briefs;
- The co-produced design and construction of a temporary pop-up installation as a means to inform, test and develop community-initiated ideas for the future redevelopment of the pavilion;
- Informing a feasibility study, funded by Community Gateway, for a Community Asset Transfer of the Pavilion and the Green;
- Supporting ongoing proposals for the role of the Pavilion as a catalyst within the wider urban context of Grangetown.

This research builds on a prior three years of consultation and relationship building with community partners which began in November 2012, including previous workshops identifying community visions and priorities and the establishment of University-Community Steering group. Analytical work conducted as part of this research thus includes analysis of communications dating from the inception of the CAT project in 2012.

Closely documenting and analysing the daily activities and time dedicated by architectural professionals in supporting a community asset transfer process, and mapping these against the RIBA plan of work, this research reports on the qualitative value the architect can offer to a Community Asset Transfer; the quantitative value of the architect in such processes in terms of time and resources; and perceptions by community representatives of the value of the architect within the CAT process. Ongoing research to date (May 2018) continues to track the project through the completed RIBA Stages 2-3, including securing planning permission and Big Lottery funding, and will

continue to track the project, using similar methodologies, through the ongoing process of capital fund-raising, and RIBA Stages 4-6, and post-occupancy, in a longitudinal and 'deep' research study.

This research is led by Community Gateway academic lead Dr Mhairi McVicar and Architect and academic tutor Neil Turnbull, in collaboration with the Community Gateway team (Rosie Cripps, Lynne Thomas, Ali Abdi, Sarah Hughes) and Community Lead Richard Powell.

#### **Outcomes of the Research:**

- ***[proposal] A 12 month program of coproduction and appreciative inquiry workshops and surgeries, pilot activities, and a temporary installation in the Pavilion;***

We held a 24-month program of activities in the Grange Pavilion, which were supported by RIBA Research funding between September 2015 - September 2017. Activities included large-scale public events with architectural practitioners; large-scale public events with undergraduate architecture students, including the construction of an architectural installation; design workshops and 'defining values' discussion sessions with core stakeholders; and interviews at two key stages with (5) key stakeholders. All were based on co-production and appreciative inquiry principles, including the development of an agreed ethos, guidance notes and inductions for co-production (see Appendix 6) Feedback was collected in a variety of forms appropriate to the event, including recording and transcription of discussion sessions; collection of 'story' or 'ideas' postcards; films; photography; and quantitative recording of numbers of participants. Key events included;

- October 25 2015 Storytelling Event – public event gathering stories about the Pavilion and park;
- Stakeholder interviews at 2 key phases (Feb-April 2016 Pre RIBA Stage 0, and August 2016-January 2017 during RIBA Stage 0-1) with five key stakeholders;
- 'Defining Values' session with Community Stakeholders Feb\_March 2016;
- Love Grangetown public workshops with architects in May 2016;
- Stakeholder sessions on 5.16.16; 6.6.16; Choosing the Architect 20.6.16; Meet the Architect 06.16; recorded and transcribed;
- My vision of Grangetown event Oct 2016

- ***[proposal] A report as supporting evidence for the Community's CAT expression of interest;***

Evidence from the RIBA research was submitted as part of a Big Lottery Fund Community Asset 2 application in August 2017, outlining details of community-university co-produced consultation between Nov 2012-August 2017, including quantitative data of statistical and demographic data of consultations, and qualitative data of community feedback and steer.

- ***[proposal] A paper for publication at the end of the 18-month period, with recommendations for architectural practices, RIBA, Councils, Community Groups on the value of the architect in Community Asset Transfers. These findings will additionally be presented at an academic conference and prepared for publication in an academic journal.***



- **Academic Papers**

We presented at (5) international conferences. One conference paper is now available via online open access conference proceedings, and (2) papers have been accepted for the second stage of peer review for academic publication:

‘Creating common ground: the value of participatory design in articulating a common ethos for dwelling’, Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull, submitted to Architecture\_Media Politics Society (AMPS). Accepted for online conference proceedings for *Cities, Communities and Homes – Is the Urban Future Liveable?* Eds. E Tracada & G Cairns. AMPS Proceedings Series 10. ISSN 2398-9467 and available as open access on [http://orca.cf.ac.uk/110206/1/McVicar\\_Turnbull\\_CreatingCommonGround\\_AMPS-Proceedings-10-Cities-Communities-Homes-Is-the-Urban-Future-Livable\\_p434-446.pdf](http://orca.cf.ac.uk/110206/1/McVicar_Turnbull_CreatingCommonGround_AMPS-Proceedings-10-Cities-Communities-Homes-Is-the-Urban-Future-Livable_p434-446.pdf) Currently under second-stage peer review for inclusion in the Journal *Architecture\_MPS*.

‘Live projects in the participatory design of a common ethos’, Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull, submitted to the Association of Architectural Educators (AAE). Longlisted and currently under second stage peer review for inclusion in *Charrette Journal* 5(2).

- **Conference presentations:**

We have presented papers and one poster at (2) international conferences held in the UK, (1) international conference in the Netherlands, and at (2) symposiums in the UK;

‘The value of the architect: the participatory design of a common ethos’, Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull. Paper presented at *Architecture Connects*, AAE, Oxford, September 2017;

‘Creating common ground: the value of participatory design in articulating a common ethos for dwelling’ Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull at *Cities, Communities and Homes – Is the Urban Future Liveable?* Architecture\_MPS, Derby, June 2017;

‘The value of an architect in a Community Asset Transfer’, Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull. Conference presentation at *DR\_SoM : Design Research, Series on Method session 4: Design Research (in) Practice*, Reading, April 2016;

‘Civic crowd funding: An opportunity for Community Asset Transfer?’ Neil Turnbull, Mhairi McVicar, Elen Roberts. Conference presentation at *Design and the City*, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam, April 2016;

‘Access project 01 research method: the value of an architect in a Community Asset Transfer’, Mhairi McVicar, Neil Turnbull, Community Gateway, poster presentation at *Public Engagement as Method in the Arts and Humanities*, University of Sheffield, July 2016.

## 2. Research Summary (key aims and activities undertaken)

We were funded to explore the Value of the Architect in a Community Asset Transfer process. The research takes place by monitoring and analysing the residency of a vacant Bowls Pavilion by community representatives for redevelopment as a community hub. Originally, this residency was programmed to last the duration of the temporary license of 12 months which was later extended with the asset now subject to full transfer of the management of the building by the local council to the community group. Throughout this process coproduction and appreciative inquiry workshops, surgeries, pilot activities, and a temporary installation in the Pavilion, the research aimed to analyse the 'value' of an architect in a community asset transfer in three senses:

- The value an architect can add to a CAT, from considerations of the building in its physical and programmatic forms to its impact upon wider urban ambitions;
- The economic demands a CAT places upon the resources and skills of architectural practice;
- The perceptions of the value of architects and architecture held by community representatives engaged in CAT processes.

### Our objectives were:

- To closely engage in and document the role of the Architect within an active CAT project;
- To report to communities, the architectural profession, and governmental bodies on the challenges and opportunities for architectural practice in adding qualitative and quantitative value to a CAT;
- To develop and submit a publishable academic paper on these findings.

**Activities during the 24 month period of the project** [Award Announced to recipients on 6 July 2015, for research to begin Sept 2015, this report covers 1 Sept 2015- 1 Sept 2017 (24 months)]

There follows a detailed summary of some of the key activities undertaken throughout the project. Each involved many different aspects of the Architecture process and although overlapping in many respects can be categorised according to the objectives list above:

- **To closely engage in and document the role of the Architect within an active CAT project;**

Due to the early stage development of the project the activities associated with this objective are focused on issues which can be associated with what might be termed a prior state before architectural design that includes pre-RIBA stage 0 identification of the client and development RIBA stage 0 clients' needs. There is also some experience of the process of architectural design through the implementation of refurbishment works, albeit very limited, and tender work for the design of a more substantial refurbishment of the asset and/or new build. Finally, activities relating to the documentation of the emerging role of the Architect are discussed. These activities may be characterised as fourfold:

- Engaging in the role of the Architect in community assets started with a tricky task of identifying the client. The client is or rather the 'community' is not an easily defined body. It is plural reflecting multiple individuals and views. Activities took place in order to recognise this complexity and try to capture and acknowledge this diversity and difference including, amongst other activities: getting to know people and their ideas (Temporary installation public launch event, Sept 2015; Community storytelling event, Oct 2015; Love Grangetown public engagement event, April 2016; 'My vision of Grangetown' public consultation event, Oct 2016); bringing people together by opening the space at public events to socialise the work of the community group and attract more and more diverse community members (Seasonal Fayre and Seasonal Solidarity Philosophy Café, Dec 2016; Grangetown Festival, June 2016; Grangetown festival, June 2017 ), and finally; open community meetings to discuss progress in the asset transfer (Jan 2016; April 2016; May 2016; June 2016, etc.). For example, a key stakeholder meeting held to debate the question of 'defining values'. This focused on values of community inclusion and cohesion, as well as on discussions of how the Pavilion might demonstrate 'Quality' for the community (Jan 2016).
- Involvement of architecture students, particular to this case of asset transfer, in the project which allowed for an exploration of the themes of co-production and appreciative inquiry (Temporary installation public launch event, Sept 2015; Community storytelling event, Oct 2015; Vertical Studio, April 2016; Love Grangetown public engagement event, April 2016; CUROP student research, June 2016; 'My vision of Grangetown' public consultation event designed by students, Oct 2016). This produced many positive consequences, although initially unintended at the time of writing the research proposal, suggesting that there exists a wide range of benefits in broadening the approach of the architect at the preliminary work stages by using an appreciative inquiry approach (e.g. Love Grangetown public consultation event, April 2016) which identifies existing assets and what works rather than dwelling on problems.
- Architectural design: Minor refurbishment works which took place through a 'light-touch' building finishes renovation project (May-June 2016). This underlined the leading role of the architect in the organisation of the works, albeit at a very limited scale (minor internal scope of work, Jan 2016; Meeting with Cardiff University Staff and Cardiff County Council to discuss scope of work, Jan 2016; Stakeholders meeting with Architect, Feb 2016; Works meeting, April 2016; construction start up meeting, May 2016). This, and later work on tender processes and appointment of Architects for building work stages for funding bids ('Choosing the architect' meeting, June 2016; document analysis of architects tender documents, June 2016; 'meet the architect' with stakeholders, June 2016; Feasibility discussion with architect, Aug 2016; Big Lottery Fund application submitted, Sept 2016), underlined the role of the Architect as advisor to community members often unfamiliar with construction processes and who could quickly become overwhelmed by 'jargon' (Community Representative C 2016), and also as a key facilitator in implementing building works.
- Documenting the role of the Architect took place through various means: draft records for discussion, meeting notes, emails, and interviews with stakeholders, architects and other actors involved (Sept 2015 – Sept 2017). All digital correspondence from 2012 onwards

relating to the Grange Pavilion Project and the Community asset transfer was documented and a timeline of activities (quantitative), and analysis of key themes related to the interviews (qualitative) was undertaken.

- **To report to communities, the architectural profession, and governmental bodies on the challenges and opportunities for architectural practice in adding qualitative and quantitative value to a CAT;**

As the live asset transfer project evolved it became clear that feedback to the stakeholders would take place simultaneously as part of an ongoing conversation necessary for the project to progress. The start date of the initial temporary license for the community group taking on the management of the asset took longer than had been anticipated at the time of the research bid (a temporary license was granted by the Local Authority between Sept 2015 and Dec 2015 while negotiations continued). The temporary license was extended (currently in force) while negotiations for a full license continue. Thus, as the project developed reporting became part of an ongoing process of engagement.

An understanding of architectural practice in the context of transfer emerged as the project progressed. Each activity and milestone produced its own narratives and discourses surrounding the challenges and benefits of asset transfer which were captured and dealt with on a routine basis through formal meetings and correspondence. These interactions, at times *in situ* or virtual, can be characterised according to the different actors involved, i.e. the communities, architects involved, and governmental bodies, and became manifest in the following ways:

- **Reporting to the Local Authority:** formal meetings with different representatives of the Local Authority took place early on and continued throughout the research project duration (e.g. Initial meeting with Cardiff Council 19/10/15; Meetings with Director and Assistant Director of City Operation Dec 2015; Meeting with Cardiff University Staff and Cardiff County Council to discuss scope of work, Jan 2016; Meeting with Cardiff Council advisor on Community Asset Transfer at Grange Pavilion, July 2016; interview with Community Asset Transfer team at Cardiff Council, March 2017; etc.) As an emerging practice involving this particular site, building and local conditions, a bespoke project emerged which carried its own challenges which required an ongoing dialogue between the Council and Cardiff University Community Gateway project and the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which continues today.
- **Reporting to the community:** The 'community' of this asset transfer corresponds to a diverse and plural set of communities and local partners who have been engaged in a variety of public events designed specifically to inform (Open community meetings to discuss progress, Jan 2016; April 2016; May 2016; June 2016, etc.) or most importantly to encourage greater involvement (Temporary installation public launch event, Sept 2015; Community storytelling event, Oct 2015; Love Grangetown public engagement event, April 2016; 'My vision of Grangetown' public consultation event, Oct 2016, meeting with community



partners, April 2017). The April 2017 meeting with community partners is emblematic of the ways in which involvement with the community has enabled challenges to be discussed and resolved as they have arisen. At this meeting the community group rewrote the original criteria for the assessment of the tender bid and a move from functional, operational ideas to more qualitative notions of value emerged and changed procurement decisions.

- **Reporting to governmental bodies:** There has been close collaboration with Cardiff Council (see above) and a developing relationship with the Big Lottery Fund, who support Community Asset transfers through their Community Asset Transfer capital and revenue funding programme, now in its second version (Big Lottery Fund CAT2). A Big Lottery fund workshop was attended (April 2016) and correspondence with the charity developed leading to a Community Asset Transfer Big Lottery Fund Stage 1 bid submission (Sept 2016), which included evidence derived from this research. The Stage 1 bid was successful (Feb 2017) providing £50k for the development of a full feasibility study and the appointment of a Design Team (April 2017). Dialogue between the Big Lottery Fund and the project took place at each level.

Finally, beyond the 'local' impact and development of knowledge surrounding Community Asset Transfer this project will also have a wider impact. The Big Lottery Fund have indicated an intent to reference the Grange Pavilion application as a case study of Asset-based and community-led funding applications, and we are in conversation with Big Lottery Fund at this time regarding a case study. As such, the offer at the research proposal to publish a report on Community asset transfer would arguably benefit from this ongoing conversation and have greater impact as the pertinent issues are drawn out in collaboration both with the Big Lottery Fund and Cardiff Council.

- **To develop and submit a publishable academic paper on these findings.**

Early preliminary activities related to developing and publishing an academic paper included;

- **Information gathering:** including a review of literature and policy relating to Community asset transfer (November 2016), pilot interview, and interview design relating to the early stages of the building project (pre-RIBA plan of work stage 0 strategic definition (Jan 2016). Analysis of first interviews and coding of data (July 2016). Design of second round of interviews with stakeholders (to incorporate interviews 2 and 3 noted above) concerning RIBA plan of work stage 0 strategic definition, and 1 Preparation and brief, 'pilot' conducted and transcribed (August 2016). Interviews and key meetings with community stakeholders compiled and initial coding of data undertaken (NT) (August 2016). MMcV began literature review and quantitative and qualitative analytical review of documentation (Oct 2016). Second round interviews held with (2) community stakeholders and transcribed (Nov-Dec 2016). Second round interviews held with (2) community stakeholders and transcribed, all community stakeholder interviews pre and post minor improvements now completed and transcribed. (Jan 2017).

- **Attending relevant workshops and seminars to support framing our research on CATs within a local policy context:** RIBA Social Purpose seminar on 15.03.16 (MMcV); Responsible Innovation network launch arranged by Cardiff University School of Business (Feb 2016) (MMcV); 'Policy Forum for Wales Keynote Seminar: Priorities for regeneration in Wales - funding, implementation and generating local growth' on 09.02.16;
- **Dissemination:** Abstract submitted to DR-SOM session 4: Design Research (in) Practice seminar (Feb 2016). MMcV presented research to date at the DR-SOM conference. (April-May 2016). NT and a community representative presented work at the Design and the City workshop conference, organised by the Amsterdam Applied University of Sciences. (April-May 2016). MMcV presented a poster of RIBA research work in progress at Sheffield University symposium Public Engagement as method (July 2016). MMcV presented RIBA research work in progress at a RSA meeting (Oct 2016); MMcV presented at the Architecture\_MPS conference, 'Cities, Communities and Homes –is the Urban Future Liveable?' in Derby (June 2017), with a paper subsequently accepted for online conference proceedings and now in Stage 2 peer review for journal publication; MMcV presented at the Association of Architectural Educators conference 'Architecture Connects' (September 2017) with a paper subsequently accepted for online conference proceedings and now in Stage 2 peer review for journal publication. The research will be presented as a paper and as an appreciative-inquiry workshop at the Generosity conference at the Welsh School of Architecture (June 2018).

