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University-community engagement in a Scottish University: the reality of community learning?

Working Paper 3 “University learning with
excluded communities” project

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1 INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing recognition of the importance of societal contributions made by the higher education sector. In the transition towards a knowledge-based economy and a learning society, universities are key learning and knowledge institutions. Universities perform a range of different roles with respect to knowledge, being involved in its creation, editing, circulation, storage, replacement and challenging. The fact that knowledge-creation and innovation are increasingly interactive processes has brought universities into contact with an increasing number of partner organisations, and the increasing salience and value of university knowledges means that there are an increasing number of stakeholders actively demanding a say in what universities should be doing.

At the same time, one of the key challenges for the knowledge economy is social exclusion (Byrne, 1999; Academy of Engineering, 2007), which is to say the growth of an increasing segment of the population who are disconnected from the interactions, relationships and networks which characterise knowledge-based societies. These communities exist at the margins of society, either actively discriminated against or suffering from the disappearance of their traditional rationales with nothing to replace old industries and patterns of social organisation. Exclusion brings with it a raft of social, economic and political problems, from increasing welfare bills to social tensions and even the possibility to create a sense of political crisis.

Moulaert *et al.* (2000) characterise this social exclusion as comprising two main facets, namely external disintegration and internal fragmentation. External disintegration arises from a disinvestment in communities which have lost their place in the knowledge economy – as external places no longer seek their resources, people in such places lose their contacts with and knowledge of wider society. Internal fragmentation can be conceived of as the disintegration of the institutions associated with the industrial society, and a failure of new institutions to emerge in the absence of strong economic imperatives. These two factors can self-reinforce to give a sense of hopelessness in these places that there is little that can address these problems, and re-engage them into the mainstream networks and relationships of contemporary society.

At the confluence of these arguments is a suggestion that there might be a role for universities to actively engage with excluded communities as stakeholders to ensure that knowledge generated meets their needs. In so doing, universities improve the quality of their research by working closely with these excluded groups, and utilising their knowledges as they might when working closely to the needs of other societal stakeholders such as businesses, government or the non-profit sector. At the same time, engaging with those communities might stimulate processes of societal learning that in turn address both the problems – disintegration and fragmentation – which constrain the future prospects of such excluded communities in the contemporary world. There appears therefore to be the potential for very positive outcomes in universities engaging with excluded communities, and indeed an argument that such community engagement should become a core mission for the higher education sector.

To better understand the contribution of higher education to driving processes of social inclusion, it is therefore necessary to develop detailed understandings of how universities work with such communities, the respective benefits that such collaboration produces, the dynamics of such interactions, and to ask whether it does indeed re-engage these communities by re-engaging them externally and mobilising them internally. This working paper reports findings from a case study of an anonymised community arts project from a Scottish university. As the case study makes clear, there were tensions inherent in the project between the staff and the university and therefore it has been necessary to preserve the anonymity of those concerned. What main concern of the paper with is the role played by the university in helping to draw together groups of individuals from excluded communities, and the extent to which they were welded into coherent and sustainable self-governing groups, which are clearly suggestive of an improved level of social capital. The projects were ostensibly about individual learning, but over time the original group cohered and developed, and new groups emerge. In later working papers, we see that this “life beyond the university” appears to be important for understanding the roles of universities. This case study therefore provides a perfect lens to reflect on ‘life within the university’, and the experiences of a group primarily focused on something which is a remote concern for the university.

The working paper places this case study within a wider theoretical framework seeking to create a link between the development of human capital and co-learning processes between universities and excluded communities. The paper begins by setting out a theoretical framework, and explaining the background and the methodology to the case study. The paper then provides some historical background to the university where this project took place and its approach to regional engagement. The report then turns to provide a synthetic history of the project, how it has evolved and progressed beyond the university, and how it has established itself as four semi-autonomous self governing groups with clearly demonstrable improved social capital. On the basis of that, the working paper concludes with a discussion of some of the issues which the case study raises for the more general understanding of university-community engagement, and models of university-community engagement.

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This working paper is the fourth in a series of six project working papers, which covered a theoretical review of engagement, an international review of community engagement, a survey of three UK regions, and two other case studies associated with Liverpool Hope University and Salford Universities in the North West of England. Many thanks are also due to the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies at the University of Twente in the Netherlands for supporting the final editing of the report. The authors would like to thank the interviewees who gave their time and permission to assist with the research, and point out the usual disclaimer that any errors or omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Fundamental to understanding university engagement with excluded communities is understanding why universities might choose to engage. A traditional conception of universities is that they deliver teaching and research as their core missions, and that they may undertake other activities for other reasons that make sense within their own particular contexts. There is uncertainty as to whether there is sufficient coherence within activities currently emerging for it to be considered as a novel mission for universities, or whether it remains a series of externalities which emerge in a more or less uncoordinated way. This chapter presents a theoretical framework in seeking to understand the significance of university-community engagement as a solution to the problems of social exclusion.

In this chapter, we explore the reality of university engagement as one of many missions for universities in an increasingly overloaded managerial environment. The key conundrum for university-community engagement is how can community engagement compete with larger, more central missions. Of course the answer to this is not straightforward, and engagement has emerged in practice in many different ways in many different situations, namely that **engagement is an emergent mission**. However, a number of common themes can be discerned, in terms of the common drivers for engagement and common barriers hindering the development of effective engagement. Reflection on the interplay between these drivers and barriers allows a better understanding of the scope and the impact of the engagement mission in the wider higher education landscape.

2.1 THE DYNAMICS OF THE NEW SOCIETAL COMPACT

It is clear that societal expectations of higher education are changing. The example of student fees illustrates this – up until the age of the truly mass higher education experience, there was a belief that the general societal benefits of higher education justified fully subsidising higher education for students. However, mass higher education has made that option prohibitively expensive, and at the same time social atomisation has made it possible to develop an argue for the individual benefits that accrue to the holders of higher education. A mix of pragmatic financial concerns (rising costs) as well as a broader social shift (atomisation) have changed the relationship between universities and society from that of a public good towards an increasingly marketised commodity.

In order to provide a background to understand the changing drivers on the societal compact, this relationship of expectations between society and higher education (*cf.* 2.2), in this section we reflect on broader issue of the societal compact. The term is used to describe an implicit bargain between society and higher education, which will be mediated through a range of institutions dependent on context, at a variety of degrees of remove. In the UK (England), the Treasury, DIUS, HEFCE, learned societies, charities (most notably Wellcome), the NHS and regional development agencies all have a stake in defining this societal relationship on the basis of their own interests, and the way their stakeholders stimulate their development.

The key issue here is that universities exist within relationships of funding and accountability that require them to respond to these stakeholders, and the changing position of these relationships results in the shifting societal compact. Understandings

of these contributions have become increasingly nuanced, moving away from a 'linear' model of knowledge transfer with universities undertaking blue-skies research, and transferring it to firms and other societal institutions which exploit that knowledge. The paradigm of knowledge transfer has evolved to that of knowledge exchange, where universities and other key partners come together with their own knowledge capacities, interests, questions and challenges, and work collectively to create new knowledge, products, processes, technologies and solutions.

Yet, at the same time, there are signs of societal dissatisfaction with the way universities contribute to their host societies. Governments have reinvented the idea of the public research laboratory into the model of the public-private research institute, co-ordinating societal efforts to exploit existing knowledges. In the UK, the Energy Technology Institute is one example of a large scale research activity seeking to provide social benefits, in which universities are taking a secondary co-ordinating role with the emphasis lying on relevance and business leadership. The long-term nature of university research and short-term pressures in the credit crunch have exacerbated this trend of emphasising the societal importance of immediately relevant findings over the longer-term development of societal knowledge bases.

Barnett (2000) refers to the expectation that universities produce societal benefits in return for their privileges and public funding as the 'societal compact'; in the 1970s, this compact was grounded in universities as independent, autonomous and slightly detached institutions contributing to a democratic society. The current expectation seems to be evolving into universities as engaged, inter-dependent, and accountable institutions contributing to a more competitive and sustainable society. Increased interest in engagement can be regarded as a reflection of this evolving societal compact, and therefore considering the dynamics of this engagement provides a practical lens through which to consider the changing institution of university in the context of the new knowledge economy.

A final point worth reiterating at this stage is that this is strongly rooted in a network model of governance where inter-dependent organisations hold one another to account. In that sense, the societal compact is rooted in a notion of **inter-institutional network accountability** rather than a **direct democratic societal accountability** or the previously dominant model of **producer-led peer accountability**. The consequence of this is that whilst universities are accountable to a group of external stakeholders, those stakeholders are not individuals within society, but rather institutions who make claims upon universities on the basis that they represent or articulate a societal interest.

2.2 THE PROBLEMATIC OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

2.2.1 Social exclusion and exclusionary practices

The phenomenon of social exclusion is not a novel one: it is a widespread phenomenon of cultural anthropology that particular groups in a society face systematic discrimination which undermines their life chances whilst making that exclusion seem natural or even justified. At its broadest definition, social exclusion can be regarded as a systematic disadvantaging within social resource allocation mechanisms in ways which become self-reinforcing and self-justifying without necessarily having a more coherent underpinning rationale. Social exclusion can be

regarded as a process of restriction, limiting access to markets such as labour and housing, to collective social welfare provision, or to education, to groups based on a collective rather than individual considerations.

In some cases, exclusion can stimulate positive responses and mobilisations from within those communities which create new, alternative institutions which substitute for those exclusionary activities. One of the most dramatic examples can be seen in the case of the Netherlands, where between 1890 and 1930, various ‘pillars’ were deliberately constructed. These pillars representing different social groups – protestant, catholic, socialist and liberal – encompassing schools, unions, political parties, broadcasters and social clubs to ensure that no one faced social exclusion at a time of dramatic social change. However, the more prosaic reality is that such situations are exceptional and that much exclusion can be self-reinforcing and lead to a process of societal segmentation where particular groups are held at the margins of society.

A good example of this can be seen in places where there are strongly exclusionary housing markets, which can see the weakest members of societies pushed to the fringes of the housing ladders (Stoeger, 2009). This can restrict their access to housing to expensive, short term and vulnerable rental contracts in locations not of their choosing. This in turn can prevent them finding good, stable employment, and with high rents and proportionally high travel costs can prevent them accumulating capital to secure a better housing market position. Frequently enforced moves of house further undermine their social and family connections which could otherwise provide access to informal welfare services. This example shows how housing market exclusion can in turn drive other kinds of exclusion and create a self-reinforcing process of lock-in, with communities unable to challenge their social marginalisation.

However, the emergence of the knowledge economy has given the issue of social exclusion a degree of added salience, because of the increasing importance of knowledge to the production process. At an individual level, this can mean that exclusion from adequate education (through being restricted to access to low-aspiration or vocational schools) can create a lifelong hindrance in terms of accessing suitable employment opportunities. For communities, particularly those dependent on traditional livelihoods, this can mean that their residents find themselves subjected to a spectrum of exclusionary market and social welfare practices as their rationale for existence disappears and at the same time this creates the impression that there is some kind of justification for those exclusionary practices.

Both Byrne (1999) and Moulaert (2000) talk of places of social exclusion which have emerged as a consequence of the radical economic upheavals of the last thirty years, as the certainties of the Fordist age have given way to the post-Fordist, post-industrial age. It is worth unpacking the idea of the ‘global age’ to highlight a number of challenges which have come together to destabilise a range of communities which had previously been well established and intensify exclusionary pressures. The first is globalisation and increasingly intense inter-place competition, which in particular adds to pressures of labour market insecurity for all but those with in-demand knowledge-intensive skills, Reich’s ‘symbolic analysts’. Secondly is the shift from government in territorially-bounded hierarchies to governance in looser stakeholder-networks, which can drive political exclusion for those individuals who do not aggressively mobilise to uphold their own interests in decision-making networks.

Thirdly has been the erosion of the welfare state and the rise of workfarism providing access to social services through markets, which raises the risk of exclusion from collective consumption for whilst additionally entrenching labour market segmentation.

The stability of the Fordist settlement created a mass workforce guaranteed social inclusion and access to welfare services, whilst the flexibility of post-Fordism has created a huge increase in vulnerability and ultimately to social exclusion. At the same time, a shift in the macro-policy perspective from demand-side to supply-side management has created a situation where the returns for public investment in these places are so low that they can hardly be justified, with the result that public investment has a regressive effect, creating ever sharper boundaries between successful world-city regions and a fragmented archipelago of excluded communities. A lack of inflow of investment and resources can cut these places off from the wider economy, further locking them into this pattern of underinvestment and underperformance, and further restricting their citizens' access to critical societal resource allocating institutions.

Table 1 Processes of social exclusion

Allocation mechanism	Exclusionary process
Labour market	Short-term, flexible, vulnerable contracts with limited benefits and opportunities to save. Workfare contracts enforcing long hours in return for welfare payment, no capital formation
Housing market	Restriction to remote, undesirable parts of city with limited service provision, poor accessibility, hidden costs of transport, caring responsibilities. High rents for poor quality housing limiting saving and housing market progression; 'red lining', negative equity.
Education provision	Discriminatory access requirements based on existing pupils or residence base – inner city schools. Limited progression and participation through education system, access only to part-time, low-cost higher ed.
Access to transport	Transport network goes through, not into, area, bringing all costs and no benefits. Poor public transport raises commuting times and reduces opportunities to networks with people in other suburbs.
Health services	Restriction/ rationing of service provision even where theoretical entitlement exists. Shift from public health to emergency health measures, limited preventative/ elective activities
Kinship ties	Fragmentation of coherent family units across urban area reducing opportunities for interaction and informal provision Emphasis on household survival strategies reduces opportunities for

	capital formation and pooling at family level.
Governance networks	Political representatives excluded from decision-making venues because no interest in constituency. Community voice excluded from governance networks because seen as being pathological or unreasonable.
State violence monopoly	Retreat of police from problem areas, increased costs and pressures of criminality Territorial profiling and emphasis on enforcement rather than welfare functions of law services.
Production networks	Failure to benefit from employment created through local investments in infrastructure and inward investment Limited workforce progression from informal-local sector to formal-external sector.
Private services	Low levels of services for high costs through <i>de facto</i> monopoly situations (e.g. water provision) Reliance on informal services
Financial services	Failure to benefit from cost reductions for secure payments –(e.g. direct debit discounts); time and monetary costs of up-front payments. Reliance on doorstep lending and exclusion from formal credit markets, reducing opportunities for capital formation.

2.2.2 Social exclusion as a territorial process: socially excluded communities

The impacts on the community can be quite devastating because of the human consequences of this exclusion. In the first instance, those with the wherewithal to leave do so, and so there is a kind of centrifuging effect, distilling the excluded and further exacerbating their problems, by further reducing their access to socialised resources and undermining social capital. The second issue is that the lack of connection of these places leaves them unable to assert their right as communities to particular socialised assets, and public investments can be slow coming in turning around the private disinvestment. Thirdly, compounding the two previous issues, is that these communities become regarded as problems requiring external solutions rather than communities with their own assets and strengths – as well as problems – who can become partners in governance structures developing new solutions to these problems.

This can lead to very different types of communities experiencing similar types of social exclusion under these modern conditions. As well as particular groups which may face systemic discrimination, such as ethnic minorities, elder communities or young people, there are also more territorial groupings which emerge as places of exclusion. Particular places within cities have functioned as spaces of exclusion, sometimes reflecting ethnicity-based exclusionary practices ('ghettos') or more functional divisions (inner city areas). Moulaert highlights that there are particular kinds of places outside of cities whose rationale for existence has disappeared whilst leaving the residents without ready access to urban-based services necessary for

modern economic success, including the UK's former seaside resorts, fishing villages, rural and peri-urban mining and steel production villages, and old industrial towns.