### 3. Expectations and Achievements (difficulties, changes to outputs, learnings)

**Objectives and outputs met:** We completed a program of coproduction and appreciative inquiry activities, closely documented the progress of a CAT, and have reported throughout the project to our project partners in the community, Council, and external funders, and have reported to the architectural profession via conference and seminar presentations, and have developed two publishable papers.

#### **Difficulties encountered and lessons learned:**

**Timetable:** As the project was tracking a 'live' CAT process, the timetable changed significantly due to external delays in obtaining a License to occupy the Pavilion, and in achieving external funding to appoint a design team. As such, our research and analysis to date has focused more closely on the pre-Stage 0 phase of a CAT, but this has revealed insights into the particular challenges a CAT presents in terms of client formation and brief development, and the role architectural skills may offer in the earliest stages of a CAT. Our research continues to track the development of the project as it now progresses through RIBA work stages, applying the same methodologies of tracking communications, reflection-in-action, and we propose to continue to interview key stakeholders as the project progresses.

**Final Report:** As the project remains very much live, with positive relationships developed with community stakeholders, the Council CAT team, and external funders, we believe it is premature to complete a final report to Communities, Councils, and Funders, and propose to develop this as ongoing research (via our roles in Cardiff University).

**Data analysis:** we have collected, and continue to collect, a substantial amount of data, in the form of interviews, transcriptions of meetings, images, films, and original materials from workshops, and continue to archive this. Our published papers to date have focused on the analysis of the pre-Stage 0 research, but we propose a second stage of analysis as the work progresses. We would still like to develop a greater awareness of data-analysis methods, including N-Vivo, and propose this for ongoing stages.

**Advisory Board** – we had hoped to set up an Advisory Board, but were unable to bring proposed members together in a formal structure; however, we did hold individual conversations with proposed Advisory Board members and received guidance on an individual basis.

## 4. Partnerships Opportunities

The partnership opportunities established throughout the research period can be described as relating to a wider range of actors including, civil society, local authorities, national government, policy makers, third-sector organisations and academia.

- **Private individuals:** Many links with individuals, who form part of the many diverse communities living near the Bowls Pavilion, and are thus potential users and managers, were established during the research period. This contact is best described as a plural 'clientele', rather than general public, brought us into contact with many who had not previously worked with Architects or had any contact with building projects. Despite the implicitly local nature of these contacts, partnership with these people was a central and extremely important aspect of a human approach to Architecture.
- **Partnerships with local organisations:** Partnerships with the Grange Gardens Bowls Pavilion Group, the Grangetown Community Action group and Sef Cymru (Local charity that seeks to address educational underachievement and improve community cohesion and social integration) were explored as an essential component of the future viability of the Community Asset Transfer.
- **Local Authorities/national government:** City of Cardiff Council and Welsh Assembly have confirmed interest in future research partnerships.
- **Policy makers:** The research has been discussed with the Office of the Commissioner for the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. They have expressed interest in discussing the work further and there exists potential for collaboration.
- **Third-Sector organisations:** Presentations of the work have been made at RSA who have interest in the work. The Big Lottery Fund has expressed interest in the project being showcased as an exemplar project for future bottom-up asset transfers.
- **Academics:** Partnerships with other academics were explored through participation in a Horizon 2020 Marie Curie funding offering opportunities for UK and European academic and

external partners. Although this bid was unsuccessful it offers future potential for collaboration. In addition, Professor Thomas R. Jones of Cal-Poly, San Francisco, USA visited the project as a critical friend on a Fulbright visit.

## 5. Dissemination Opportunities

See 2.1: Outcomes and objectives.

## 6. Financial Report

Funding of £10,000 from the RIBA Research Trust Award was allocated as proposed, with costs directed to Mhairi's research time, Neil's research time, and £500 funding directed towards public consultation events. **We would like to propose allocating the original proposal of £585 towards a final recommendation report, to be developed following case-study review with Cardiff Council and Big Lottery Fund, as discussed above.**

Match funding was allocated as proposed, with a Research Leave fellowship award granted by Cardiff University for Mhairi's research time, License fees for use of the Grange Pavilion supported by Cardiff University's Community Gateway (£12000 for 24 months, in lieu of £6000 for 12 months) and match funding for public consultation events supported by Cardiff University's Community Gateway. We allocated additional match funding costs towards Conference costs (registration, travel and accommodation), Transcription costs to support transcription of interviews, and Research Assistant costs to support with data analysis and the development of inforgraphics.

Finances – <b>Final Report summary (revisions from original in red)</b>			
	Total Project Cost	Amount Contributed by others	Amount sought from an RIBA Research Trust Award
Applicant's Time (Mhairi McVicar)	Hours 176		
	£10,846 (based on Cardiff University daily rate of £493).	£5,423 Cardiff University Research Leave	£5,423
Applicant's Time (Neil Turnbull)	Hours 176		
	£2,992 (based on Research Associate rate of £17/hour)	£0	£2,992
Equipment	£0 - all equipment provided by Cardiff University/ Community Gateway	£0	£0



Practicing Engagement – the value of the Architect in a Community Asset Transfer

Facilities	£12,000 inc utilities (24 months) in lieu of £6000 for 12 months	£12,000 Community Gateway	£0
Printing	£585 final recommendation report. <b>This is on hold pending case study reviews in partnership with Cardiff Council and Big Lottery Fund.</b>	£0	£585
Materials	See workshops	See workshops	£0
Travel	£0	£0	£0
Other expenses (please give details)	£3000 for 6 co-production workshops with residents. RIBA funds contributed £1000 to (2) key public events: Storytelling (October 2015) and My Vision of Grangetown (October 2016).	£2000 match funding for co-production events	£1000
Conference attendance (registration, fees, travel expenses)	£556.17 (not included in original proposal)	£556.17 (Mhairi Research Development Account)	£0
Research Assistant (support of data analysis, infographics)	£1147.60 (not included in original proposal)	£1147.60 (Mhairi Research Development Account)	£0
Transcription of interviews	£846.37 (not included in original proposal)	£846.37 (Mhairi Research Development Account)	£0
Total	£31,388.14	£21,388.14	<b>£10,000</b>

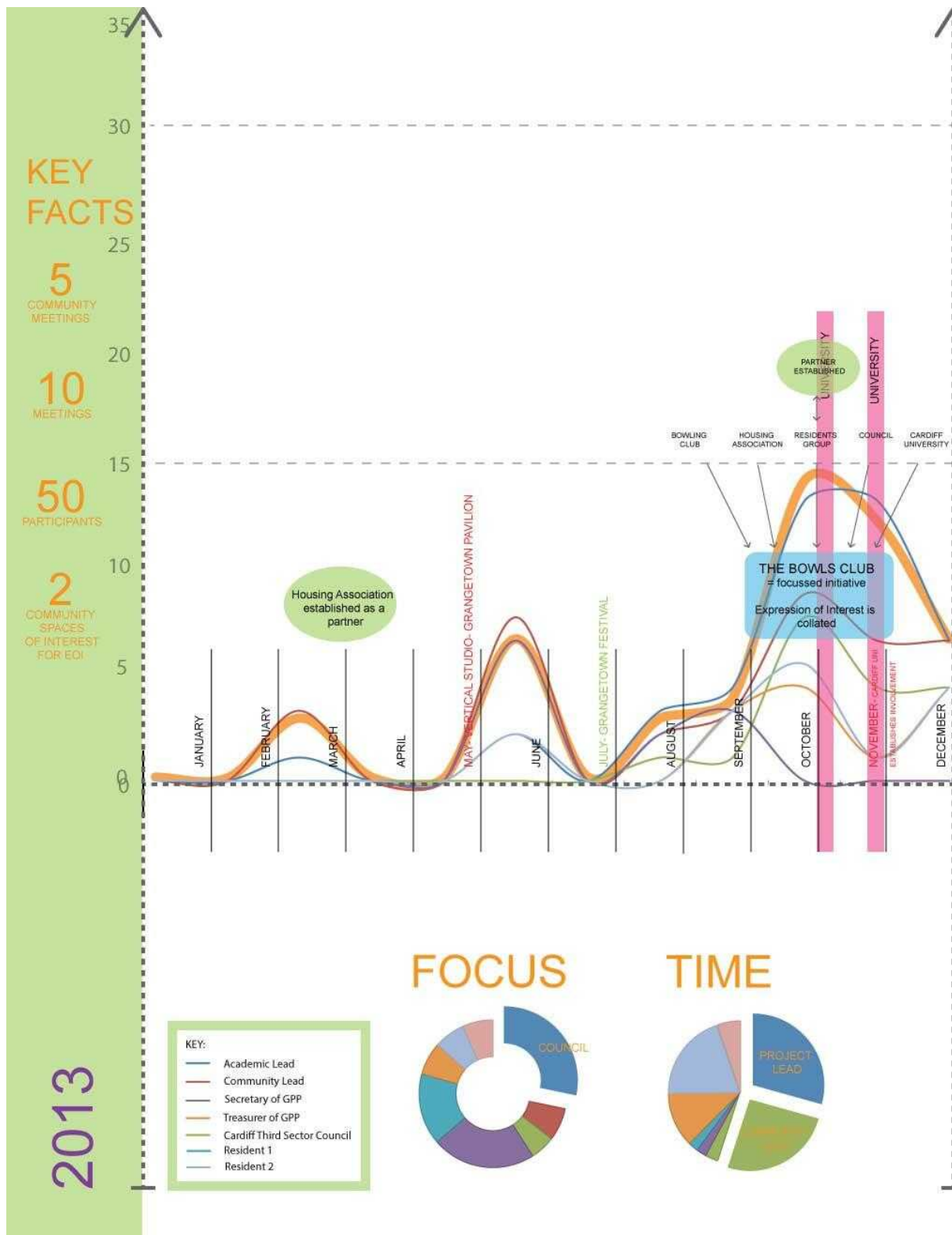
## **Appendix 1**

Analysis of communications related to the Grange Pavilion CAT 2013-2015, carried out in collaboration with Research Assistant Sarah Ackland. Image credits Sarah Ackland under supervision of Dr Mhairi McVicar.

- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- Full combined infographic (tracking email correspondence, key events, key participants, key phrases 2013-2015)
- Key facts 2013
- Key facts 2014
- Key facts 2015

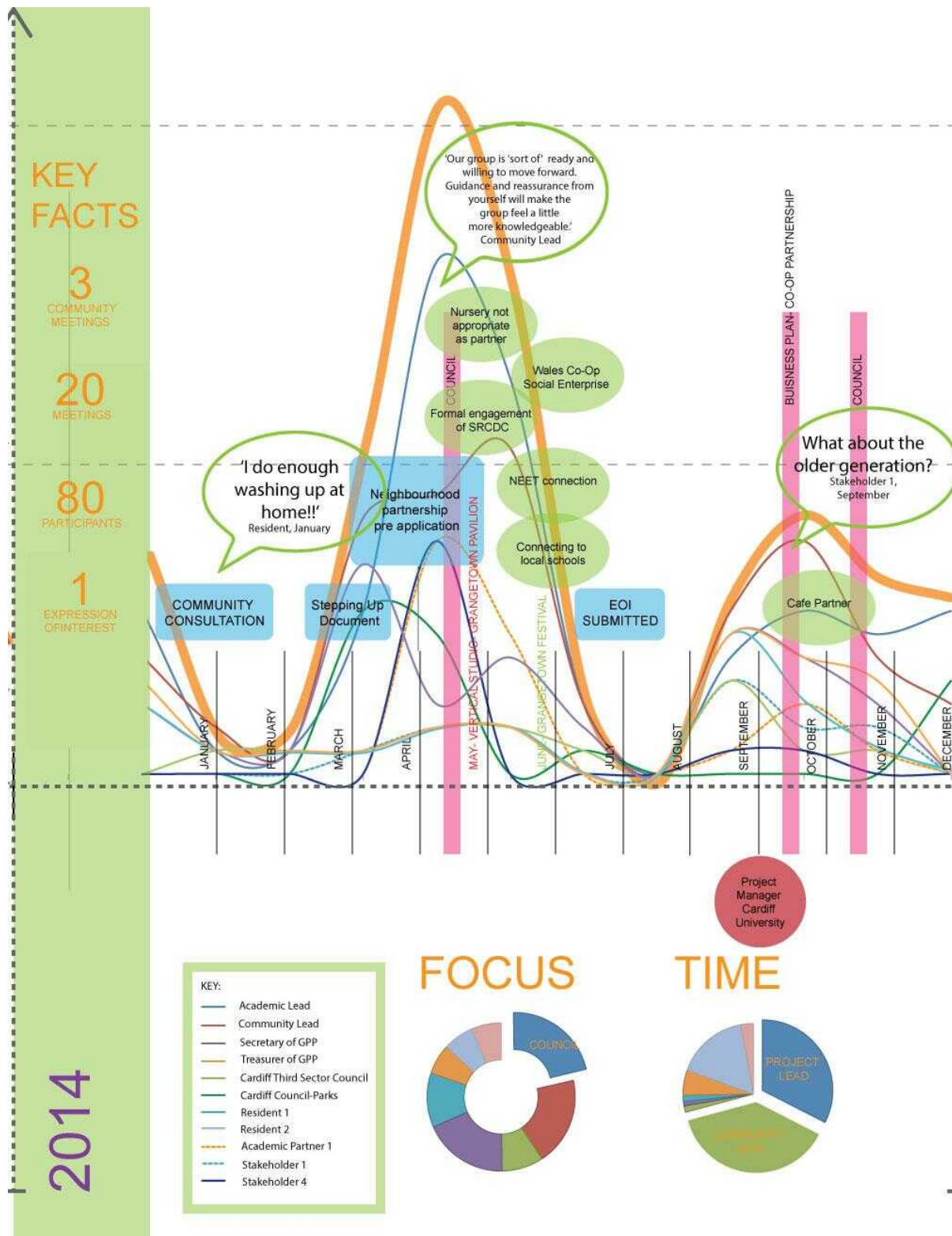
Individual graphs and quantitative analysis of email communications available on request.

## Practicing Engagement – the value of the Architect in a Community Asset Transfer



Mapping communications in a CAT - 2013 (12 months, Year one). Image credit: Sarah Ackland, under the supervision of Dr Mhairi McVicar.

## Practicing Engagement – the value of the Architect in a Community Asset Transfer



Mapping communications in a CAT - 2014 (12 months, Year Two). Image credit: Sarah Ackland, under the supervision of Dr Mhairi McVicar.



**KEY FACTS**

- 14
- 38
- 97
- 1

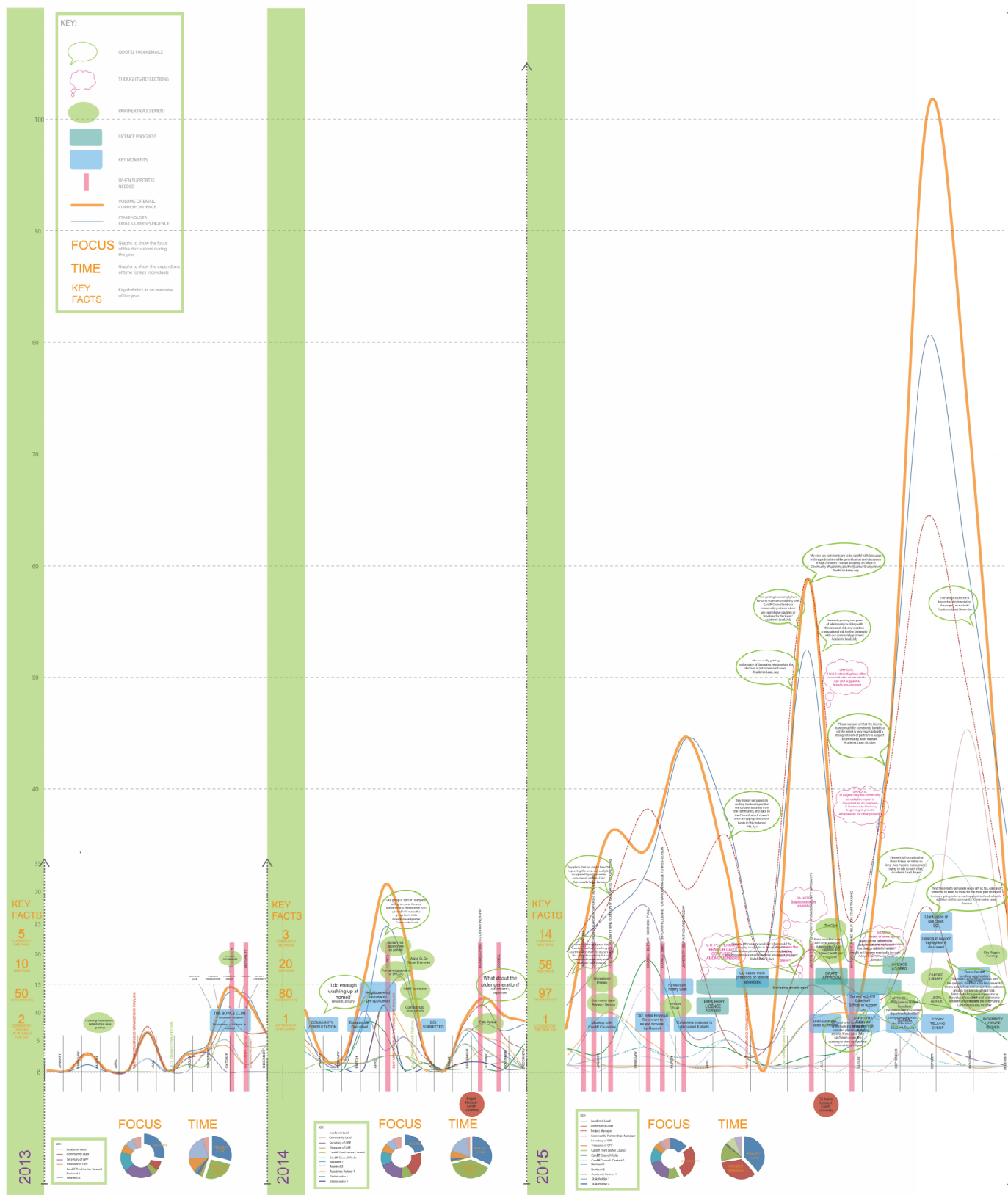
**2015**

**FOCUS**

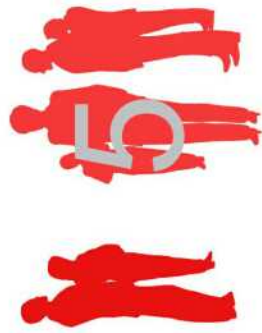
**TIME**

**KEY FACTS**

- 14
- 38
- 97
- 1



# KEY FACTS: 2013



COMMUNITY MEETINGS



MEETINGS IN TOTAL



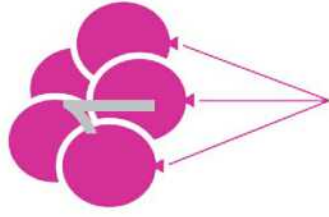
POTENTIAL SPACES FOR CAT



GPP MEMBERS



VERTICAL STUDIO



GRANGETOWN FESTIVAL



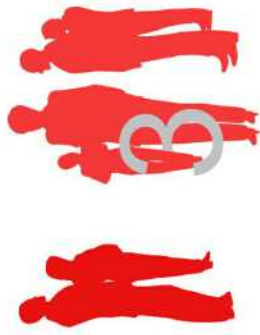
50

PARTICIPANTS



EMAILS SENT

# KEY FACTS: 2014



COMMUNITY MEETINGS

+1

COMMUNITY  
CONSULTATION



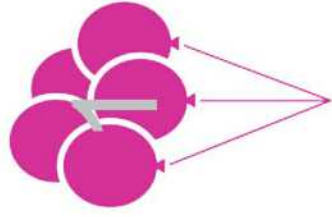
VERTICAL STUDIO



MEETINGS IN TOTAL



GRANGETOWN PAVILION BECOMES  
FOCUS FOR CAT



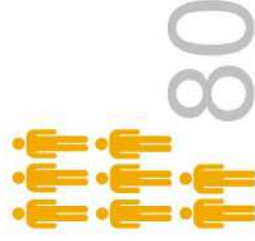
GRANGETOWN FESTIVAL



GPP MEMBERS



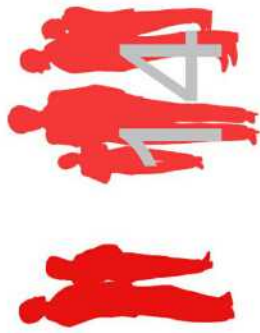
EMAILS SENT



PARTICIPANTS



# KEY FACTS: 2015



COMMUNITY MEETINGS



MEETINGS IN TOTAL



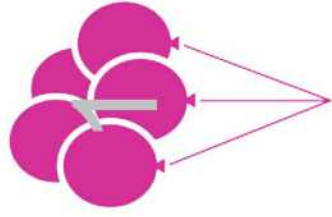
INDEMNITY LICENSE



GPP MEMBERS



VERTICAL STUDIO



GRANGETOWN FESTIVAL



PARTICIPANTS



EMAILS SENT

## **Appendix 2**

Questionnaires for Stakeholder interviews

## ***What shall we do with the Bowls Pavilion?***

### **Interview Introduction**

Cardiff University is signing an agreement to take over the Bowls Pavilion in Grange Gardens for one year. From November 2015 the University as part of an experimental project by the University to form partnerships with people in Grangetown to set the Bowls Pavilion for the long term as a place run by and for the local community. We are researchers who are shadowing the progress of this project to help it on its way, get people involved, and to find out what people think what value an Architect can bring to this project.

With this in mind, we would like to ask you to take part in a short interview. We would also like to ask you to attend a short workshop event to be held in the Bowls Pavilion in the next couple of months in order to discuss the issues presented here with other members of the community. In order for us to be able to use the information you provide us we would ask you to spend a couple of minutes reading the following section, and if in agreement, sign in the part indicated below.

### **Consent**

I understand that my participation in this project will involve taking part in individual interviews and a public workshop titled 'What shall we do with the Bowls Pavilion?' run by local residents, students and staff of Cardiff University. I understand that the researchers will ask for my opinions and ideas with regard to what I think should be done with the Bowls Pavilion, how this might be achieved and what part I might be able to play in this. The interview will take no more than 15 minutes of my time and the workshop will last around 3 hours – light refreshments will be provided.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with the researchers, Neil Turnbull (neil\_jon\_turnbull@hotmail.com, 07480147206) or Mhairi McVicar (mcvicarm@cardiff.ac.uk)

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, and that all collected materials, such as my written responses to questionnaires, will be anonymous. The information will be retained for up to fifteen years when it will be destroyed. I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted/destroyed at any time and, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, I can have access to the information at any time. I understand that the event will be photographed, and that photographs may be used in promotional material for Cardiff University.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ **[PRINT NAME]** consent to participate in the study conducted by the staff and students participating in the Grangetown Vertical Studio 2015, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University with the supervision of Rosie Cripps, Project Manager.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Interview**

- 1) Why are you / would you get involved with the Bowls Pavilion? (*Motivation*)
- 2) What is your vision for the Bowls Pavilion? (*Objectives*)

*Show the people what requests for activities we have collected so far. Ideas Picnic 2014 / Love Grangetown Event / Storytelling Event 2015*

- 3) More specifically, what activities would you like to happen in the Bowls Pavilion? (For who, when, cost, etc.)
- 4) How could it pay for itself?
- 5) What are the next steps to make this happen?
- 6) How can an Architect help in this?

*Show them the skills we have*

- 7) What skills do you have that could help make this happen?
- 8) Who else should we be talking to, who else should be getting involved?
- 9) Would you like to come to the workshop to discuss these ideas?



## ***Stakeholder interviews (RIBA pre-stage 0 Strategic Definition)***

### *Interviews 1 summary*

This document outlines and summarises the main findings from the first series of interviews undertaken with members (six in total) of the Grange Pavilion Project in relation to the value of the Architect in the potential Community Asset Transfer of the Bowls Pavilion in Grange Gardens. These semi-structured in-depth interviews were undertaken during February and March 2016. At the time no Architect had been appointed to carry out works, the specific aims and objectives, budget and timescale<sup>1</sup> were undefined. As a result these interviews capture the interviewee's preconceptions about the role of the Architect in Community Asset Transfer. The interviews start with general information relating to each interviewee's involvement in the project for the purposes of context.

Findings are referenced back to individual interviewees where appropriate by page number from interview transcription and a letter of identification given to each interviewee (Interviewees will not be identified by name). For example, (5:B), refers to page five of the transcription with the interviewee identified as B.

*Conclusion of key findings relating to the perceptions of the value of architects held by the communities engaged in CAT.*

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<sup>1</sup> This is important in relation to the next set of interviews which are to be undertaken during the application for Big Lottery Funding when many issues should be clearer and real experience with the Architect will be discussed.

1) Value architects add through physical and programmatic consideration of the building;

An Architect can create universal space where everyone feels welcome. They can create something that people are proud of and that can inspire the community. Part of the process of deciding on what the building will be used for is finding out what the client needs and demonstrating to the community what is feasible. They can also think about how the building brings real benefits to the wider community through improving access and addressing sustainability.

2) Demands placed upon the resources and skills of architectural practice;

The Architect is expected to be practical, having 'expert' technical knowledge, be able to coordinate the process and offer guidance on what is possible and what is not. The Architect is able to creatively interpret the needs of the community and give these needs spatial form and raise the quality of a project by asking pertinent questions to challenge the task being set.

The Architect should be paid since the service they provide needs to be done in a professional manner, and because voluntary work might not achieve the results necessary (Payment gives the client leverage).

The Architect may benefit the project by helping it run smoothly and without delay, although they understand practicalities they also have design knowledge which results in the project being 'exciting' rather than 'pedestrian'. However it is not thought necessary to have an Architect for refurbishment.

Finally, one interviewee mentioned that there was a lack of understanding of the CAT process as a whole and this contributes to people's perception of the role of the Architect in this process which is also somewhat unknown.

"The whole process is a bit fuzzy, I don't have a really have a good grasp of how it's supposed to work, but that's kind of partly me, I like certainty, so something like this, I've never done before, em, so yeah, so I don't really know how it is all going to work basically. I don't know how the CAT works, I don't know how the Architect bit - not that they are necessarily separate but they are kind of different parts of the same puzzle, I don't know how any of it works" (p7, 032116\_RIBA\_Interviews1\_Value\_C\_ElenRobert).

### *Summary of Key findings*

- What does an Architect do?

The Architect carries out three roles in the design and delivery of a building. They have practical 'expert' technical knowledge and can help in coordinating the process. They also can creatively interpret the needs

of the community and give these needs spatial form. (It is unclear to what extent the Architect takes responsibility for the 'interpretation' of the needs of the community and indeed the identification of the community itself).

- What value does an Architect bring to the project?

An Architect can identify and harness existing resources and existing knowledge for the benefit of a project. They can offer guidance on what is possible and what is not. An Architect can raise the quality of a project by asking pertinent questions to challenge the task being set.

- How could the building itself benefit from the skills of an Architect? (Physical aspects)

An Architect can create universal space where everyone feels welcome. They can create something that people are proud of and that can inspire the community.

- How does the work of the Architect help to organise the space and the activities that take place in it? (Programme and use)

This is part of a process of finding out what the client needs and demonstrating to the community what is feasible.

- Can an Architect help ensure that the proposed project can bring real benefits to the wider community? What sort of things can an Architect do?

This was understood in various ways with respondents thinking about how the Architect deals with the building in the context of access (or current physical inaccessibility) and sustainability (how a building might address this issue). There is recognition that the process by which the building will be developed is about working together; however the role of the Architect here is thought to be one of fellow participant rather than leader in the collaborative process.

- How can an Architect help in the Business Case and find funding?

The Architect has a knowledge and expertise in the quantification of things. The Architect will be able to allow people to discriminate what the building can and can't be.

- Should an Architect be paid for their work?

All interviewees unanimously responded by saying that Architects should be paid for their work. Architects provide a professional service (and should therefore be valued and it is a job which needs to be done in a professional manner), volunteering is considered impractical as consistency and timescales can't be guaranteed. Although pro-bono work may be undertaken by some Architects they are motivated by the prospect of future work and it could be detrimental to them.

- Is it really necessary to have an Architect?

An Architect is considered necessary for building works (but not for refurbishment). An Architect can help with technical aspects so a project is not delayed (in coordinating information for the authorities). An Architect understands the practicalities but at the same time is able to bring their experience of other

precedents to bring the 'world' of Architecture to the project allowing for something exciting rather than pedestrian (D,8).

- Other comments

One interviewee mentioned that there was a lack of understanding of the CAT process as a whole and the role of the Architect was part of this unknown.

Interviewees have high expectations that the Architect will be able to find out what is actually feasible and provide the 'best' solution for the community which is

## **Extracts from interviews**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

#### **1) How and when did you get involved in the Community Gateway / Bowls Pavilion project? (Why?)**

Although most interviewees have experience of working with an Architect, this is limited to specific roles and/or as clients on relatively uncomplicated works (domestic work).

Of the six interviewees, five became involved in the Grange Pavilion Project through social contacts they had with other members or through friends or acquaintances. One interviewee became involved having been introduced to the project through the Love Grangetown event in 2015.

People became involved because: they were passionate about helping the community and wanted to get involved in projects (2:A); they wanted to participate in voluntary work (2,B); wanted to work with people and get more involved in the local community (2,C) they had a particular project in mind which would provide a focal point for the area and engender a sense of ownership through common ownership of the Bowls Pavilion (2:E).

#### **2) What has the School of Architecture done so far? Has it been useful?**

The University is useful to the process in various ways: It has provided essential funding (E,2); The University is useful in building relationships with the council, with key stakeholders in the community (B,2) which might not otherwise be available (E,2); It has helped to 'figure things out' dedicated time and consistency to the project when it hard to find volunteers for the project (C,2); The Community Gateway and the WSA have been one of the main drivers of the project (B,2).

"It has kept an energy going through things like the vertical studios...it has kept certain energy within the site and the project" (E,2).

### **ABOUT THE ARCHITECT**



### 3) Have you previously worked with an Architect? (When/What/Why?)

There a range of experiences of working with Architects: As part of a team delivering building projects (2 interviewees); as clients (3 interviewees); and those who have had no experience of working with an Architect (1 interviewee). However all experiences relate to small scale works.

### 4) What does an Architect do?

The Architect is seen as having various and changing key roles in the process of creating a building which can be described in three areas:

- i) *The Architect has practical 'expert' technical knowledge in space and how it is used, in the design of space and in the construction process of Architecture.*

"The Architect can have a 'rootedness' in the place, which is helpful in terms of research, in their knowledge about the site and their connection to people there" (D,3).

"Architects know how to make buildings more energy efficient and how to go about it (A,3).

"Design Buildings" (C,3).

"Think about how buildings and the built environment can facilitate interaction between different people" (C,3).

- ii) *An Architect coordinates the process.*

Through their knowledge of the building process that can act as 'broker' between the client and the council (B,3).

"They are orchestrators, they pull lots of different disciplines together and they are creating not just a physical envelope but creating an intellectual envelope in which things occur, spaces or events, and they have to speak many languages, they are polyglots" (E,4).

At the same time there is a perception that the Architect is only one of many people 'around the table' and other actors, such as clients, funders and authorities can take on a more dominant role (D,3).

- iii) *The Architect can creatively interpret the needs of the community and give these needs spatial form.*

Through communication with their client they are able to interpret the needs of the client and imagine 'something that doesn't exist' (D,3).

The Architect carry out a process of talking to all people to ask what they want, helping the client to see different visions and possibilities, inspire, communicate and interpret the vision then help the client come to a decision (C,5).

“If I was trying to translate to you what the community wants, I wouldn’t know what questions to ask to get the correct answers and I guess an architect would know exactly what he wants to get from his clients...would know specifically what questions to ask them about, would know what they would need to know for them to start making drawings” (A,3).

“The architect helps to draw up the brief through conversation with the client, or the community, and will incorporate these needs into the building” (A,3).

“They are the ‘bridge’ between what is not there and what will be there” (B,3).

“Architect helps the client to understand the whole process of what the building could be before it is under construction” (B,3).

“What’s not there is you identifying what the customer or community want and then they would bridge that by drawing something or communicating to the Council, or helping the community visualize what that would look like and then the community would have to adopt that, or accept, that, or agree to that to move it forwards” (B,3).

## **5) What value might an Architect bring to the project? (Specialist skills, knowledge and/or experience)**

This can be described in three areas:

### *i) Work with existing resources and harnessing existing knowledge:*

The architect can bring a ‘lightness of touch’ (D,3), an ability to use resources and knowledge to work with the existing building. This can be functional but also taps into place, people, and history.

“Sensibilities around how connection to place, understanding place and being curious about place and wanting to tap into the things that are already there” (D,3).

An Architect can converse with specific users (Gardeners) so that their ‘expert’ knowledge is incorporated into the project (C,3). Brings in knowledge of other projects, case studies (B,3).

### *ii) Offers guidance in what is possible.*

It is even suggested that they even take on a role as the arbitrator in what is 'best' for the community by exercising 'due diligence' (which sounds potentially very dangerous).

The Architect helps to define what is actually possible. A 'brokering' of helping people understand but also managing what they can technically do. Guide the project so that what the community says it wants is actually possible (B,3). An Architect can advise on what is practical (and what is not) to be objective or critical in relation to the clients demands (A,3). The architect should exercise care and caution in the process and becomes responsible not only for listening to the community but in delivering the 'best' outcome.

"Taking in the information of what the community want, trying it out, the practicalities of things and so if we just did whatever the community wanted we might end up with a project completed in practical terms, wasn't actually the best thing to do or best way to utilise the finances and I guess that would be a mistake, I guess a due diligence in the whole project" (A,3).

*iii) An Architect can raise the quality of a project.*

It is the creative act of the Architect to prompt better thinking and provoke a better response (E,4).