Even for those within cities, who should be able at least to readily access social welfare services and urban assets, the global economy has produced new kinds of exclusionary processes and practices. In particular, the rise of the public-private partnership as new form of governance mechanism is particularly potent in excluding the voices of local residents from consultation mechanisms. Cameron & Coaffee frame this in terms of a sense of revanchism within urban regeneration projects, reclaiming derelict places from the 'socially excluded' for the 'gentle citizenry'. This further adds to the problems of these communities by imposing new forms of exclusion on them, reducing their stability and preventing them from forming social, housing and other forms of capital.

Critiques of gentrification that fail to address the needs of those residents are long-standing and it is only the form of these governance arrangements – public private coalitions which exclude residents – which are in a sense novel. The issue with gentrification is that it is a spatial fix for the problems which arise in particular places without addressing the underlying processes of exclusion which give rise to these communities. This makes these problems intractable and difficult to address, and in recent years there have been manifestations of dissatisfaction with deep-seated urban exclusion in a series of riots in developed economies, from the North West of England in 2001, Paris (2007) and the Netherlands (2008). Riots represent a profound problem of legitimacy for governments and can help to place the exclusionary barriers which these places face back onto the political agenda.

Ensuring continued political legitimacy for governments will be a serious challenge in the coming century as there are a series of major challenges which will have to be addressed which will require substantive collective action to address and solve, including demographic ageing, climate change, resource scarcity and water access. Solving these problems will raise substantial challenges of equity and fairness within national borders and may lead to a questioning of the legitimacy of national governments. Urban inclusion is a similar challenge, because there is the risk that problems of urban exclusion might further fragment political cohesion at a time of mobilisation around developing large scale solutions to these grand challenges of the 21st century. Therefore there is a pressing need to develop real solutions to these problems which address both the exclusionary processes and the physical manifestations of exclusion to ensure continued social cohesion.

2.3 THE DOUBLE BIND OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION: REENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

This raises the question of how to address the challenge of social exclusion by addressing the exclusionary processes which cut off these communities from the societal mainstream. Understanding exclusion is difficult because of the inherent equity problems within exclusionary practices, which justify manifestly unfair behaviour in terms of an abstract rationale, such as the efficiency of markets or the pathology of excluded communities. This raises the question of why excluded communities do not mobilise themselves to politically contest the processes of exclusion, improve their own situations and reintegrate themselves into the societal mainstream. Moulaert (2000) notes that part of the phenomenon of social exclusion is

that being externally excluded undermines the necessary internal cohesion to mobilise and challenge their political-economic placing through exclusionary processes.

Moulaert makes a conceptual distinction between two distinct elements of the experience of social exclusion. Firstly, they are disconnected by exclusionary practices and processes from wider economic, political and social structures which severely limit community opportunities. In competitions for scarce public investment, these communities may be directly excluded from investments, or investments may be configured to ensure that they are excluded from the private benefits of infrastructure investment development (e.g. through employment on building projects, from ownership of the assets (e.g. houses) built, from benefiting from improved accessibility (lack of motorway junctions or high-speed train stations). Challenging these exclusionary practices is difficult because of the pre-existence of governance coalitions ready to justify their practices as well as the time limited opportunities for contesting exclusion from investments.

The point is that what creates the preconditions for these communities external exclusion is that they fail to mobilise and successfully contest the decisions, networks and norms which frame their exclusion as acceptable and even necessary. Byrne (1999) notes that a key characteristic of such communities are that they are also internally fragmented, and have little capacity to challenge these external structural weaknesses to improve their own situations. This means that there is not the socio-cultural base on which to develop an 'urban social movement' with the capacity to challenge the decisions taken by outsiders and ensure that the community does have equitable access to social market services and is seen as a suitable space for outside investment that contributes to local growth as well as producing local exploitation.

The issue hinted at by both Moulaert and Byrne is that these two pressures are mutually reinforcing, and are two symptoms of some underlying problems. One way to conceptualise this problem would be of an absence of effective social capital. The idea of social capital was raised by Putnam to understand the self-organising capacities of groups to achieve both internal goals, but also to engage with external agents and their agendas to achieve collective goals. Bordieu has also noted that one of the key features of social capital is that – in common with other forms of capital – it provides the owners of that capital with the power over other types of capital. Therefore, the possession of social capital conveys a particular kind of power, which in the context of social exclusion, allows a contestation of exclusionary processes.

Putnam makes a distinction between internal (bonding) social capital and external (bridging) social capital. Internal social capital is the capacity for a group of individuals to work together effectively and to generate responses to particular situations, effectively a kind of self-governing capacity. External social capital is the ability to work within networks to identify the needs, vulnerabilities and resources of other actors and engage with them within these networks to achieve shared goals, or better put, to maximise ones own goal achievement whilst making sufficient concessions to others to allow them to achieve their goals.

A critical point here made by writers on social capital is that it is both transitive activity, that is to say that it exist in relations to others, and performative, in that those relationships continually have to be renewed in order to carry their value (Burt, 2000). The issue therefore in terms of social inclusion can be that these communities have lost their linkages both internally and externally, reducing the ability of individual

community members (nodes in these social capital networks) to access the capital of others. This is depicted in figure 1, which indicates both of these impacts.

Figure 1 The dual fragmentation of excluded communities in the knowledge economy

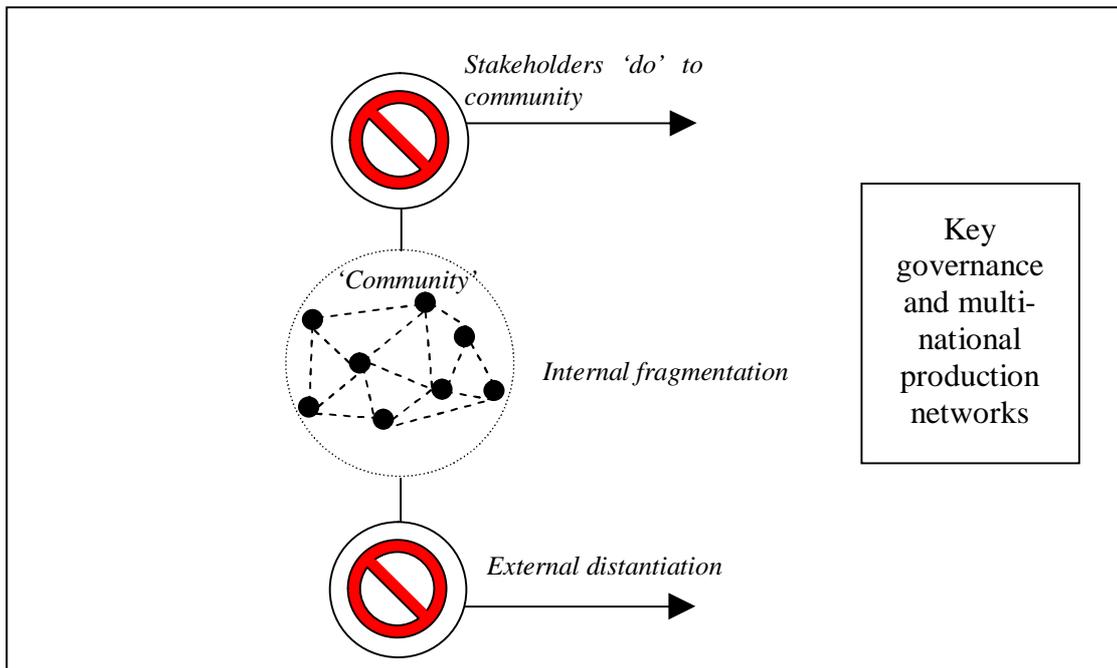


Figure 3 above attempts to make this distinction clearer through a graphic representation, which highlights three problems. Firstly, these communities are cut off from multi-national production and investment markets – they suffer from market exclusion which forces them to the fringes of labour markets. Secondly, these communities are cut off from governance networks which allocate public resources which provide places with the capacity to alter their own situation. Thirdly, these places are internally fragmented which prevents them from asserting themselves within either production or governance networks, and hence reinforces their relatively weak, excluded positions. This raises the question of what can begin a process of positive change to address this situation, given a lack of agency internally and a lack of interest externally.

2.4 UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: SHARED LEARNING FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT

The starting point for this project is to ask whether universities can play such a role, and in particular by engaging with excluded communities, universities can help a process of social capital accumulation in those places which addresses those problems. It is important not to underestimate the scope of the change involved in addressing the trajectories and positioning of these excluded places within wider political economies. However, it is fair to ask the question of whether working with universities can help (people in) these places to address particular exclusionary practices which reduce their opportunities for self-mobilisation and political activism.

There is a clear heuristic, building on the idea that universities working with those communities offers a 'global pipeline' which (in the language of Bathelt *et al.*, 2004) restores a sense of local 'buzz' and economic vibrancy to these places, developing

social capital to reconnect these communities to their wider societal milieu. There are clearly situations in theory and practice where universities could help communities build both bonding and bridging social capital. This might be an ongoing process, where a university engages to improve the access of a particular to internet access (both around infrastructure and training). Alternatively, it might be related to a particular local environmental issue threatening a community where a mix of advocacy and consultancy see the communities' interests better articulated and represented in external policy-networks (Cox, 2000).

A graphical representation of a heuristic for this process is provided in Figure 2 below, which highlights two situations. The first is one in which a community is excluded both in terms of being cut-off and disintegrated, and has no capacity to work with the university. The second is an 'ideal type' situation, where through working with the university, the excluded communities has addressed the problems identified above, in terms of internal cohesion, attracting external investments, and being taken more seriously by external political actors within governance networks. However, this heuristic for a change is not the same as understanding how that change can come about, nor in terms of building an understanding of the necessary changes to alter the situation.

Drawing on social network theory (e.g. Dassen, 2010), it is possible to identify a number of configurations which universities might play in improving the position of these excluded communities. In social network terms, such communities are surrounded by 'structural holes' and indeed face 'structural holes' within their community networks. There are a number of processes which universities might contribute to in improving the connectivity of these excluded communities:-

Bridging: the university connects members of the excluded community through the university networks to external actors, and via the university, the excluded community can access novel resources, and better represent its position within governance networks.

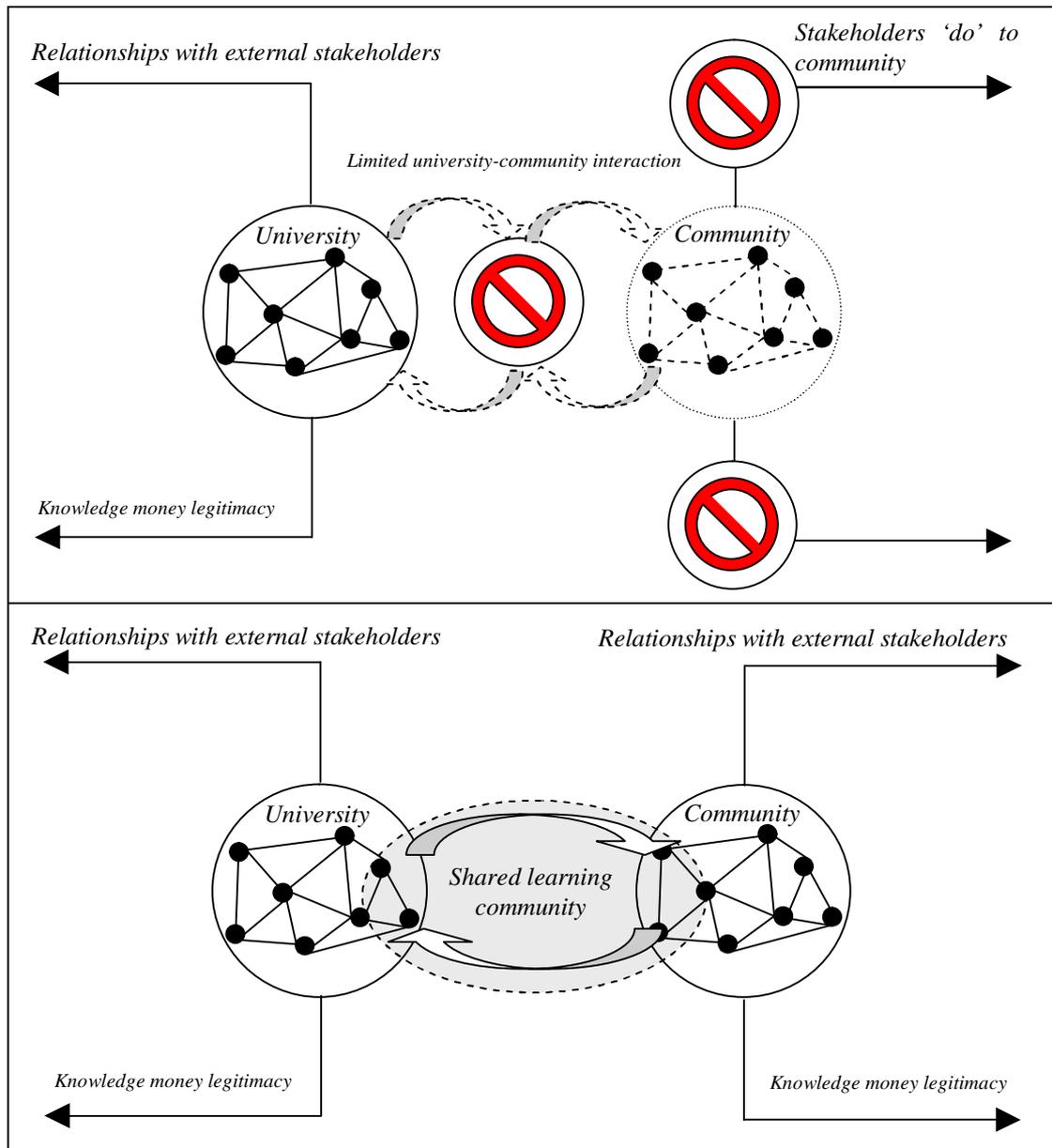
Building: the university connects members of the excluded community through the university networks to external actors, and over time, the community develop direct links to those external actors to better represent their positions and interests within governance networks.

Bonding: by two community members working with the university, they come to know one another, and therefore have better mutual links, creating links **within** the excluded community.

Strengthening weak ties: the university develops a link to partners of community members, and in doing that, ties the community members more closely to their external partners, and increase the power of the community partner over the external actor.

2nd Order Building: the university develops links to third party actors which are then brought into the extended network of the community, and to which the community then has the opportunity to develop direct relationships.

Figure 2 A heuristic for university-community interaction improving community situation within its local political economy



The critical issue here is how that collaborative working addresses the problems of social exclusion affecting the community. Gunasekara (2006) made a distinction between university's generative and developmental regional contributions. Generative contributions were the provision of community services which were relatively simply absorbed within the regional system, whereas developmental contributions were those which changed the nature of regional innovation and governance systems. This suggests that the focus for the research needs to be developmental contributions from universities.

This implies that the interaction with the university had encouraged the community to work more co-operatively, developing internal social capital (bonding social capital, in the language of Putnam). This bonding capital gave the community a coherence which in turn made it more demanding of other political institutions, and improved its local position. We can identify from social network literatures that there are a number

of processes by which universities and excluded communities working together can create linkages that improve the connectivity of the excluded communities, which can be taken as a proxy for improving their inclusion (*cf.* Dassen, 2010). These are shown in figure 3 below¹.