"An Architect can raise the game and the quality of the question that has been posed. In fact the Architect can raise the quality of the question and I think that is where they start to make a difference, if they are only resolving the question, quite often the question is the wrong question anyway. So if they can intervene and raise the question of what is really needed than better solutions should flow from that raising of the question" (E,4).

## **6) How could the building itself benefit from the skills of an Architect? (Physical)?**

The Architect creates space which sets the scene for the use of the space in the sense of 'how long you would want to spend in it' (E,5). In relation to the Bowls Pavilion:

"...something like providing a quality recreational space, improving health, well-being, the idea of being in the open air is that something that is of benefit? Is being with other people of benefit? Being with other people in a common space of benefit? And the Architect in a way providing the three dimensional framework for that feeling confident and comfortable with strangers, it's really important, because it runs counter to all the prevailing fear and hostility that is put about and it's not easy to erase hostility and fear, it's actually very difficult to make people feel comfortable with strangers (E,5)"

The building can become something that people are proud of and that can inspire the community.

“I feel like the BP has a lot of potential...to make it something that people can be proud of, that people want to say, if like my family members came down to visit, like, I know this amazing place where people go and go visit” (A,5).

**7) How does the work of the Architect help to organise the space and the activities that take place in it? (Programme)**

Should be part of the same process of finding out what the client needs (C,5). It is important that the client knows what they want to do with the building, to know what is it going to be used for (A,6).

“I think the final decisions everyone is involved I guess, you know, what the community wants...Architects give us the reality of that and put everything in perspective – what is really achievable (with) the use of the building, the Architect can have an influence on that” (A,6).

**8) Can an Architect help ensure that the proposed project can bring real benefits to the wider community? What sort of things can an Architect do?**

This was understood in various ways with respondents thinking about how the Architect deals with the building in the context of access (or current physical inaccessibility) and sustainability (how it addresses this issue). Also there is recognition that the process by which the building will be developed is about working together; however the role of the Architect here is thought to be one of fellow participant rather than leader in the collaborative process.

Sustainability: Architects can bring their ‘catalogue’ of experience to start a conversation about how the building might be. For example:

“About, how does heat work? How does a green agenda work? Some of those debates, that people are interested in but they don’t necessarily have them clearly articulated in their heads” (E,5).

Access: By addressing the current physical barriers of the building, making it inviting for everyone (C,5).

Process: Not so much about an outcome but rather about the process of making the building.

“So the ‘how’ for me is the question about what’s our model of meeting people and getting on doing stuff together because it is quite a big invention, isn’t it. It’s quite a big thing to invent” (D,7).

The architect can get involved in the process of working together as a member of the team, but do they have the skills to lead?

“They certainly would be one of the people, but I don’t know, one of the parties involved, (but) architecture is not one of the things that spring to mind when you think of someone facilitating it, or holding it. Architecture is really strong on the physical thing, and also on the histories, and also

the resources, picking up the resources and actually working with the stuff is a different thing” (D,8).

### **9) How can an Architect help in the Business Case and find funding?**

Having the knowledge and expertise about how to quantify things, have a certain groundedness (D,8).

Figuring out what the space is to be, which comes before the business case? (C,6).

Part of the business case is finding out what is actually feasible (C,).

An Architect can help to ‘sell’ the idea in a more creative way. They can enhance the business case (B,4).

“...pragmatics about what goes where and the cost per square metre and how that might generate an income that a building would necessarily have to produce for it to become viable and long term viable” (E,6).

“Architect would be able to do is through the process, and it is a process, would be able to start to allow people to start to discriminate about what it isn’t, at the moment it could be anything, because at the moment is isn’t really anything and what is has to do is become something and certain things have to be eliminated, it is not an open air swimming pool, maybe and the architect has to help the community understand that if the community say we want that the architect has to be able to say “if you are utterly determined to have that, you are going to have to achieve this, to get that”. And I think the architect can help again teach, help become part involved and be involved and take responsibility, they are a mentor, rather than a teacher” (E,6).

### **10) Should an Architect be paid for their work?**

Yes,

Yes,

Yes,

Yes,

Why not?

It is a job for a professional. The client needs a professional service and guarantees (Insurances). For some it is an ethical decision since the service that the Architect provides has been ‘worked hard for’ so it should be valued, they are actually doing their ‘work’. Volunteering is considered impractical as consistency and timescales can’t be guaranteed. Although pro-bono work may be undertaken by some Architects they are motivated by the prospect of future work and it could be detrimental to them.



It is a big role, and needs consistency and professionalism. It is a job that needs to be done professionally (C,6).

“It’s a really complex job to start with and therefore you need to ensure that it’s done professionally and so if you pay somebody there is a higher chance that it will get done in a professional manner...and I guess, if something goes wrong...they may be liable, and if they are paid they have insurance and so on, and if they are not then I guess they are open to...” (C,6).

Volunteering is unlikely as you can’t guarantee that volunteers can give the job the time that it needs (C,6).

“Well some Architects do give a lot of time pro-bono, but a lot of that may be to try to get work out of it and it’s not always that great for the Architect” (C,6).

“everyone is entitled to get paid and not to see payment as an expense but as an investment...I know some of us are doing voluntary stuff and that, but I think that architects are bringing their specific set of skills that have been studied for, worked hard for, so we have got to value that...I think it is a point of valuing that expertise and that, yes, they should get paid” (A,9).

Sometimes you just have to pay for things. One interviewee drew a parallel with the payment of a group to provide entertainment at an event:

“...very few people will turn up to do an event without getting some reimbursement, it doesn’t always mean getting paid, it can be spice credits which rewards volunteering, if it’s your skills and you’ve done seven years training and you’re doing these plans and doing this work, then actually you are working” (B,5).

“Why not! (laughs) absolutely, why not. They should be, if they do what we have been speaking about, it is invaluable for years to come, that might well engender an understanding and a confidence in people that go beyond the building of the single object, it breaches the prejudices that we surround ourselves with, it allows us to demand better, and better doesn’t mean more expensive, just better” (E,7).

“Yes. If only to act as a lubricant between the machine, the mechanism, skillfully employed, engaged, shortens the process and I think that is true. Shortens the process, in that they know the process, you can’t expect the community to know and articulate and uncover, so they can shorten the process by not allowing bureaucracy to hold them up. One of the skills that they bring is that idea that they know the process of how to get from there to there and quite often communities start at the wrong place, they go with the final product, whereas the architect can say “community this is the process that you are going to go through and your final product is going to be conditioned by it going through these things, I can’t think of a good analogy, I can’t think of a particularly nice analogy that has the right product at the end, but you understand what I’m saying, and the community can get rocked off at one point and go this is what we are talking about and everyone else is going, “no, we are talking about that” so that miss communication

disables – it destroys the belief and the trust and the enthusiasms and that only embitters the communities against the agencies” (E,7).

### **11) Is it really necessary to have an Architect?**

“...you can do the project without the architect, but there is a risk that without the architect we would miss out on crucial information or knowledge and could be the difference between the project being successful and not successful” (A,7).

“...understanding of the kind of practical things, but also around those curiosities...about what is a space...takes it away from being functional...connecting it to architecture around the world, and community building around the world and it seems really exciting and it means that we aim for amazing rather than pedestrian...” (D,8).

It depends on the vision of the group. A “lick of paint” doesn’t need an architect (C,3).

Depends on what you want to do. An Architect is necessary for rebuilding (but not prefabricated buildings), for a quick refurb an Architect is not necessary.

The Architect acts as a broker between the Council and the Community and helps to get it done properly, and perhaps a bit quicker (B,5).

### **Any other comments**

At this stage there is a lack of understanding of the process, don’t know how CAT works, don’t know how an Architect works – not separate issues but part of the same puzzle (C,7).

The building is not just about what you can do there but how do you want it to feel for people (C,7).

It is a negative space at the moment, I want to change that (C,7).

“Yeah, the architect doesn’t have the answer, they don’t have the power, but they have powers like understanding process, understanding language, understanding space they are all the things that they do have, and the community has its powers, and maybe the architect can help the communities understand their powers and the effect of those powers” (E,8).

### **Appendix 3**

Academic paper: 'Live projects in the participatory design of a common ethos', Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull, submitted to the Association of Architectural Educators (AAE). Longlisted and currently under second stage peer review for inclusion in Charrette Journal 5(2).



**Charrette**

*the Journal of the Association of Architectural Educators*

# Live projects in the participatory design of a common ethos.

Anonymous authors.

*Anonymous institution.*

**ABSTRACT** Philosopher Karsten Harries proposes that the task of Architecture is that of helping to articulate a common ethos in order to help us dwell in a disorienting world. This paper draws on such a viewpoint to closely track the slow, complex, messy processes underpinning the community-led redevelopment of a small civic space in [neighbourhood], [city]. The development of long term partnerships between [neighbourhood] and [institution] have co-produced an annual cycle of public celebrations and collaborative research between residents and architectural students. Preceding the architectural design or even a design brief for the [project] and gardens, the contributions of architectural students, educators and researchers towards one project over a five-year period are examined here as supporting the participatory design of a common ethos.

**KEYWORDS** public interest design, participatory design, appreciative inquiry, live projects

## **The Ethical Function of Architecture**

In *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, philosopher Karsten Harries defines 'ethical function' in relationship to Architecture as referring to 'its task to help articulate a common ethos.'<sup>1</sup> 'Ethos', Harries notes, 'names the way human beings exist in the world: their way of dwelling.' In considering whether the task of Architecture can be that of a hermeneutic, or interpretative function in communicating or interpreting a way of life, Harries questions whether there can be a way of life valid for all - that is, a common ethos. Harries proposes that, '[t]he problem of Architecture and the problem of community cannot finally be divorced.'<sup>2</sup> 'Only if we are capable of dwelling', Harries concluded, 'then can we build.'<sup>3</sup>

This question provided a starting point for an approach to ongoing architectural and multi-disciplinary teaching collaborations with residents of a place-based local community. Over five years, annual cycles of listening, gathering, celebrating and researching through collaborative teaching projects has played a role in gathering a community and supporting the emerging definition of a common ethos to support the activation of a civic space.

As architectural educators, practitioners, researchers and students, we have come to understand our role as listening, interpreting, and presenting community voices. Our collaborative work emerged through devices of gathering stories, rather than - to the surprise of all - the design of a building, or even a design brief. As Awan, Schneider and Till observe, architectural skills may be deployed and developed in settings beyond that of the design of an architectural artefact.<sup>4</sup>

Collaborative teaching and research, negotiating a path through principles of appreciative inquiry, participatory design, co-production, action research and grounded theory, helped shape an understanding of the value and skills architectural students, educators and practitioners may bring to the participatory design of a common ethos. This paper, closely tracking five years of daily communications between an extended team of protagonists, reflects upon the development of this understanding, and the complexities, challenges, messy realities and common ground we have encountered along the way.

*Insert figure 1 here: [anonymous project, anonymous author (tutor)]*

## **[project]**

In 2012, a resident of [neighbourhood], [city], approached their councillor to discuss the possibility of converting a vacant structure near a popular neighbourhood park into a community-led facility. With an interest in facilitating redevelopment, rather than running a facility, discussions described aims of fostering 'quality' in an area often described in terms of deprivation. A group of residents began meeting around kitchen tables to discuss:

a question, rather than a set of definitive expectations or resolved framework [...] just to get an idea of what a few others might wish to see take place and whether we think it is worth the effort.<sup>5</sup>

Initially focusing on a vacant Caretaker's House in a School adjacent to the park, the fledgling group were instead redirected to a Bowls Pavilion and Green located in the park itself. With Council funding cut under austerity budgets, the Bowls Club had elected to shut down. Once vacant, the facility began to deteriorate, threatening to reinforce negative perceptions of the area. It also offered an opportunity for redevelopment as a more public facility and as a catalyst for wider community ambitions.

Of particular complexity here was the fact that the group meeting around kitchen tables made no claim to represent 'community.' Undefined by formal organisational structures, those gathering voiced understandings that the role of a community facility and definitions of 'quality' might vary enormously according to the multiple and complex 'communities' which make up [neighbourhood]. The task of creating, 'a vibrant, friendly community facility where people of all backgrounds can connect and are made welcome'<sup>6</sup> would be, all knew, extraordinarily complex.

'To be experienced as a genuine centre', Harries writes, 'a place must be experienced as gathering a multitude into a community,'<sup>7</sup> a task recognised as pertinent to the [project].

*Insert figure 2 here: [anonymous neighbourhood, anonymous author (student)]*

### **[neighbourhood], [city]**

[neighbourhood] is [city]'s largest electoral ward, located in the south side of [city] between [neighbourhood] and [neighbourhood]. Developed from marshland in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to house employees of adjacent docklands and planned industrial areas,<sup>8</sup> its current population of nearly 20,000 residents makes up [city]'s most ethnically diverse ward.<sup>9</sup> Residents who describe the area's communities as well-served socially by mosques, temples, churches, social clubs, café's and bars also observe that:

[neighbourhood] doesn't feel like it has a centre where the whole community can meet. At the moment, the community is made up of pockets of different cultural populations who mix in either the mosque, the temple, the pub, church- but they do not mix in one place.<sup>10</sup>

The Index of Multiple Deprivation highlights significant challenges in [neighbourhood], including poor health, child poverty, and unemployment.<sup>11</sup> Residents, however, highlighted that any proposed partnership initiative should place a priority upon 'creating the notion of belief in the people, in the area.'<sup>12</sup>

This began the pursuit of an ethos for a community-led definition of a space for all, beginning with valuing what already existed, both in terms of the physical surroundings, and of the skills, expertise, commitment and sense of community shared amongst residents. As conversations developed amongst residents, the local council directed them to a recently introduced program of Community Asset Transfers.

### **Community Asset Transfers**

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) has been defined as a mechanism which allows for the 'change in management and / or ownership of land or buildings, from public bodies, (most commonly local authorities), to communities, (community and voluntary sector groups, community enterprises, social enterprises, etc.).'<sup>13</sup> This process has been described by Aiken et al. as aiming to increase participation

and community empowerment by giving citizens opportunities to take over the organisation and administration of public services.<sup>14</sup>

[City] Council notes that the concept of leasing council property to community groups at below-market rates is not in itself a new initiative, citing community halls and scout huts as historical precedents. The process of identifying and advertising council assets for community groups to take over was, however, first formalised in [city] Council under the terminology of 'Community Asset Transfer' in 2014.<sup>15</sup> Noting that CAT's are not consistently defined across the UK, with each local authority adopting its own approaches to asset transfer, [City] Council developed a 'Stepping Up Toolkit,' which begins with a contextual explanation of the rationale and economic need for a program of CATs:

In this 'age of austerity' public bodies have been under increasing pressure to find new and more efficient ways of delivering their services. This has impacted across the board, but perhaps no more so than on community services delivered at a local level. The situation demands a creative response. Local communities have traditionally been very resourceful in acting to help themselves. Indeed, community organisations have been at the very heart of local service delivery for decades. The need and the opportunity, however, is to enable more community-led activities to take place. To encourage more volunteers to 'step up' and take over the management of services and assets in their own communities.<sup>16</sup>

Aiming the tool kit at 'people and organisations that work at a neighbourhood or community level', [City] Council provides definitions of 'organisations' as including:

Individuals or groups of people coming together for the first time for a specific purpose, to deliver a particular service or building under threat of closure.<sup>17</sup>

Any group taking on an asset, the document outlines, should establish clear objectives, build the capacity to see the project through,



prove the feasibility of proposals, develop a business case, and deliver real benefits to the community.<sup>18</sup> These tasks were daunting for an emerging, as yet unstructured, group of residents who nurtured ambitions to do something about a deteriorating asset on their doorstep. 'Presently', the group emailed amongst each other in 2013,

the project consists of a good case which has been well put to the council, a growing catalogue of local knowledge, a lot of positive interest and good will from those who know about it in the Council.<sup>19</sup>

'Ourselves' is a subject of discussion' the group noted as they sought to define their aims. 'As we don't wish to 'run' the cafe or the building itself, but would rather be a catalyst for change, working with others would seem the correct thing to do.'<sup>20</sup> The group expressed an interest in [institution] 'being a long term partner and stakeholder, and also an organisation with resources that could assist and practically help the process along.'<sup>21</sup> The endeavour, the residents forewarned, could 'become an all-consuming project that could overpower those who were tempted to step in.'<sup>22</sup>

*Insert figure 3 here: Resident wish-list, 2013 [anonymous]*

### **'A relationship, not an affair'**

Our involvement with the project as educators, participants and researchers began in 2012 with an internally-funded institutional platform initiated by eight staff members.<sup>23</sup> We proposed that [institution] could enter into a long term partnership with a local, place-based community, with no pre-defined objective other than exploring ideas for mutually beneficial collaborations, and aims defined as:

to scope, develop and facilitate projects between the community and the University and to promote communication between them, ensuring that the University's civic role as a contributor to the health and wellbeing of the city and its residents is acknowledged and developed.

A key principle of the initiative is to work with the community, responding

to their concerns and needs, and in turn to make visible, mutually impactful initiatives. It is not to conduct research on the community.<sup>24</sup>

We emphasised that ideas, skills, and resources flow two ways: that the Community could change the University, as well as vice versa.