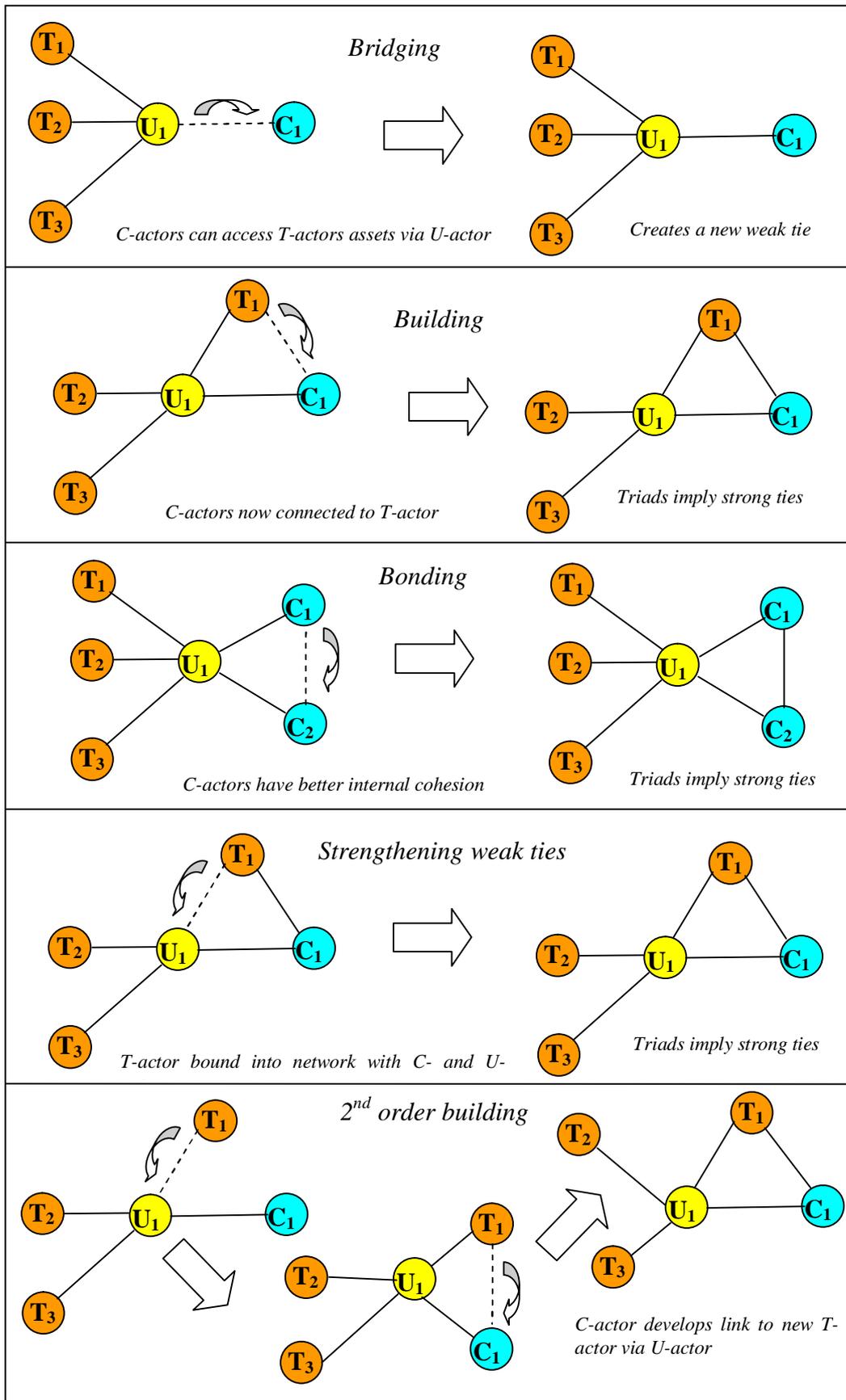
- **Bridging:** the university connects members of the excluded community through the university networks to external actors, and via the university, the excluded community can access novel resources, and better represent its position within governance networks.
- **Building:** the university connects members of the excluded community through the university networks to external actors, and over time, the community develop direct links to those external actors to better represent their positions and interests within governance networks.
- **Bonding:** by two community members working with the university, they come to know one another, and therefore have better mutual links, creating links **within** the excluded community.
- **Strengthening weak ties:** the university develops a link to partners of community members, and in doing that, ties the community members more closely to their external partners, and increase the power of the community partner over the external actor.
- **2nd Order Building:** the university develops links to third party actors which are then brought into the extended network of the community, and to which the community then has the opportunity to develop direct relationships.

This nevertheless offers a model – or at least a heuristic – of how universities and communities could interact to increase the social capital of excluded communities. By engaging in shared learning activities, the actors create relationships which connect excluded communities to societal actors via the university. The idea is that this interaction benefits these communities by giving them greater capacity for self-determination and autonomy. They have relationships directly with these actors, reducing their reliance on external experts for improving their fortunes.

There is of course the risk here in assuming that this relationship-building process is simplistic, and ignoring the power relationships which undoubtedly influence the network dynamics. Nevertheless, considering which types of relationships universities can assist in building can understand how universities build the micro-foundations for the reintegration of socially-excluded communities within these broader (meso-scale) local political economies. This theoretical and conceptual discussion raises the opportunity that universities could work with excluded communities to improve their structure exclusion. However, this raises the question of how that might take and the kinds of empirical testing of that possibility that could take place. This is addressed in chapter 3.

¹ The key to this diagram is that U are university actors, T are third party actors and S are actors in socially-excluded communities.

Figure 3 The network building processes reintegrating excluded communities



3 INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDY & METHODOLOGY

The heuristic above suggests that a university and excluded community work together for some reason, and in the course of that collaborative working activity, the community develops social capital. This social capital both bring the community closer together, addressing internal fragmentation, but also makes them more demanding and sophisticated in dealing with external partners, addressing their external fragmentation. This suggests that if university/ community interaction could stimulate learning processes, which are inherently social activities, then this may augment those communities' bonding and bridging social capital. This suggests that to empirically explore whether that is indeed taking place, there is a need to establish a number of key elements in this process.

- There is collective learning between the university and the socially excluded community
- The collective learning helps build social capital within the community
- The social capital which builds up helps to address the particular problems of exclusion facing that community.

There are several steps necessary to establish that some particular university-community engagement project has made a positive contribution to addressing social exclusion, namely that collective learning has taken place, that collective learned has build bonding and bridging capital within the community, and that has increased the community's power to contest exclusionary processes. For the first step, we seek to understand the dynamics of the interaction between university and community, and the processes of social capital that this drives. For the second step, we use Bordieu's assertion to deduce that increased social capital within excluded communities will allow those communities to exert greater influence over other forms of capital, notably those from outside the community. The final step will be to identify how that influence in turn reduces the functioning of these exclusionary practises.

3.1 COLLECTIVE LEARNING

There is an increasing recognition of the social nature of 'learning', which is an increasingly important economic function because of the increasing importance of innovation and creativity to driving economic growth and rising welfare levels. Gibbons *et al.* (1994) characterised the new environment for knowledge production as 'Mode 2' in contrast to the linear knowledge creation of mode 1, in which universities undertook blue skies research, and transferred it to industries who created new products which then diffused out into markets.

Although they acknowledge that the change has been more of a shift of tendency between the two poles than a simplistic binary shift, Gibbons *et al.* were amongst the first to capture the essence of contemporary innovation as a means of bringing diverse and heterogeneous knowledges together to create solutions to problems that meet needs. They characterised innovation as a 'team game' in which various actors combined knowledges together whilst also devising meta-governance arrangements (self-organising) to establish which knowledges and which partners should be involved.

Their notion of innovation as a ‘team game’ hints at the social – and socialised – nature of knowledge production, particularly because even within a team playing towards the same ostensible goals, different players have not only different capacities, but also different motivations for playing in the game. It is under these circumstances that the issue of governance becomes important, as a means of ensuring that there is a broad constituency of support for the goals being pursued. But this social nature of knowledge production – its interactive and path-dependent nature highlighted by Kline & Rosenberg (1986) also raises an additional challenge for knowledge production, which is that knowledge is not readily transmitted and transferred between actors.