Piloting in [neighbourhood], as [city]'s largest electoral ward, our [neighbourhood] partnerships began with a walk-in scoping session held at a Salvation Army hall in December 2012, advertised through word-of-mouth and recommended contacts. We understood that this first session could do little more than dip a toe in the water; that it would be accessible only to those with the time and confidence to walk through the door. We hoped to identify existing perceptions and assumptions about the university, and to be signposted to a wider group of contacts as 'gatekeepers' to the area's multiple communities.

At this first scoping session, the willingness of 'the University' to listen and to commit to the long term were identified as critical in developing the level of trust required for meaningful partnerships.<sup>25</sup> Residents made it clear that 'Universities... particularly in [city], have got to up their game in terms of the way they relate to the community.' Fears were voiced that the community would be 'researched' with no tangible impact or benefit. Academics, residents emphasised, should ask 'not what the community can do for us but what we can do for the community', stipulating that we should be prepared to foster 'a relationship, not an affair.'<sup>26</sup>

*Insert figure 4 here: Student presentation, 2013 [anonymous]*

### **Co-producing a partnership**

Our first co-production between University and Community ran as a '[UG studio]',<sup>27</sup> a [institution] program which annually sets aside three weeks for first and second undergraduate architecture students to work together with internal and external creative practitioners. With an objective of broadening the context of students' understanding of architecture as 'an integrated discipline that engages with a broad range of research approaches,' the annual call

invites proposals ‘within and outside of the specific field of Architectural design’, highlighting that ‘research does not have to involve a design project.’<sup>28</sup>

A May 2013 [UG studio] brief developed with the [project] asked students to ‘work directly with residents, policy makers, educators, artists, health professionals, local businesses, University staff, and other interested parties,’ to:

- ‘carry out social, economic, and historical surveys to help identify needs and aspirations of local residents and businesses, and organise and run a public consultation event;
- investigate precedents of architectural and art practices which focus upon community engagement, and precedents of small business projects which act as a catalyst for community development;
- explore strategies for regeneration initiatives at the scale of the neighbourhood, park, and city;
- develop a brief for an Architectural competition to regenerate , adjacent derelict / underused buildings and public spaces.’<sup>29</sup>

Expressing hopes that the students’ work would support the physical regeneration of identified vacant spaces, and act as the ‘first step in forming a ten year partnership to develop a series of research and teaching projects between [institution] and [neighbourhood]’, the brief asked the students to investigate:

what role the Architect can play in such regeneration issues, looking at precedents and examples of architectural practice which set out community engagement at the heart of design matters.<sup>30</sup>

We ambitiously suggested that, in a three-week timespan, the students and residents could ‘develop the proposals into a viable yet ambitious design brief.’<sup>31</sup> Upon launching, it became clear that this was setting the cart before the horse.

As yet, there was no formally defined client, no agreed site, no defined program. While disconcerting to architectural students who expected to design Architecture, the studio refocused on running a second, more widely advertised, drop-in session to capture an incrementally wider range of views, test reactions to ideas, and gather recommendations for where to look for inspiration and who to talk to next. Rather than demonstrable design outputs according to an academic curriculum, the pace and direction of the process remained in the residents’ hands. Discussions with students reset our Unit aims as listening, analysing and graphically presenting residents’ ideas to capture an emerging ethos for a civic space.

Writing of the communicative value of Architecture, Karsten Harries notes that ‘this language is inevitably mediated by particular landscapes, particular histories, particular stories.’<sup>32</sup> Our role as Architectural educators and students now became that of gathering stories as a means of helping to gather community.

*Insert figure 5 here: Ideas Picnic poster [anonymous]*

### **Ideas Picnic**

As educators and practitioners, the [project] represented a rare opportunity to develop co-produced ideas incrementally and iteratively. As the residents’ group and [engagement platform] each began to formalise, our second co-produced studio and first public ‘gathering’ event in the vacant building itself was established by an Ideas Picnic in May 2014.

With a brief emphasising the ‘pedagogic possibilities of referencing and building on the work of previous studios, introducing collaborative and long-term cumulative approaches to design, and working with a long term view in mind,’<sup>33</sup> we imagined that, two years into the project, our role might by now be Architectural. We envisioned the students setting up a pop-up café, asking the Unit to:

develop ideas for a café + hub based on themes of health and wellbeing through neighbourhood surveys and precedent research into themes of food, health and wellbeing to inform ideas for a brief for the café; design

proposals for the renovation or reconstruction of the Pavilion and surrounding landscape as a café and garden; and public workshops / events and an ‘accumulating’ exhibition in the [project].<sup>34</sup>

*Insert figure 6 here: Ideas Picnic [anonymous]*

In reality, we again found that the project wasn’t yet physical. The students deferred the idea of installing Architectural interventions, focusing instead on baking cakes, planning activities, and simply opening up the building for public use for the first time. They had it spot on, as a resident noted:

The students were blown away by the response and numbers that came. A bit of free cake and tea was always going to draw a crowd, and [neighbourhood] excelled itself. We are now sorting through the comments and ideas that were flying about on the day, the general consensus is:

- 1, the area needs this as a 'hub' around which to build/ rebuild the community.
- 2, anything that does happen has to happen quickly.
- 3, it should be 'community led'
- 4, yes, there is real need for quality within the area
- 5, where's the money coming from?
- 6, What we really need is...
- 7, and lastly, 'I'm more than happy you are going to do it, because...' <sup>35</sup>

Free tea and cake in a park on a sunny day attracted more people, confirmed interest and support, emphasised a need for things to start happening soon. Presenting 3-minute films and an exhibit of flyers, paper ‘tablecloths’ and hanging ‘leaves’ of residents’ ideas, and graphic summaries of interviews, students led a follow-up discussion with resident partners.

Key recommendations and questions highlighted that the facility should be community led and represent quality; the challenge of funding; the need to agree a program; the question of who would take on this task as it moved from a loose vision and long conversations around kitchen tables to a more formal structure and significant demands of time and expertise.

*Insert figure 7 here: Ideas Picnic exhibit [anonymous]*

### Translating positivity into committed action

Anyone can be positive towards an 'idea' such as this’, the resident group emailed in January 2015, now into the third year of the project. ‘It's how that positivity translates into committed action.’<sup>36</sup> In constant flux as individuals joined, changed careers, moved homes, or burnt out after intense periods of volunteering,<sup>37</sup> the group identified a need to ‘maintain public momentum and cohesion when things are apparently not happening,’ to pull together ‘many threads within the community and other interested parties’, and to support these identified needs by developing ‘stable long term partnerships with organisations and institutions that can offer guidance and security to the programme.’<sup>38</sup> In early 2015, the project moved towards a next key stage:

[The Council] proposed that the building be passed to 'us', on a 'peppercorn' rent', sometime close to within the next three months. Note, Rent. The offer is there on the condition that we can prove ready and able to fulfil at least a part of the social programme so sketchily outlined, so far. I indicated joy as well as uncertainty, (as I'm not sure how ready we are.)<sup>39</sup>

A challenge was how ‘to identify and encourage individuals and groups from within that community to take an active role in the long haul, as well as in the fun bits at the end.’<sup>40</sup> Now taking on tasks which asked for significant commitment, time and effort, and with the first formal indications that the project might progress, the group considered how to reach out in a more targeted way.

As educators, we summarised our intent to continue the studios on an annual basis to support the project within wider emerging University-Community partnerships. Our [engagement project], at the end of a first year, had likewise acknowledged the limitations of standard communication channels - flyers, emails, word of mouth, drop in events - and similarly planned a focused outreach. The annual cycle of a [UG studio] offered the possibility of targeted outreach alongside

building momentum through immediate and tangible public action.

*Insert figure 8 here: Love [neighbourhood] [anonymous]*

### **Love [neighbourhood]: concepts of community, co-production and appreciative inquiry**

‘Here in [neighbourhood]’, a resident summarised, ‘there are many communities, some communities packed within their own community (a Russian doll demographic-locality), and so are difficult to reach and exchange ideas with.’<sup>41</sup> Marilyn Taylor of the Institute of Volunteering Research has noted that ‘community is defined as much by THEM as by US. It can be both oppressive and exclusive.’<sup>42</sup> This can be understood to lead to the exclusion of certain groups from the process, and to this end, the next phase of our partnership sought to identify and invite representatives from the widest range of [neighbourhood] communities.

Our 2015 [UG studio] collaboration paired six undergraduate Architecture students with fifteen ‘community researchers’- community representatives identified over the previous two years, who could support in reaching faith, ethnic, age and interest groups representing [neighbourhood’s] demographics. The student-resident pairs were trained by Architect-researcher [tutor], and [Engagement platform project manager] in principles of co-production and appreciative inquiry to interview five friends and neighbours of each of the community researchers, reaching a total of ninety-nine community members through direct contact and visits to the Hindu Temple, a local youth club, a Catholic Club Bingo Night, and two Muslim groups, as well as interviewing local businesses and conducting street interviews supported by local actors.

Extending beyond the previous remit of the ongoing [project], the [UG studio] brief for Love [neighbourhood] 2015 identified broader aims for [engagement platform], the students, and the community:

‘[Engagement platform] aims:

- To ensure key demographics of the neighbourhood are fairly represented in [engagement platform];

- To ensure key demographics in the neighbourhood have access to University resources;
- To make new connections with prospective community project leads and volunteers.

Student aims: To explore:

- The role of the Architect in developing positive community identity;
- The value of involving community members at each stage of the design process;
- Innovative ways of engaging and communicating with local communities to inspire community-led action.

Aims for the community:

- To build a positive, shared identity across the many communities in the area;
- Define where and how [institution] should invest seed-corn funding in [neighbourhood] over the next 2 years;
- Develop a plan of activities to make [neighbourhood] an even better place to live;
- To build stronger connections between the community and University.’

Principles of coproduction and appreciative inquiry framed the brief, defining co-production principles in the brief as:

- ‘Building on people’s existing capabilities and actively supporting them to put these to use at an individual and community level;
- Reciprocity and mutuality;
- Developing peer support networks which work alongside professionals to transfer knowledge;
- Blurring distinctions between professionals and recipients;
- Facilitating rather than delivering;
- Assets: transforming the perception of people into one where they are equal partners.’<sup>43</sup>

The brief introduced appreciative inquiry as a model within which co-production principles can be applied, defining appreciative inquiry as building on what already works, rather than a ‘problem-solving approach’ in which outsiders - such as the students - come in to fix a ‘problem’. Mathie and Cunningham define appreciative inquiry as:

a process that promotes positive change (in organisations or communities) by focusing on peak experiences and successes of the past. It relies on interviews and storytelling that draw out these positive memories, and on a collective analysis of the elements of success. This analysis becomes the reference for further community action.<sup>44</sup>

Working within a 5-stage model of ‘Define-discover-dream-design-deliver’, the students and community researchers were charged with accessing community groups in a more focused manner than drop in or open public sessions had achieved. The approach emphatically avoided identifying ‘problems’, instead asking residents to share a positive memory, their favourite places, and their visions of the neighbourhood, as well as the skills and resources they felt they could offer to help make it happen.

Community and student researchers came back together in a ‘Love [neighbourhood]’ workshop and public celebration. Presenting visual summaries of residents’ memories and a ‘dream [neighbourhood]’ drawing, the students’ work acted as a starting point for workshop participants to identify, agree upon, and rank nine key community themes, of which ‘community meeting spaces’ was highlighted as a key priority.

*Insert figure 9 here: Love [neighbourhood] memories [anonymous]*

*Insert figure 10 here: Love [neighbourhood] 9 key themes [anonymous]*

### **Learning from Love [neighbourhood]**

Community feedback had consistently emphasised a need for immediate, direct and tangible action alongside the long term development of partnerships. As architects, educators and students, the fast-slow-fast pace

of this project, unfolding over a number of years as both ‘client’ and program emerged, reframed our expectations of what we could offer as Architects. Student feedback captured interpretations of their roles as architects:

- Architecture can play a big role in shaping a positive community identity...creating something for people to feel proud of and part of the area.
- An Architect can provide the neutral spaces for different communities to come together and feel comfortable to discuss or partake in an activity.<sup>45</sup>

[project manager] noted of the architectural students’ approach that:

All the students taking part in the project noted the importance of listening, involving and designing with the community. Many of the students refer to the facilitative and social role they could play as Architects to translate community ideas into a shared vision rather than enforcing “outsiders” design ideals. A number of the students reflected on how this process can encourage stakeholder engagement and be used to develop an increasingly positive identity for an area.<sup>46</sup>

*Insert figure 11 here: Love [neighbourhood] ‘dream’ [anonymous]*

In particular, [project manager] noted the approach the students brought in terms of communicating residents’ ideas back to residents, recommending that future studios prioritised visual analysis as ‘crucial to the process of exchanging and feeding back knowledge’:

Each student took part in creating a display to represent the findings of the consultation. The washing line of ‘special memories’ and the ‘[neighbourhood] Dream’ were both particularly effective at displaying the consultation results. There is often a tendency to feedback to communities either through technical reports or poor quality flipchart scribbles; the designs the students created really helped engage community members in the

broader project and maintain momentum.<sup>47</sup>

The value of applying architectural skills to visual analysis is also linked to the importance of giving training to students to develop new tools to socially interact with community members. The start of the project involved a lengthy debriefing on how to talk to people from the community, how to treat them and the area with respect, and how, as researchers they could stay safe in the field, issues not always addressed as part of an architectural education.

Building on the first two years of partnership development, Love [neighbourhood] formalised partnerships, set definable goals, and began to clarify our role as architectural educators and students in supporting the [project]. ‘As a community’, a resident wrote in June 2015,

we are beginning to find and have 'voice', but as yet we have little or no authority to ensure a positive outcome. Your students' work helps reinforce identity and so provides authority, giving 'us' a further means or power to complete. This is real and valuable work they do.<sup>48</sup>

*Insert figure 12 here: Storytelling flyer*  
[anonymous]

*Insert figure 13 here: Storytelling booth*  
[anonymous]

*Insert figure 14 here: Collected stories*  
[anonymous]

### **Physically manifesting an intent**

Karsten Harries, writing of Architecture as articulating social function, proposes:

building helps gather individuals into a community by placing them on the ground of a shared history and by gesturing toward an ideal image of communal dwelling.<sup>49</sup>

In 2015, building on the evidence of community interest and support gathered over the prior three years, our community-university partnership secured a temporary License to take up residency in the [project],

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focusing our fourth co-produced studio on gathering stories in order to gather community for this facility. In collaboration with the [project] and a resident arts organisation, a year-long BSc3 Unit brief began with a four-week Storytelling phase exploring how sharing stories might help create a sense of place.

Referencing Pierre Hughyes' *Streamside Day*<sup>50</sup> and Theaster Gates' Dorchester project<sup>51</sup> as examples of artist-led gathering of community through devices of story-making, the Unit began with the design and construction of a storytelling booth for a storytelling and song-making day, gathering stories which built upon the 'growing catalogue of local knowledge' and which acted as prompts for students' ongoing design briefs.<sup>52</sup>

The physical grounding of our community-university partnership offered a base for ongoing live learning collaborations with a growing range of community partners, both with the [project], more broadly across [neighbourhood], and across multiple academic schools in all three Colleges of [Institution]. In Architecture, place-based undergraduate and postgraduate briefs continued to explore themes of gathering community, including; 'Communications champions' (2015); 'My vision of [neighbourhood]' (2016); 'Mapping Cultural Assets' (2016); (2017) and ongoing Love [neighbourhood] studios (2016, 2017, 2018), supporting educator and student alike in gaining a more critical understanding of the value of their architectural knowledge beyond that of design itself.

*Insert figure 15 here: My vision event*  
[anonymous]

*Insert figure 16 here: Love [neighbourhood] model* [anonymous]

### **The role of the live project**

[Engagement platform] partnerships have engaged over 200 undergraduate and postgraduate Architecture students in place-based live teaching projects over the past five years, now collaborating consistently community resident groups, arts organisations, local area schools, and the local Council, and supporting [Engagement platform] in reaching over 3000 individual residents and over 80 community and third sector organisations.



Design studios, dissertations, summer research internships, and research assistant posts have enabled us to work closely and consistently with the same community and residents over a number of years, giving us all the rare luxury of building on each year's successes, failures, and opportunities, and of iteratively shaping our joint understandings of the role of live projects in a community-university partnership.

Practical and ethical issues, and the challenges of annually bringing new cohorts of students into a partnership built carefully upon gained trust has taught us to induct new participants into the ethos of the partnership. 'This project,' our induction begins:

emerges from an ethos of working in collaboration with a geographically defined area over a number of years.

We believe it is important to represent [neighbourhood] positively, with the understanding that negative portrayals of a community can reinforce and even create negative feelings about the area. We ask that you focus on what you can do to 'help make [neighbourhood] an even better place', and focus on the breadth and depth of skills, expertise, opportunities and ideas emerging from the area.