The most basic distinction was made by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) who distinguished between codified and tacit knowledge. Codified knowledge can readily be written down, transmitted and readily becomes ubiquitous, whilst tacit knowledge is based on relationships and understandings and requires inter-personal contact for its transmission. Gregersen and Johnson (1995) made a further distinction between know-what and know-why – factual information and deductive rules – as codified knowledge, and know-how and know-who – the knack of a skill and governance skills – as tacit knowledge. Typologies of transmission mechanisms have been developed, placing learning-by-doing and learning-by-networking as tacit transfer mechanisms alongside traditional knowledge-absorption mechanisms.

Boschma (2005) makes a useful point that what governs the capacity for transmission for types of tacit knowledge is the relative proximity between the actors. This proximity may be geographical (such as within clusters and industrial districts), but may also be organisational (within a single company), cognitive (with similar educational and professional backgrounds), social (related to similar status) and institutional (having a mandate to work closely with particular other groups). A key element of knowledge transmission is building the necessary proximity between two actors which in turn facilitates future interactions, and that is a profoundly social process based on developing common understandings and frames of reference.

Bringing these two issues together, in the perspective of Mode 2 knowledge production, interactive innovation processes require at least two kinds of learning, one set of learning related to the problem domain, and one set of learning related to the proximity of the participating actors. However, the point about socialised theories of learning is that the distinction is to some extent artificial, because the two kinds of learning operate in parallel and are mutually reinforcing: if partners can develop shared solutions, then the sense of success can reinforce collaboration, whilst if proximity cannot be built up, then there is little chance of genuinely mutual collaboration to solve problems.

In this project, we have used the theory of a community of practice as a means for understanding the dynamics of the socialised learning processes (*cf.* Wenger, 1991; 1998). He observed a number of workplace situations where teams worked together to develop shared solutions to complex problems, and he found that knowledge of shared solutions built up, but became embedded into the social life of the community. Applying an anthropological lens to the working of these communities he found that accessing the knowledge required becoming a member of the community, which in turn brought ‘initiation rites’. Members had status within the hierarchy, with new members joining in the periphery and moving to the core of the community over time as they acquired the necessary social skills and knowledge to themselves initiate other

members. These communities were privileged places both for the *acquisition* as much as the *generation* of new knowledge useful for solving the collective shared problems.

The social dimension of the community was extremely important and became partly-formalised into things like shared social routines, prestige, status, artefacts and the stories that people told about the life of the community. Yet the social life of the community extended beyond the formal demands of the problem-solving, and it acquired a degree of autonomy from the problem domain as the community developed an independent social life. The practices, routines and bonds developed to solve particular work-place problems were also the foundation for friendship relationships, and the artefacts, stories and hierarchies of the community of practice extended beyond the work sphere into the private lives of the participants.

3.2 ...ACROSS INSTITUTIONAL BOUNDARIES...

Wenger's idea of communities of practice were derived from very detailed studies of single organisations where participants were closely focused on working together to address complex working problems. With the increasing nature of inter-organisational working and the increasing prevalence of partnership models for the delivery of particular economic outputs, this raises the question of whether communities of practice could build up across institutional borders.

Benner (2003) identified that in the extremely vulnerable world of ICT work in California, a set of independent contractors developed a message board system to exchange ideas, work opportunities, identify collaborative partners, and also to bring a human dimension to their work. He coined the phrase 'network of practice' to describe the situation of a virtual community of practice going across institutional boundaries to a group of people facing similar problems and interacting and collaborating to address those problems.

There is a need for a natural caution in applying the idea of a community of practice or network of practice too readily or too liberally without demonstrating empirically that there is in practice an independent social dimension to the life of the community that transcends the immediate functional pressures. In asserting the existence of a network of practice there is a need to establish the independent social life of the community across the institutional borders. This requires asking the question of whether the grouping has a distinct community life with hierarchies, initiation rites, shared stories, progression within the community, artefacts, accepted ways of doing things, and a social life beyond the functional tasks that the community activity is woven into?

One attraction of the idea of networks of practice is the intuitive connection between socialised learning across boundaries and the development of different kinds of proximity – cognitive, organisational, social – between the participants, thereby increasing future capacity for collaboration. The question of future capacity is an integral part of the social capital that builds up in particular circumstances, and what is critically important is the extent to which that social capital genuinely allows partners to challenge and contest what larger scale structures compel them to do. In the fields of cross-border planning, Haselsberger & Benneworth (2010) have looked at the extent to which cross-border planning communities have built up and been able to challenge national epistemic communities and valuations of their respective places. They were unable to find convincing evidence that these cross-border planning

communities had built up substantive capacity which could make these challenges, reinforcing the importance of not imposing a community of practice framework on situations which do not necessarily justify it.

It is particularly important to be careful when considering the relationships between universities and excluded communities, and in particular their potential to work together as partners on joint enterprises. In the first working paper in this series, we identified that there are a range of barriers which prevent or at least hinder universities and excluded communities together. In part these arise because of the huge disconnect between the types of institution each is – universities are large, powerful and institutionalised corporate actors, whilst excluded communities typically encounter large institutions in their policing rather than through their citizenship and welfare functions.

At a more concrete level, universities and communities do not necessarily have the correct fit of skills to work together, and the university may indeed perform exclusionary practices as part of its work routine. An example is a university with a campus in an excluded community that physically separates itself from the community to protect staff, students and buildings, but which at the same time sends out an extremely discouraging message for community groups. At the same time, universities may be drawn to more formalised organisations which purport to represent the community interest in ways which are more immediately recognisable by universities. In figure 5 below, we bring together some of the barriers which can inhibit collective working between universities and communities (drawn from Working Paper 1) which indicate the natural resistance which might inhibit these actors working together effectively for collective benefit.

Figure 4 Barriers which inhibit from universities and communities from engaging with each other

University	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement not compulsory • Absence of institutional strategy • Absence of engagement manager <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diffusion of responsibility • Lack of dedicated funding stream <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives to lure students • Core funding ignores engagement • Other funders do not demand engagement • No career structure for engagement • Engagement seen peripheral hobby <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do 'research on a community' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of subject knowledge • Physical distance from communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of 'roots' in communities • Community do not make demands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community seen as a 'problem' • Third parties divert university activity • Other funders buy research 'on' communities • Global networks favoured over local links • Excluded communities avoided/ ignored • Town/ gown tensions create student enclaves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enclaves 'turn off' non-trad local students • Difficulty of rewarding student engagement • Engagement not fit into professional curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalisation of engagement routes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of leaders to sit on boards/ committees • Lack of capacity to mobilise around issues • Misunderstanding of university capacities • Invisible barriers put communities off engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal structures exclude communities • Engagement projects have high staff turnover • Community skills mismatch with project demands • Communities lack knowledge absorptive capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual activists not repeatable learning • Exclusion from professional engagement discourses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of individuals wanting to engage • Engagement helps cleverest to leave community • Engagement driven by experts not local learning • Absence of individuals with 'feet in both camps'

Source: Working Paper 1

3.3 UNIVERSITIES CREATING NEW COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE...

This refines the question originally posed to consider whether universities and excluded communities can come together to create communities of practice which in turn represent social capital for these communities, which allows those communities to appropriate the embodied labour of others and hence improves their position within a local political economy. In Phase 1 of this research project, we undertook a survey of 33 institutions in the North East and North West of England, and Scotland, to explore where they were engaging with excluded communities, and as part of that, sought to identify where there was genuinely shared learning activities taking place between universities and communities. This survey unearthed a very few examples of where this was happening at an institutional level, and even at the departmental or individual level, there were relatively few experiences of collective learning between universities and partners.