The partnership with [neighbourhood] is equal and mutually beneficial: ideas, skills, resources and expertise flow in two directions between the community and the University.<sup>53</sup>

From this starting point, we have adopted core principles which include:

*Appreciative inquiry:* Framing work through appreciative inquiry reminds us to continuously pay close attention to the verbal, written and visual language we all use when describing community, and to value what is already there.

*Listening:* collaborative studios with Architectural practices including Ash Sakula, Nudge, and RIBA role model Dan Benham have supported discussions about the role of the professional Architect in collaborating with residents. One student noted:

A key aspect of [engagement platform] that I have learned over the years is to listen and remember that when listening to the community to learning is a two way street and the best insights can come from a very organic conversation.<sup>54</sup>

*Managing expectations:* student-oriented learning outcomes are not always compatible with community expectations, restricting co-production. We emphasise that students are not consultants; their learning-oriented aims may differ from community aims and their proposals will range from the most pragmatic to the most speculative. Even the most speculative ideas inform ongoing discourse and all ideas are valuable: some speculative ideas lay latent for several years before returning to inform a concrete proposal.

*Academic and community timetables don't align:* Timescales dictated by university parameters or external agencies often don't sit well with the pace of the evolving partnership ideas. We are beginning to settle into annual cycles of proposals, research and events which feed into, rather than resolve, ongoing partnership projects.

*Long term commitments:* The ability to work with a place-based focused and established community partners over a number of years has enabled students to be involved through each year of their BSc, and to see their proposals and recommendations encapsulated and made manifest in ongoing partnership projects. One student noted:

Having a constant project and seeing it change over the years has been interesting and shows the timeframe of working a real project. It is an experience that I really enjoy and value in my time at university.<sup>55</sup>

*Separation of student and professional briefs:* Guidelines for Community Asset Transfer acknowledged the difficulty emergent community groups may have in accessing funding for professional fees. Working pre-RIBA Stage 0 in supporting not only the formalisation of the brief, but the formalisation of the idea, the client and the site, student research supported the earliest stages of a community project at a time when funding for professional services was not feasibly

accessible, and when speculative, in-depth and broad research and outreach was most welcomed.

*Deploying design skills:* We have gained confidence in acknowledging that the role of an architectural student may not always be that of designing architecture. Student outputs have included research into university-community partnership precedents; proposals for communications strategies; research into the definition of 'value' in participatory design; visual and quantitative mapping of cultural assets; visual and qualitative mapping of communications; and analyses of the mutual impact of our partnerships.

To date, our partnerships have focused on collaborative working between architecture students and community partners; other [engagement platform] partnership projects have partnered Business, Healthcare Sciences, Planning and Geography, and Philosophy students with residents. Our next step, in 2017, will bring interdisciplinary students together to work on a 'Grand Challenge' for Grangetown.<sup>56</sup>

*Insert figure 17 here: Communications mapping [anonymous]*

### **Expectations of the Architect**

In 2012, Gordon Murray noted that 'Architecture is no longer simply about designing buildings, places and spaces. It has not been for some time.'<sup>57</sup>

To scrutinise our understanding of the role students, researchers, educators and Architects play within the long, slow, messy, complex process of a community asset transfer, we mapped and analysed communications - emails, meeting minutes, flyers, workshop outputs, student outputs, social media - and interviewed key stakeholders to better understand the expectations and potential of the role of an Architect in this process as the partnership began, in 2016, to develop an outline brief and selection criteria to work with a professional design team.<sup>58</sup> The Architect, our analysis summarised, would be expected to enter into a long term relationship, to raise the quality of expectations, to engender belief, and, above all, listen and demonstrably act on feedback.

'They are 'orchestrators,' creating, a resident noted, 'an intellectual envelope in which many things occur, spaces or events occur.'<sup>59</sup> They should, another noted,

engender a confidence to demand better of everything from the client, the Architecture and the funders, and an Architect can raise the game and the quality of thinking to answer the question that has been posed [...] the Architect can raise the quality of the question and I think that is where they really start to make the difference.<sup>60</sup>

'Better Architects will stick around and create a relationship', one resident noted, highlighting fears that Architects would 'move on and leave the inhabitants and the residents behind picking up the pieces.' 'Who would we trust to come and sort out the mess the year afterwards?' a resident questioned.

Residents were sceptical of architects' ability to listen and act on feedback. 'It is one thing to have post-it notes on the wall', a resident observed, 'it's another thing to actually look at them and feed that to inform your practice.' One resident summarised the key criteria for professional team selection as:

it's not about the visions but how they understand the us of us.<sup>61</sup>

Such expectations may be challenging to practically and financially incorporate into commercial Architectural practice. While RIBA may advocate for the Architectural profession to take on a leadership role as 'enablers of successful community engagement',<sup>62</sup> the recommendation to emerging community groups in Stepping Up that 'you may be able to secure some 'pro-bono' work (provided by professionals at no charge)'<sup>63</sup> may not align with the scope of work required to meaningfully engage a community in co-production. At the [project], live projects laid foundations for a professional design team by collaborating with an emerging community group for three years, gathering, organising, and developing a design brief through:

- a regular cycle of public events in helping to 'gather' community, maintain momentum, and build new

partnerships to take on wider ambitions;

- mapping the value of what was already physically and socially there, contributing to the ‘growing catalogue of local knowledge’;
- the analysis and re-presentation of information shared by residents’ to support ‘the notion of belief in the people, in the area’;
- the development of a long term relationship, supporting engagement well before Architectural design began;
- maintaining enthusiasm and gathering support with tea and cake, parties, music, walking, making, and being present.

Research undertaken within live projects was submitted as supporting evidence for external funding applications. In 2018, our partnerships celebrated a successful Big Lottery Fund grant to redevelop the Pavilion, supporting the now very real possibility of a successful community asset transfer to the new project CIO, a development we propose to continue supporting through ongoing live projects as we turn attention to questions of care, craft, value and ownership in the physical and social construction of the [project], with the intent to ‘be around later to correct the corrections’ that may emerge as a newly formalised [Project] CIO takes on the long term management of a civic facility.

*Insert figure 18 here: The importance of seed-funding small projects [anonymous]*

### **Researcher, participant, educator, resident**

Embedded as participants, researchers, educators and learners from the inception of this project, our close involvement offered access to the daily actualities of taking on a Community Asset Transfer. Gathering data through teaching and action research in the context of a wider ongoing examination of the coproduction of a community development project between the University and local representatives, our role as researcher and

educator has been to carry out reflexive inquiry acknowledging that we are not simply observing from a position of detachment.<sup>64</sup>

While on the one hand our close proximity to the process and its participants allows for an ‘in-depth’ understanding of the process, it also raises methodological issues in terms of how we might distance ourselves from the process to see more objectively what is going on. Our involvement in the project as participants and researchers aligns with Kathy Charmaz’ definition of Grounded theory, in which, she notes:

Researchers are part of the research situation, and their positions, privileges, perspectives, and interactions affect it. In this approach, research always reflects value positions. Thus the problem becomes identifying these positions and weighing their effect on research practice, not denying their existence.<sup>65</sup>

Charmaz identifies a cycle of collecting and closely reading data, and reflecting upon this through analysis whilst still within a cycle of research. The inductive approach we have taken towards data has parallels to, but was not explicitly generated by, Grounded Theory. On reflection, the emphasis that Grounded Theory places on the generation of ideas rather than verification, and the insistence that data does not remain as simply ‘common sense’ knowledge but instead should be used to create concepts, was similar to our approach to generating concepts about teaching through exploration, rather than answering specific problematized positions, as Alversson and Skoldberg note.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, Mary McCeteer identifies ‘action research’ as ‘operationally cyclical, the findings of each cycle informing the planning and carrying out of the next’<sup>67</sup> in which ‘the action researcher is both practical and theoretical in approach.’<sup>68</sup> Referencing Day (1993) and Schon (1983) as ‘recognising the need to become immersed in the (crucially important) messiness and complexity of practice,’<sup>69</sup> McCeteer highlights the inherent uncertainty embedded in action research, noting:

the almost conversational relationship between theory and practice indicated

in action research is suggestive of greater provisionality in our understanding of what counts as knowledge, than more positivistic approaches would imply.<sup>70</sup>

These approaches, emphasising the embedded, cyclical, complex and inherently messy nature of research practice, describe well what we have been doing intuitively, rather than having served as a guidebook along the way. They now provide support in analysing and coming to an understanding of what we have been doing all along, supporting our analysis of the work in reference to principles of co-production and appreciative inquiry as the most declared means of approaching the project.

Our research into the role of the Architect developed as a variant of research ‘co-production’ with the explicit aim that the research process would follow the trajectory of the asset transfer process which was being co-produced with members of the community. In this sense there was an implicit offer to the community that research would develop with the communities sharing control over its direction. We do not use the term ‘co-production’ lightly. As Walkerdine highlights, ‘The challenge of democratising the work should not be underestimated and is fraught with problems.’<sup>71</sup>

Many projects do involve people on the ground but they don’t all ‘co-produce.’ It is difficult to work in an egalitarian way. An important means of participation has been to emphasise a two way flow between the parties, rather than a one way flow which creates a sense of dominance from the practitioners’ side.<sup>72</sup> Achieving an equal share in the creation of knowledge is extremely tricky, requiring constant effort to ensure that barriers to participation and imbalances of power are addressed and mitigated for an equal share in the creation of knowledge to be achieved. This has demanded that our teaching and research be flexible and accept unexpected changes in the direction of projects, as community partners and students bring different expectations of the outcomes and take the project in new directions. Trust is supported by the ability to commit to the long-term, building confidence that ideas may, eventually, be tangibly achieved, which is a tremendously important outcome.

*Participatory City* references Tim Brown’s definition of the organisational process of ‘design thinking’ as:

open-ended, openminded, and iterative, a process fed by design thinking will feel chaotic to those experiencing it for the first time. But over the life of a project, it invariably comes to make sense and achieves results that differ markedly from the linear, milestone-based processes that define traditional business practices.<sup>73</sup>

*Participatory City* suggests that a ‘dense participatory ecology is estimated to take three years to build.’<sup>74</sup> Similarly, an engagement ‘steps’ model published in *Academic Medicine* recommended at least one year of ‘no engagement’ to allow trusted relationships to form before piloting preliminary projects in years two and three, initial partnerships by year four and full partnerships following year five,<sup>75</sup> echoing the pace of our partnership development, and providing further evidence for the need for long-term commitment in order to pursue co-production.

Of the potential for the architect, RIBA writes:

the formalisation of processes such as community consultation and brief development in statute should also be a signal to Architects that their skills are valuable, that they should look to engage them in new ways and look to capitalise more on the services they provide.<sup>76</sup>

Our experience in this neighbourhood suggests a role for Architects in applying design thinking to gathering community, in order that civic spaces may be activated.

This is a dynamic process still under development, but to return to Harries, we have learned above all how delicate and precarious it is to create a community space by first defining a community ethos. ‘Like a poem’, Harries declared:

no way of life is given to transparency that it unambiguously declares its meaning. There can be no definitive statement of that meaning; it must be

established, ever anew, and  
precariously, in interpretation.<sup>77</sup>

We hope that our ongoing partnership supports  
the establishment, ever anew, of such an  
interpretation, summarised by a resident who  
observed of the prospect of now moving  
towards a constructed proposal: ‘it’s a really  
delicate thing, isn’t it?’<sup>78</sup>

*Insert figure 19 here: Love [neighbourhood]  
2016 [anonymous]*

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- <sup>8</sup> Detail provided in non-anonymised version.
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- <sup>10</sup> Resident feedback, May 2012
- <sup>11</sup> According to the 2014 Index of Multiple Deprivation, [neighbourhood] is considered to be in the top 10% most deprived areas of [region] for income, health, employment, housing and physical environment. 2011 Census data highlights that [neighbourhood] is a highly multicultural area of [city]: 38% of the population in [neighbourhood] identify as being of 'Mixed Ethnicity', 'Asian', 'Black' or 'other ethnicities' as opposed to 15.3% in the whole of [city].
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## Appendix 4

Academic Paper: - 'Creating common ground: the value of participatory design in articulating a common ethos for dwelling', Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull, submitted to Architecture\_Media Politics Society (AMPS). Accepted for online conference proceedings for Cities, Communities and Homes – Is the Urban Future Liveable? Eds. E Tracada & G Cairns. AMPS Proceedings Series 10. ISSN 2398-9467 and available as open access on

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# CREATING COMMON GROUND: THE VALUE OF PARTICIPATORY DESIGN IN ARTICULATING A COMMON ETHOS FOR DWELLING

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## INTRODUCTION

Philosopher Karsten Harries' defined the 'ethical function of architecture' as that of articulating a 'common ethos.'<sup>1</sup> From this stance, this paper considers how architectural processes may help to, as Harries described, articulate a common ethos to help us dwell. Our close examination of an ongoing renovation of a small Bowls Pavilion in a popular neighbourhood park in Grangetown, Cardiff, led by a group of residents who with an aim of gathering community, is set within the context of an 'age of austerity'<sup>2</sup> in which volunteers are encouraged to 'step up and take over the management of services and assets in their own communities.'<sup>3</sup> Our research scrutinises challenges and opportunities faced by residents taking on a Community Asset Transfer, and examines the challenges for participatory design and appreciative inquiry in supporting the pursuit of a common ethos for dwelling.

## A Common Ethos for Dwelling

In his introduction to *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, Harries voiced the hope that architecture may 'help us to find our place and way in an ever more disorienting world',<sup>4</sup> defining an 'ethical function' thus;

"Ethos" here names the way human beings exist in the world: their way of dwelling. By the ethical function of architecture I mean its task to help articulate a common ethos.<sup>5</sup>

The articulation of a 'common ethos' was core to a small group of residents, connected through school bus-stops conversations, as they voiced ideas for redeveloping a 134m<sup>2</sup> vacant 1960's Bowls Pavilion in Grangetown, Cardiff. Defining their aim as creating 'a vibrant, friendly community facility where people of all backgrounds can connect and are made welcome',<sup>6</sup> all understood the task to be extraordinarily complex. In lieu of a predefined organization, the project was initiated by a loose group of individuals seeking to act as a catalyst, rather than as operators of the space. Making no claim to predict what 'the community' wanted, the group identified a first aim as bringing together Grangetown's communities. 'To be experienced as a genuine centre', Harries wrote, highlighting this challenge, 'a place must be experienced as gathering a multitude into a community.'<sup>7</sup> Our interest, as participants, partners and researchers, was how participatory design approaches might support such a task.

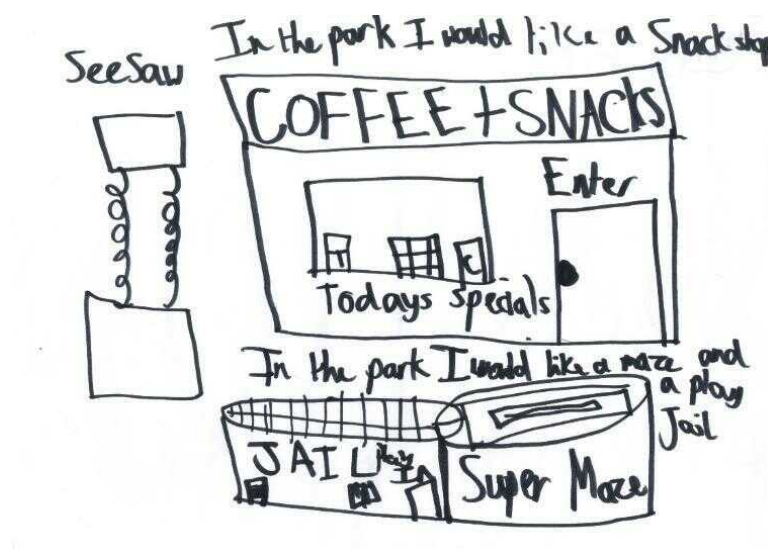


Figure 1. Launch partnership public event in Grangetown: image by resident.  
Vertical Studio led by Mhairi McVicar and Richard Powell, May 2013.

### A micro-study of a small project

As participants, partners and researchers, our embedded role in the project is captured by Kathy Charmaz's description of Grounded Theory:

Researchers are part of the research situation, and their positions, privileges, perspectives, and interactions affect it. In this approach, research always reflects value positions. Thus the problem becomes identifying these positions and weighing their effect on research practice, not denying their existence.<sup>8</sup>

While our close proximity to the process and its participants allows for an 'in-depth' understanding of the process, it also raises methodological issues regarding how we might distance ourselves from the process to see more objectively what is going on. To address this, we have developed written and visual analysis of documentations through which we attempt to see the world anew. Charmaz described a cyclical process of collecting, closely reading and analyzing data throughout research, a process we used in exploring and confronting mechanisms and processes along the way. Documenting emails, meeting notes, event feedback, interviews, films, photos, flyers, newsletters, tweets and conversations, we treat all communications as loaded with value, with the view that even the most seemingly prosaic hold valuable insights into the messy actualities of the endeavor.<sup>9</sup> Through close quantitative, qualitative, literature and graphic analysis, the ebbs and flows of enthusiasm, optimism and progress of the project become more apparent. Visual analysis, such as Figure 2, captures the quantities and emerging themes of email correspondence over two years, tracking the the project as it races ahead, stalls, or takes an unexpected detour. We have aimed to scrutinize, in exact detail, what is really asked of those who 'step-up' to lead on the complex task of taking over an asset in their community. At the Grange Pavilion, this began by trying to understand what 'community' might mean in this context.

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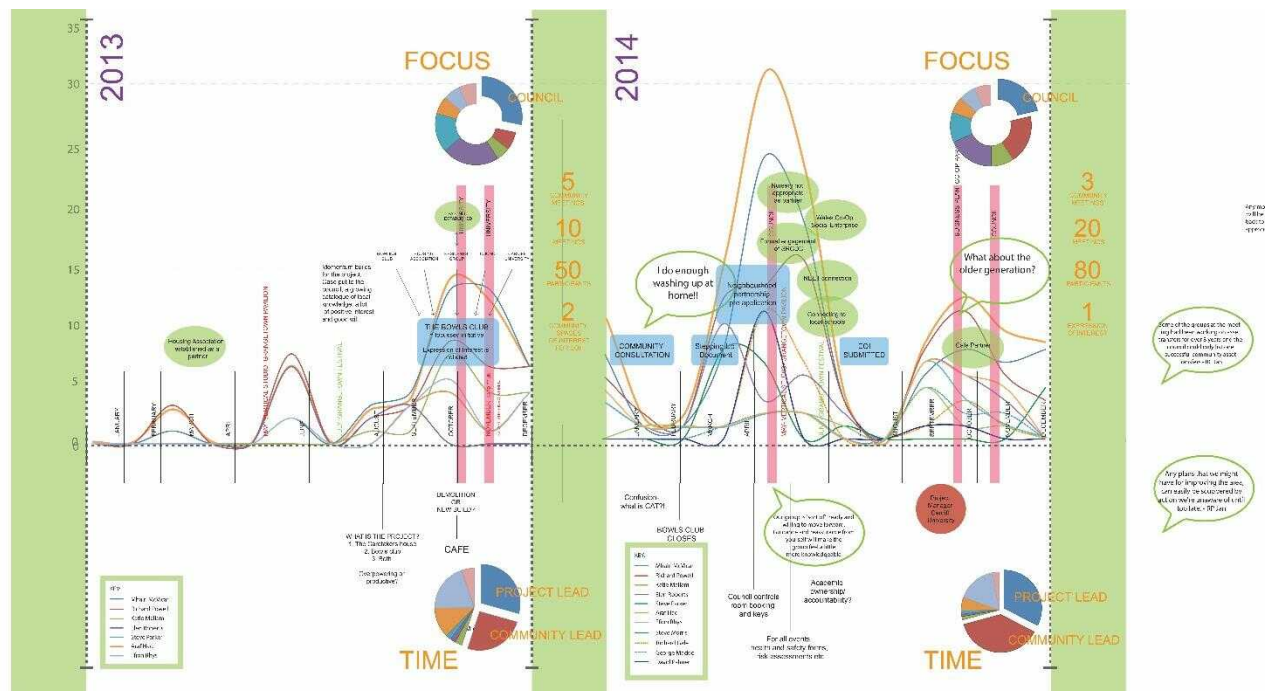


Figure 2. Communications mapping, Grange Pavilion Project 2013-2014  
Image by Sarah Ackland under supervision of Mhairi McVicar

### ‘WE SHOULD INVOLVE THEM IN EVERY PART OF THE PROJECT’

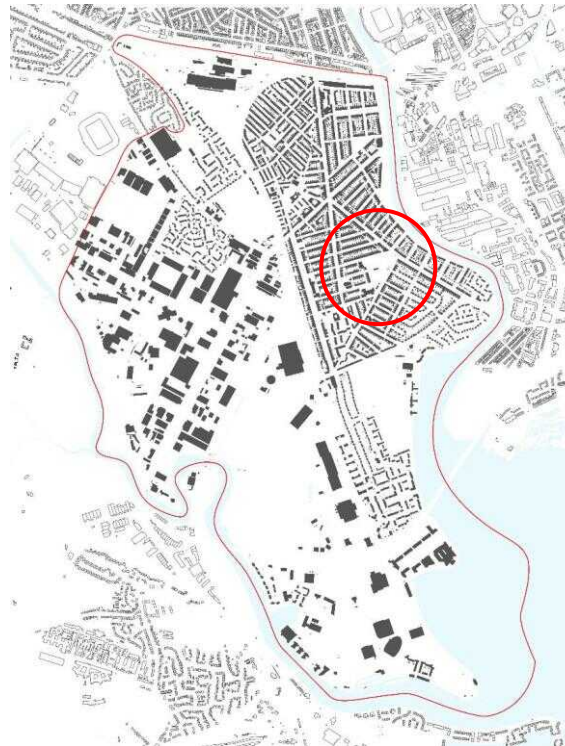
Cardiff’s most ethnically diverse electoral ward, Grangetown is home to a population of 20,000 Welsh, English, Polish, Somali, and Pakistani residents.<sup>10</sup> While well served by facilities including Mosques, Temples, Churches, a Cons club, and bars, one resident observed that;

Grangetown doesn’t feel like it has a center where the whole community can meet. At the moment, the community is made up of pockets of different cultural populations who mix in either the mosque, the temple, the pub, church - but they do not mix in one place.

Grangetown’s diversity is highlighted in discussions as a key strength, and the lack of a neutral meeting space identified as both challenge and opportunity. The first email circulated amongst the group expressed ‘something of a question rather than a set of definitive expectations or resolved framework.’<sup>11</sup> From the outset, the small group of residents voicing the idea of setting into motion such a space were well aware of the need to first ask questions and listen:

Firstly we should get to know the local population to find out what they want. We should involve them in every part of the project so that they feel ownership and ultimately run the place.<sup>12</sup>





*Figure 3. Grange Town electoral ward, Cardiff  
Image by Fiona Shaw under supervision of Mhairi McVicar*

### Stepping Up and Taking Over

The Grange Pavilion project was set into motion when a resident approached a local area Councillor during a weekend surgery to raise the possibility of a resident-led café as a means to halt the deterioration of a vacant facility. Encouraged by discussions about an aim of quality, the Councillor suggested the resident group look into developing an expression of interest for a Community Asset Transfer. As guidance and context, Cardiff Council's Stepping-Up Toolkit notes:

In an age of austerity, public bodies have been under increasing pressure to find new and more efficient ways of delivering their services. This has impacted across the board, but perhaps no more so than on community services delivered at a local level. The situation demands a creative response. Local communities have traditionally been very resourceful in acting to help themselves. Indeed, community organisations have been at the very heart of local service delivery for decades. The need and the opportunity, however, is to enable more community-led activities to take place. To encourage more volunteers to 'step up' and take over the management of services and assets in their own communities.<sup>13</sup>

Participatory Cities' 'Designed to Scale' publication similarly highlighted 'that the state is a waning power in the lives of many, and it is seizing the opportunity to suggest that this may be no bad thing.'<sup>14</sup> Recognizing the 'implied risks' of devolving civic responsibilities, the commentary proposed that the state should 'not simply withdraw' but rather radically redefine its role.'<sup>15</sup> Redefinitions of roles were urged in RIBA's 'Guide to Localism' as 'a radical devolution of responsibilities to the local level, giving

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new powers and opportunities to councils and communities to plan and design their places.’<sup>16</sup> Localism, RIBA proposed;

requires a shift to partnership approaches with local people, requiring new skills in building effective dialogue and developing a shared understanding of places, their challenges and their potential.<sup>17</sup>

RIBA advocated that Architects, ‘can emerge as integral design enablers and facilitators of localized plan-making, helping communities helping communities and local authorities to maximise the potential of their places.’<sup>18</sup> At the Grange Pavilion, expectations and fears of collaborative working between community members and external partners focused on how professional structures might give credibility or threaten a community-led idea. Despite recommendations for early engagement with professional services, the loose group of residents were initially in no position to apply for funding for professional services at a meaningful scale, while recommendations from Stepping Up that ‘you may be able to secure some pro-bono work (provided by professionals at no charge)’<sup>19</sup> contradicts hopes that professionals could secure the time to meaningfully develop shared understandings. ‘This project,’ a resident noted in 2013, ‘could become an all-consuming project that would overpower those who were tempted to step in such matters,’<sup>20</sup> an observation extending to professional as well as voluntary services.<sup>21</sup> Our role as participants, researchers and partners through Cardiff University’s Community Gateway offered an opportunity to explore what developing a shared understanding might involve.



*Figure 4. Ideas Picnic, Grange Pavilion Project 2014  
Image by Mhairi McVicar*

### Community Gateway

Our partnership with the Grange Pavilion project was instigated through the concurrent formation of Community Gateway as a Cardiff University Flagship Engagement project.<sup>22</sup> In 2013, we proposed that the University make a long term commitment to a geographically defined local community, and launched Community Gateway as a three-year pilot in Grangetown with an open call for ideas for University-Community collaborations.<sup>23</sup> The 44 projects so far launched with community partners from 126 expressions of interest have included a Business Forum, Youth Forum, Philosophy café, and a Mental Health network, collaborating with individual residents, third sector, public and private sector representatives, and staff and students across Cardiff University. From earliest discussions, residents highlighted that the University should enter into ‘a relationship, not an affair’,<sup>24</sup> that knowledge, skills and resources should flow two ways, and that the University should support ‘creating the notion of belief in the people, in the area.’<sup>25</sup> Initial discussions with the Grange Pavilion group led to our first three-week co-produced live teaching ‘Vertical Studio’ in 2013, tasking twelve BSc students with gathering ideas for a community space, gauging interest and support, and spreading the word. We imagined, ambitiously, that the students’ work might lead to a design brief. It quickly became clear that our role was instead that of helping to gather community: to build on what one resident identified as ‘a growing catalogue of local knowledge.’<sup>26</sup> Gathering stories in order to gather community would form the basis of multiple public co-produced events over the next three years, framed by our introduction to appreciative inquiry.



Figure 5. A cycle of co-produced events, 2014-2017

### Gathering stories

Appreciative Inquiry is defined by Mathie et al as:

a process that promotes positive change (in organisations or communities) by focusing on peak experiences and successes of the past. It relies on interviews and storytelling that draw out these positive memories, and on a collective analysis of the elements of success. This analysis becomes the reference for further community action.<sup>27</sup>



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Karsten Harries noted, too, that architectural language ‘is inevitably mediated by particular landscapes, particular histories, particular stories.’<sup>28</sup> As residents waded through the logistical hurdles of developing an expression of interest for a Community Asset Transfer, our second co-produced Vertical Studio in May 2014 opened the Pavilion for an Ideas Picnic, with students baking cakes and spreading the word. A resident summarized:

A bit of free cake and tea was always going to draw a crowd, and Grangetown excelled itself. We are now sorting through the comments and ideas that were flying about on the day.<sup>29</sup>

The comments and ideas confirmed wider support for the idea, the need for tangible things to happen, and the ongoing importance of the project being ‘community-led.’ While the Picnic gave an impetus to carry on, the complexity of the endeavor was becoming clear:

As our project relies on pulling together many threads from within the community and other interested parties, for us to provide such a comprehensive business plan within an indicated and limited time frame would be very difficult.<sup>30</sup>

Emails capture the barriers involved in progressing from speculative conversations around kitchen tables to formalizing a definitive proposal. Defining ‘who’ an open group consisted of led one resident to observe that ‘Our list of emails/members is a bit chaotic presently. I’m trying to figure out who exactly is a (willing) member of our group, officially or not.’<sup>31</sup> ‘Any project of this diverse constituency (community) kind’, another emailed, ‘needs to maintain public momentum and cohesion when things are apparently not happening.’<sup>32</sup> ‘Anyone can be positive towards an ‘idea’ such as this’, it was noted, ‘it’s how that positivity translates into committed action.’<sup>33</sup> These observations align with recommendations by Participatory City, who include, amongst a list of eight ‘reasons why projects die’, the burdens of ‘too many meetings and too little action’, of enthusiasm lost through ‘waiting too long’ for funding processes, and of an over-reliance on one or two people to carry responsibility.<sup>34</sup> Progressing the project demanded early tangible action, and reaching further for wider participation and support.



Figure 6. Storytelling Booth, 2015  
Image by Marius Dirmantas

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### Gathering community

A third co-produced event, Love Grangetown 2016, paired architecture students with community ‘gatekeepers’ identified through previous consultations to represent demographics of faith, ethnic, age and interest groups in Grangetown. Visiting mosques, temple, bingo, and family parties to gather stories, the student-resident teams connected over 100 community members to set strategic aims for partnership working and identify nine themes which residents valued in Grangetown. The participants prioritized community meeting spaces, with community organizations and local businesses pledging support.<sup>35</sup> A growing cycle of co-produced community-university events continued, via a Storytelling Day in October 2015, including the installation of a Storytelling booth as the first architectural intervention in the Pavilion (Figure 6); a second Love Grangetown in 2016; a ‘Vision of Grangetown’ walking day in 2016; and a third Love Grangetown 2017, establishing a cycle of public events to gather ideas and stories, invite commitments to action, and update all accurately on progress. As usage of the Pavilion incrementally shifted from pop-up to regular activation, entirely community-led use began: a pop-up cinema at an annual Festival, an Eid celebration, a seasonal solidarity evening, a winter Fayre, a weekly Friends and Neighbours group, a Tech Café.

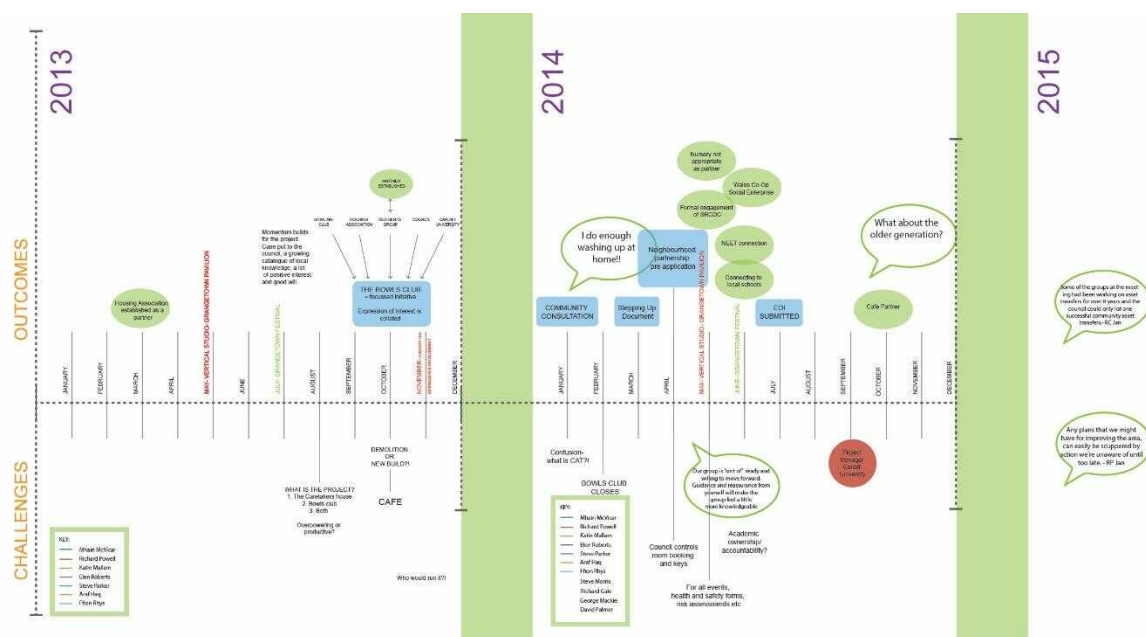


Figure 7. Key public events and their impact, 2013-14  
Image by Sarah Ackland

The launch in 2017 of a local business-led social enterprise café following a partial temporary renovation has, for the first time, activated daily use of the Pavilion. Often knee-deep in paperwork and stalled by seemingly insurmountable barriers of the logistics of multiple individuals and organizations coming to agreements, and in the midst of life taking place amongst community volunteers – births, deaths, moving out, moving in, moving on from the project, every co-produced event brought in someone new to activate and progress ideas; each event brought a slightly different energy and direction; each event brought with it a tangible and celebratory reminder of what the project was about, and how much input and support was needed to make things happen over a long term.



*Figure 8. Love Grangetown, 2016  
Image by Gemma Gorton*

### **The role of the architect**

Our research had started with the intent of tracking an architectural design for a Community Asset Transfer. Instead, three years of engagement had focused, before any design discussion, on gathering community: on building mutual trust, on developing a shared understanding of place, on forming a common ethos. That this took three years and is still ongoing aligns with Participatory City findings that it takes an estimated 3 years to build ‘a dense participatory ecology at scale,’<sup>36</sup> that micro-level participation requires 10-15% of local residents at any one time, and that ‘the costs of building and maintaining a participatory ecology in an area with approximately 50,000 residents is estimated at £300,000-£400,000 per annum.’ Such statistics, and our experiences in Grangetown, highlight the depth of engagement required to establish partnerships and get to know an area.