The OECD Centre for Higher Education Research and Innovation (CHERI) in 1982 produced a categorisation of the kinds of activities which universities could undertake to engage with communities (in contrast to the separate activity of business engagement). With each of the services associated with university-community engagement, it is also possible to identify where there are opportunities for collective learning between universities and the excluded communities.

Table 2 a typology of university services for (excluded) communities

Way of providing service	Mechanism for delivering service	Opportunities for collective learning
University puts facilities at community disposal	Use of equipment, premises, laboratories, laboratories Using teachers and students to make direct contribution Drawing on community in delivering occupational, vocational training (e.g. nursing, law, planning)	Community builds up links with academic staff and can offer interesting student projects and placements
Execution of orders placed by community	Offering training as occupational, continuing education or cultural University receives a payment from community for delivery of a service A near private contract between the buyer and the vendor	Learning how to use the university, get the best out of the services, conditioning the university to be a good, willing client
Analysis of needs of community	The university comes into the community as an outside expert The university provides services for the community with some reference to an 'order' by the community	Community generates a better sense of group interests, priorities, budget-setting and needs.
Analysis of problems at request of community	University engages at community request in developing solutions University has the autonomy and freedom to suggest a range of solutions away from overarching pressure.	Positive reinforcement that the community problem identification works well, good existing capacity
University delivers a solution for community	The university delivers a service for the community which is compatible with its institutional status	Harder to identify where collective learning takes place.

Source: after CERI (1982)

There are various kinds of ways that universities and communities could work together collectively and circumvent the barriers in figure 5 – universities teaching higher vocational courses may have to provide learning experience and placements helping educate professionals who will have to deal with communities with these problems in their future professional life. In order to generate a steady stream of placements and projects for students, university staff may develop stable links with excluded communities and begin processes of co-creation of knowledge; these linkages may also develop into consultancy, research, public knowledge and expertise functions, with an in-depth exchange between universities and communities.

Although these opportunities may exist, the critical issue as far as this research project is concerned is whether those learning opportunities create social capital. To establish this fact, we will consider whether the learning opportunities have produced socialised learning in the form of identifiable communities of practise. The question is whether there is a definite community has formed which has *created distinctive knowledge* which is only easily *acquired by participating in the community*. The primary focus for the empirical research is exploring the contention of whether there are indeed genuine learning communities emerging which are having a developmental effect on these excluded communities *collectively*, as opposed to the provision of particular *individual* services which may assist the recipients but which do not challenge the exclusionary practices and processes constraining those communities.

3.4 ...AND REPOSITIONING EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES IN THEIR LOCAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

The final element of the method concerns how to understand whether the engagement and co-learning processes have successfully repositioned the excluded communities within their own local political economies. In 2.2.1 we highlighted the key processes of social exclusion which come together around particular communities to exclude them from contemporary societies. We therefore choose to define a developmental contribution from the universities in terms of engagement as addressing one or more of those processes on a recurrent basis so that the outcomes are systematically less exclusionary for the communities concerned.

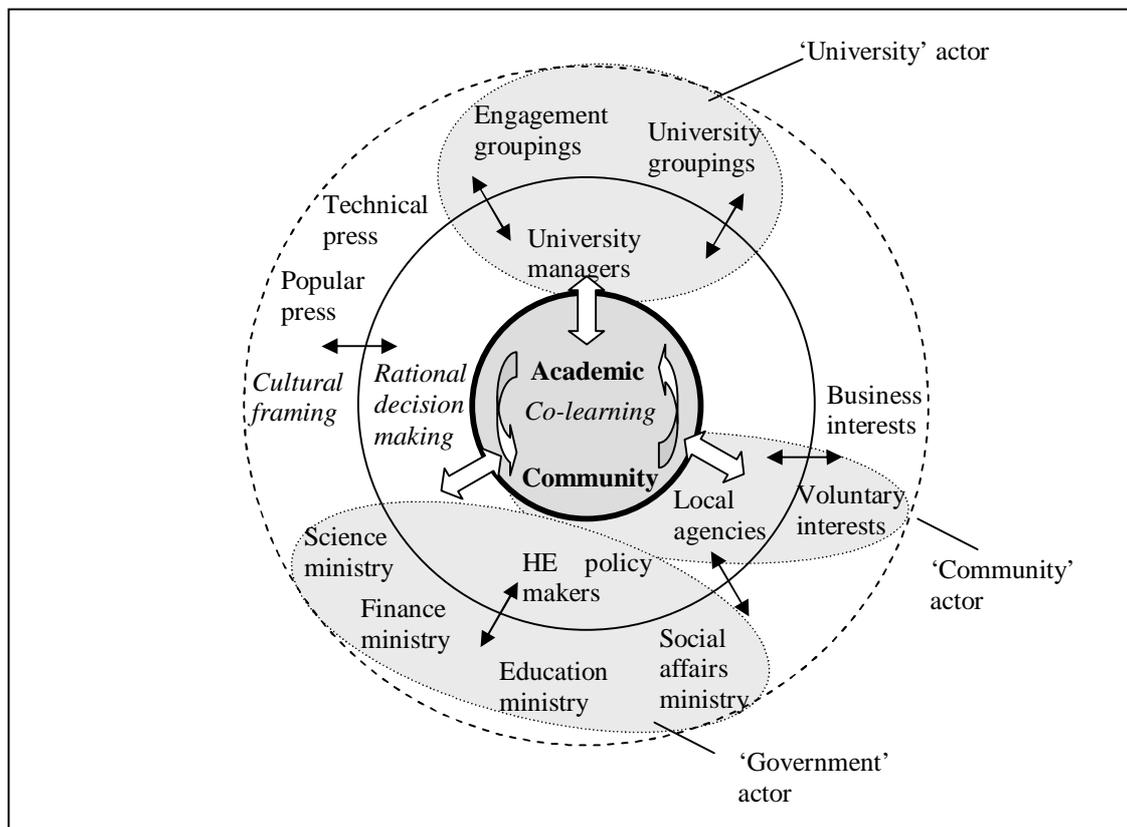
We argue that this can have a structuration effect, repositioning these communities within the local structures which create the positions of exclusion. The basis for the model is that engagement is a difficult process to initiate and sustain in practice, because it depends on building engagement activities that meet the needs of a range of partners. At its core is a set of co-learning activities between individual academics and community members, with clearly defined shared interests and needs. The university actors in effect use the community as an interesting laboratory in which to extend their studies, whilst the community learn about themselves in the process of generating new knowledges about their situation, and that improved knowledge helps to strengthen their societal position.

There is then a second set of interests whose relative alignment shapes how easy it is for their principle actors to achieve their tasks. The particular policies and structures created by universities to support community engagement shape the environment within which the principal actors are able to create these new activities. Likewise, the direct decisions taken by higher education funders can create incentives and reward outcomes by those active in community engagement. There is an interaction here

between universities and policy-makers – eye-catching university instruments can shape the way policy-makers think about university-community engagement, whilst direct stimuli can initiate new policy experiments by universities.

There is then a third set of interests which condition how effectively successful engagement activities are able to flow outwards and drive strategic transformation within universities and communities. There are many actors active in this field within the university, community, government and society. The culture of acceptance within universities determines how effective it is for strategic direction and policies to embed engagement within core university activities. The wider rhetoric of the societal compact and relative valuations for university missions by government (often outside the science ministry) may shape the kinds of arguments that universities feel able to advance. Societal pressures from parliament, non-governmental organisations or pressure groups may in turn compel universities to produce some kind of collective response or statement of activity (such as the Kellog report).

Figure 5 A stylised model of the embedding of university-communities engagement within rational decision-making and cultural framing processes



The fairly well-understood process of co-learning is one element of university-community engagement, albeit a critical one. That co-learning is embedded within a layer of rational/ direct policy-making which shapes the wider environment for community engagement. That rational policy-making is in turn embedded within a wider, and more fluid culture of competing pressures and interests which determine the kinds of visions that universities and policy-makers have for engaging with excluded communities. It is not therefore sufficient to only study the co-learning process – what is also necessary is to explore in more detail how this co-learning diffuses outwards and influences rational policy-making, and how that in turn

interacts with two critical discourses, university engagement (framing how key actors conceive of appropriate university missions) and social inclusion (framing the latitude for self-determination given to local communities). A stylised depiction of this is given in figure 4 above.