Interviews we held with the Grange Pavilion group emphasized expectations that architects would take the time to get to know the area and stick around in an ongoing relationship. Reflecting the desire that the University’s role long term should support a notion of belief in the area, so too did the group anticipate that an architect should:

engender a confidence to demand better of everything from the client, the architecture and the funder [...] an Architect can raise the game and the quality of thinking to answer the question that has been posed.<sup>37</sup>



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Describing architects as ‘orchestrators’ who can create ‘an intellectual envelope in which things occur, spaces or events occur’, an overriding concern was that an architect would impose a design and leave. ‘Better Architects will stick around and genuinely create a relationship’, one resident commented:

...who would we trust to come and sort out the mess the day afterwards because it is a year down the line and it’s not working, who is going to come back and say, actually ok we went too far and we are going to pull it back [...] who is going to correct the correction that needs to be made?<sup>38</sup>

Prior experiences led to cynicism regarding how feedback might be implemented. ‘How do they act upon that?’ one resident questioned. ‘It is one thing to have post-it notes on the wall, it’s another thing to actually look at them and feed that to inform your practice.’<sup>39</sup> The key criteria for the Architect was, finally, ‘not about the visions but how they understand the us of us.’<sup>40</sup> Such understandings take time, and a willingness to discard traditional structures more suited to formal organizations. One resident described the enormity of the barrier of formalized meetings:

It's the actual culture of the machineries the way that the meeting happens I think is for me quite difficult and draining. If you for a walk and you had a rant or you go for, I don't know... you're making something or if you're gardening. It's, you might spend longer having a cup of tea. But I would say that as the community group, the way we've displayed ourselves, as being serious, to demonstrate our properness, we go to a meeting...and it's a really delicate thing, isn't it?<sup>41</sup>



Figure 9. The Hideout café, Grange Pavilion, 2017  
Image courtesy of Community Gateway.

### Gently revolutionary space

This process is ongoing towards planning applications, and we are still unpicking the wealth of evidence underlying the process. From the first voicing of an idea by residents in 2012, the project has so far



involved over 300 individuals in the community, university, council and external partners, communicating through over 500 emails, 50 ‘formal’ meetings and untold numbers of cups of tea around kitchen tables, just to get to the point of proposing a design brief responsive to community ideas. The task of ‘stepping up’ from the bottom up is enormous and overwhelming, and the ‘delicacy’ of maintaining trust, capacity, energy, and community-wide engagement an ongoing balancing act as formalized and externally-led deadlines and structures impose their weight. Karsten Harries ends *The Ethical Function of Architecture* with a recognition of the complexity of any claim by architecture to resolve the problem of community. ‘With good reason’, he ends, ‘we have learned to be suspicious of all architecture that confidently embraces architecture’s traditional ethical function.’<sup>42</sup> Harries proposed ‘introducing into the context of the modern city theatrical and festal spaces, punctuated by works of architecture that, lacking authority and responsible to no one, are gently revolutionary and let us dream of utopia’. In Grangetown, having tentatively gathered a form of community to reach a first agreement for a brief, the project proceeds towards coaxing a relationship between communities and designers to create a space which balances the certainties required by external agencies of planning and funding, and the open-ended, slow, uncertain and incremental processes which support a community in gathering in a small civic space.<sup>43</sup>

## REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1997), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Cardiff Council, *Stepping Up Toolkit*, p.4 Accessed 15 May 2016, <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Council-finance/Council-Budget/2017-18/Documents/SteppingUpToolkit.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p4.

<sup>4</sup> Harries, *Ethical Function*, 4. Harries references here what he calls Siegfried Gideon’s ‘modernist hope’, citing Gideon’s belief that the main task facing contemporary architecture was that of ‘the interpretation of a way of life valid for our period.’ Siegfried Gideon, *Space Time and Architecture*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1974), p.xxxiii.

<sup>5</sup> Harries, *Ethical Function*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Grange Pavilion project mission statement, created 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Harries, *Ethical Function*, 199.

<sup>8</sup> Kathy Charmaz, ‘Constructionism and the Grounded Theory’ in *Handbook of Constructionist Research*, eds. J.A. Holstein & J.F. Gubrium (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008), 405.

<sup>9</sup> This stance towards prosaic communications is with reference to Paul Emmons’ work on Architectural Graphic Standards, which notes that ‘Diagrams, even those purporting to be objective, are inevitably culturally influenced [...] diagrams, like history, are not thin and factual, but rich with meaning.’ Emmons, Paul, “Diagrammatic Practices: The Office of Frederick L. Ackerman and Architectural Graphic Standards,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64 (2005), 14, 15. The analysis of prosaic language for cultural meaning is also indebted to Katie Lloyd Thomas, “Specifications: Writing Materials in Architecture and Philosophy,” *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 8 (2004), 277-83.

<sup>10</sup> 2011 Census, Grangetown and Cardiff, accessed 1 June 2017, <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Have-your-say/AskCardiffLibrary/CyfrifiadGrangetown-GrangetownCensus.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Resident email, 18 May 2013

<sup>12</sup> Resident feedback at May 2013 consultation.

<sup>13</sup> Cardiff Council, *Stepping Up Toolkit* accessed 15 August 2015, <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Council-finance/Council-Budget/2017-18/Documents/SteppingUpToolkit.pdf>. The Toolkit was launched in December 2014, with workshops offered in 2015 to support community groups. The launch was met with mixed reviews, with local media reports questioning the ability, experience and availability of volunteers to run council services. Emma Sisk, “Step up’ and get involved in the running of our community facilities, says Cardiff council”, Wales Online, December 9 2014. <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/step-up-involved-running-community-8260953>

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<sup>14</sup> Julian Corner, “Foreword” in *Designed to Scale: Mass participation to build resilient neighbourhoods*, Participatory City, 5. The report describes the Open Works pilot held between Lambeth Council and Civic Systems Lab in 2014/15. Accessed 1 August 2017, <http://www.participatorycity.org/report-the-research/>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Introduction, in Royal Institute of British Architects, *Guide to Localism Opportunities for architects Part one: Neighbourhood planning*, James Parkinson (ed) 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Cardiff Council, *Stepping Up Toolkit*, p.30.

<sup>20</sup> Resident email, 20 August 2013

<sup>21</sup> In anecdotal conversations, architects engaged with long-term community partners often do report taking on this work pro-bono, covering engagement services with other fee-paying non-community projects, taking on other roles, such as teaching, or being otherwise financially self-sufficient.

<sup>22</sup> Cardiff University launched a ‘Transforming Communities’ initiative with internally funded five ‘Flagship Engagement’ projects, operating at local, regional, national and international scales, as pilots from 2014-2017, of which Community Gateway was one.

See <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/about/our-profile/who-we-are/engagement/transforming-communities>

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/community-gateway>

<sup>24</sup> May 2013 consultation.

<sup>25</sup> May 2013 consultation.

<sup>26</sup> Resident email, May 2013

<sup>27</sup> Alison Mathie and Gord Cunningham, “From clients to citizens: Asset Based Community-Development as a Strategy for Community-Driven Development” *Development in Practice*, 13, No 5 (Nov 2003) pp.474-486

<sup>28</sup> Harries, *Ethical Function*, 202.

<sup>29</sup> Resident email 19 May 2014

<sup>30</sup> Resident email 2 November 2014

<sup>31</sup> Resident email 20 February 2015

<sup>32</sup> Resident email 20 February 2015

<sup>33</sup> Resident email 13 January 2015

<sup>34</sup> Illustrated Guide to Participatory City, <http://www.participatorycity.org/the-illustrated-guide/>

<sup>35</sup> Love Grangetown 2017 was led by Community Gateway project manager Rosie Cripps and Architect and Grangetown resident, and co-author, Neil Turnbull.

<sup>36</sup> Participatory City, ‘Designed to scale: Designed to Scale: Mass participation to build resilient neighbourhoods’, accessed 15 August 2017, <http://www.participatorycity.org/research/> ‘Year 1 testing’, the report noted, ‘was the first step in a 3 year process of developing an innovative, evidence-based participation ecology prototype,’ noting that ‘high levels of micro participation could be a key component for building local sustainability and resilience in a neighbourhood’. 23.

<sup>37</sup> Resident interview, 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Resident interview, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Resident interview, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Resident interview, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Resident interview, 16 December 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Harries, *Ethical Function*, 367.

<sup>43</sup> This research is a collaborative endeavour between numerous individuals and organisations, with thanks due most notably to: Richard Powell and the Grange Pavilion Project residents’ group; Rosie Cripps, Lynne Thomas, Ali Abdi, Sarah Hughes of the Community Gateway team; Cardiff University’s Engagement team; Sarah Ackland, Claudia Petre, Josh McDonough, and Louie Davies for postgraduate and student research contributions; teaching and professional support from Dan Benham, IBI Group, Nudge, and Ash Sakula Architects; Cardiff University students, academic and professional services staff who have supported partnership projects. Funding which has supported Community Gateway and related research have included: the Vice Chancellor’s Office, and College of Physical Sciences, Cardiff University; a RIBA Research Trust Award to Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull for research into the Value of an Architect in a Community Asset Transfer; a Big Lottery Fund CAT2 development grant, and funding and in-kind contributions from Cardiff Council Neighbourhood Development Fund, Cardiff Bay Rotary Club, Ikea, Cardiff and Vale College, and Nathan White Construction. The authors would like to thank representatives of the Grange Pavilion project, Grangetown Community Action, and Cardiff Council for their kind permissions in including email correspondence or interview transcripts.

## **Appendix 5**

Poster presentation presented at 'Public Engagement as Method', University of Sheffield, 2017





## since our launch in 2015: nine community-defined themes:

We began by holding introductory open and targeted public consultations, thematic workshops and student-community partnership projects, culminating in an annual public workshop with 100 representatives of the diverse communities of Grange town which identified 9 key themes for community-university initiatives.

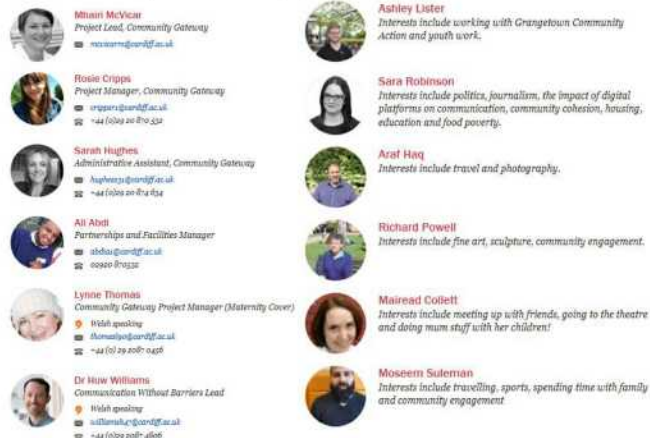
This began with an open call to communities in Grange town to submit ideas for ways in which the University could work in partnership with them. We have developed these ideas by matching community partners with academics, professional services staff, and students throughout Cardiff University.

128 expressions of interest have been received from the community and University with 421 students from both Business and Architecture courses having worked on 15 'live' teaching projects in Grange town. Nine access projects have been completed and 38 University-community collaborations have been initiated.

Projects supported range from Eye Health; Environmental crowd-sensing (surveying environmental and mental benefits of developing local green spaces); a street choir; a shop local campaign and business forum; Somali needs; a Mental Health awareness day; a bee-friendly city; Philosophy in the community; Love Grange town; mapping Grange town's cultural assets; Grange town running club; and the development of a community cafe in a vacant Bowls Pavilion.



## our university-community partnerships:



Our community - university partnership structure includes: a core Cardiff University team, including dedicated academic roles for key themes; a Steering Group and Advisory Board with mutual community-university representation; a Schools Advisory Panel with representation from all local primary, secondary and FE schools and colleges; and a community and university partner on each supported project.



## GRANGE GARDENS IDEAS PICNIC

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



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Come and tell us what  
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FRIDAY 16TH MAY, 12-5 PM  
Grange Gardens Bowling Pavilion  
**ALL ARE WELCOME**



## access project 01: Grange Pavilion

Cardiff University began working with a group of local residents in 2012 to bring an unused Bowls Pavilion in a well-loved park in the centre of Grange town back to life as a community cafe. Envisioned as something of quality which will be accessible and welcoming to all, Cardiff University has supported the project through Live Teaching projects with undergraduate and postgraduate students in Architecture, Business, and Social Sciences. Partnership projects have included an Ideas Picnic as an open awareness raising and partnership building event, recipe book workshops with local schools, architectural design proposals for a Pavilion and community garden, and Marketing proposals for an imagined cafe. In March 2016, the Grange Pavilion community-university partners took on a 12-month temporary License to open up the facility for a year-long consultation to develop a business case for a long term Community Asset Transfer.

## access project 01 research method: the value of an architect in a Community Asset Transfer

This research by Mhairi McVicar (Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University; Cardiff University Community Gateway Academic lead) and Neil Turnbull takes place within the 12-month community-university residency of the previously vacant Grange Pavilion, supporting, critically examining, and reporting on the processes involved in a Community Transfer Application (CAT), whereby a public asset, such as a Council owned public facility, is passed to a community or third sector group on a long term (typically 99 year) lease. Focusing specifically on the role of the Architect in CAT processes, this research-in-action responds to guidance given by Cardiff Council and the Big Lottery Fund that architectural proposals are a critical and required component within a CAT application, but that architects may be requested to provide initial feasibility studies on a pro-bono basis. This raised for us critical questions with regards to the perceptions of value attributed to architectural services within the CAT. In this context, our research focuses on value in three senses:

- the value an architect can add to a CAT, from considerations of the building in its physical and programmatic forms to its impact upon wider urban ambitions;
- the economic demands a CAT places upon the resources and skills of architectural practice;
- the perceptions of the value of architects and architecture held by community representatives engaged in CAT processes.

Over eighteen months, we are closely engaging in and documenting the role of the Architect within this active CAT process, both quantitatively - by documenting hours spent on the project - in particular time allocated to community engagement - as part of the process, as well as logging numbers of meetings, emails, letters, drawings, and associated economic value of such services on the architect's part, including the 'in-kind' donations of the numerous community members involved. Qualitatively, we are interviewing Grange Pavilion Project members before, during and after the process, recording discussions at meetings, and surveying and interviewing at public events to capture changing perceptions over the length of the project regarding the role of the architect and the impact of architectural work. Social media (tweets, facebook likes and comments) as well as news items are also being gathered to collect real time wider opinion on the changes occurring at the Pavilion. All collected interviews and discussions will then be critically analysed in terms of what they reveal about expectations, assumptions, challenges, and opportunities for both architect and community client in a CAT process. The research is linked to and embedded within live teaching projects, through which undergraduate students first constructed a temporary architectural installation in the Pavilion to collect stories regarding its use and memory; and student summer internships in which students are surveying the cultural meaning of the Pavilion and public perceptions of the role of the architect.

An advisory board will launch in Sept 2017 to review methodologies of analysis and means of dissemination on a national level. The research will culminate with a report to support a CAT application in Sept 2016; a report in August 2017 to the community partners, the architectural profession, and governmental bodies on challenges and opportunities for architectural practice in adding qualitative and quantitative value to a CAT with recommendations for future practice; and an academic published paper critically evaluating research-in-action methodologies applied throughout this process.

'The value of an architect in a community asset transfer' is funded by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Research Trust Award 2015.



## **Appendix 6**

Guidance notes for students for an appreciative inquiry based approach to co-production, developed as an outcome of the research.

# Principles when working with Community Gateway

This Vertical Studio emerges from an ethos of working in collaboration with community partners in a geographically defined area over a number of years. We have developed relationships with many Grangetown representatives over a number of years, and will continue to build on these.

- Please always be polite and respectful of opinions and concerns, and always keep in mind that you are representing Cardiff University;
- **We believe that it is important to represent Grangetown positively, with the understanding that negative portrayals of a community can reinforce and even create negative feelings about the area. We ask that you focus on what your research can do to 'help make Grangetown an even better place', and focus on the value of the breadth and depth of skills, expertise, opportunities and idea emerging from the area.** While you may reference statistical information etc which does factually convey the reality of challenges facing any community, please be careful that your use of such information is factual, objective, fair and respectful.
- **Be clear that your ideas are speculative and exploratory**, for the purpose of generating ideas and questions for a student project, and do not in any way represent resolved solutions for the Pavilion;
- **Approach the partnership with Grangetown residents as equal and mutually beneficial: ideas, skills, resources and expertise flow in two directions between the community and the University;**
- Please do not photograph in particularly sensitive sites such as Schools / Playgrounds unless the Vertical Studio tutors have specifically confirmed to you that permissions have been arranged for workshops. Ask permissions if photographing the public. When creating visual proposals for Grangetown, please accurately represent **the existing community as your clients.**
- Please support the 'Keep Grangetown Tidy' campaign by not littering and removing all rubbish / debris;
- Please read Studio Guidelines, carry a Studio letter when working in Grangetown, and refer any queries to [studio leader]

**Please bring any additional queries to the attention of the studio leaders.**

**I have read the Guidance Notes and agree to follow all required procedures.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_