This influencing process involves a rescaling of activity, from micro-scale activities where actors come together and generate social capital to meso-scale changes in the nature of wider social processes by changing the rational policy decisions taken by a range of actors, and then the wider cultural contexts within which community engagement and social inclusion takes place. This means that the small scale activities have successfully exerted influence at higher levels, and suggests that the social capital has therefore demonstrated its value as capital by ‘appropriating social energy’ as Bordieu puts it, and seeing the interests of communities taken seriously at higher levels. There is therefore a need to understand this upscaling process whereby individual activities produce broader societal changes. Our model is that small activities can be considered to make a difference to particular situations if they have an observable effect at higher levels, that is to say that they become incorporated in the way that higher level actors consider issues.

3.5 THE SCOTTISH UNIVERSITY CASE STUDY

The basis for the report that follows has been a very detailed case study of the situation at the university being studied. The case study activity was first identified in the Phase 1 research within the project as a potential site of university-community learning. Following that, interviews were arranged with the principals in the scheme. The interview arrangement followed a snowball pattern, and some non-participant observation and attendance at meetings was undertaken in order to solicit more evidence relating to the learning activities and the possible existence of a community of practice around the project. However, in the course of those interviews it became clear that an essential part of the case study was a tension between the project and university managers, and it was therefore decided – in discussion with those concerned – to anonymise as far as is possible that particular case study. Unfortunately, that reduces the compulsion of some of the argument, and reduces the total available evidence base, yet, on the basis of the group interviews and observations, it is possible to argue that the university has allowed the creation of self-organising and reproducing community groups in highly deprived areas.

The aim of the method is to use detailed triangulation of evidence in a consistent way to highlight critical consistencies and relationships that allow the articulation of a set of stylised facts which help to establish the significance of particular empirical phenomena and their relationship. The aim of the case study is therefore to produce a stylised set of facts about the situation, and the relationship between those facts, which aim to provide a better reflection of the underlying reality than a simple narrative. These are presented in a synthetic narrative which aims to make explicit the nature of relationships and avoid creating implicit relationships through textual or temporal juxtaposition.

4 CASE-STUDY: SCOTLAND

4.1 UNIVERSITY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT²

The HEI relevant to this case-study is a new university, gaining its status in June 1992. With an avowedly vocational curriculum its 14,000 students can choose from a portfolio of over 200 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Subject strengths include accounting, computing, law, nursing and midwifery, timber engineering and transport, whilst the Business school is one of the largest in Scotland. The ‘School of Disciplines Allied to Medicine’ is likewise a significant provider of pre-registration Nursing and Midwifery courses in Scotland, as well as a wider range of health care professional education. It is also a partner in one of three research consortia set up in Scotland in 2004 to develop research capacity in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions.

As noted in its latest Strategic Plan the university ‘will rise to the challenges presented by the continuous transformation of higher education and the needs of the communities it serves’. It will ‘focus on practice, informed by theory’ as well as ‘research which emphasises relevance’. It will be connected to its various territorial constituencies ‘and will be valued by them’ because of its applied knowledge transfer. Widening access, flexibility of learning provision (providing a choice of place and time of study for busy professionals), the extension of continuing professional development (in markets of high demand) and enhanced knowledge transfer activities (reaffirming its strong links with business) are all identified sites through which the university will match its objectives to the wider political context. A ‘Widening Access Strategy’ clarifies the university’s aims and objections as well as specific measures to be taken in line with the Strategic Plan. Collaboration and partnership are also key objectives in seeking to make a contribution to the economic and social fabric of Scotland.

4.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The university ‘prides itself on close links with industry, professional bodies and the communities we serve’. In line with a majority of Scottish universities ‘community engagement’ has tended to be viewed within a social inclusion agenda that has focused on widening access and participation and thus engagement with schools, colleges and voluntary sector groups. A dedicated Lifelong Learning department works for and with communities to help both inform the university curriculum and tailor learning to local needs. It is also viewed as important that its work is aligned with wider political aims governing lifelong learning as well as corporate social responsibility, skills development and volunteering to help validate the work of those engaging with communities. Through financial support from the Scottish Funding Council, European Social Fund and private funders the university has been able to offer a range of community courses as tasters for those aiming to return to education. These courses are delivered off-campus and reach local communities through links developed with the VCS and other agencies. A number of successful projects have been initiated by lifelong learning staff, including the subject of this case-study.

² Throughout the case-study the university will be referred to as ‘S’ to retain anonymity

Research has long been a mechanism of engagement. In determining the priorities for its research activity it is claimed that ‘the parameters of social relevance, quality and sustainability will be paramount’. For example, the Faculty of Medical and Social Sciences links health modules to health projects operating across communities, which, in turn, contribute to national health policy. Its Faculties currently comprise over 40 research teams that collaborate across and with their respective audiences, in particular business and industry. At the time of writing two of these teams have a specific community focus: ‘Communities social focus’ and the ‘Centre for community learning’. A ‘Special Activity Development Unit’ liaises with communities (as well as business and external organisations) as part of its external funding and knowledge transfer objectives.

More recently community consultation and partnership has become central to university management. In particular, during recent campus development management were made aware of the need to consider community views and hence the setting-up of a ‘Stakeholders Advisory Group’ that included local business, community and public sector representatives. And whilst the focus of the Strategic Plan continues to prioritise business, college and school engagement the wider application of community engagement has been a subject for senior management discussion and policy. A Vice-Principal has subsequently been tasked with leading on a Community Engagement Strategy whilst a project group of senior managers and Faculties staff has been selected to devise a phased approach to its strategic delivery. In July 2008 a paper was presented to senior management outlining the rationale, objectives and proposed outcomes of a Community Engagement Strategy. The purpose of the paper was:

‘to more clearly define community engagement, to outline a vision for Community Engagement at [S], to explain the reasoning for taking a geographical approach and to illustrate how this approach will complement other work across the university’

Its communities include:

‘social enterprise companies, voluntary and community organisations, public and private sector organisations, stakeholders, business and industry, government, other education providers and learning organisations, community learning and development partnerships and citizens “that are near a university campus”’

The university is taking a geographical approach to community engagement since it fits in with its widening access and participation objectives. It also links in with the university’s commercial knowledge transfer activities and campus expansion and redevelopment programme. A Community Engagement Strategy would likewise help to articulate the aims of its estates strategy as well as facilitate consultation over future public use of its campuses.

The university also aims to promote and embed a culture of community engagement through staff and student activities as part of curriculum development and through commercial engagement to ‘ensure that ‘S’ becomes a hub for social and educational integration and a catalyst for commercial growth in the region’. Overall, the aim will be to ‘become the market leader in Scotland for Community Engagement in line with its aim to be “the best modern university in Scotland”’. A timetable of activities, from July 2008 to July 2012, details the intended programme of work that will translate the vision and objectives outlined in the paper into institutional and cultural

practice. Such actions will include the expansion of partnerships, the development of a communications strategy around community engagement, a centrally-driven community engagement philosophy and the setting-up of an extensive community engagement infrastructure.

Progress will be measured through the Scottish Executive's community engagement 'National Standards'. Key indicators for measuring community engagement will include:

- the number of partnerships that address community need and aspirations aligned to the university's vision
- the number of projects meeting community needs
- data on widening access
- the number of programmes that demonstrate community engagement
- the number of staff involved in community engagement

The paper notes that there are limitations to its outlined aspirations, most specifically that 'there is no core funding and limited activity throughout the university for staff to pursue activities'. Other constraints include a 'lack of awareness by academic colleagues of what is possible in terms of innovative and enterprising opportunities for engaging their learners in community learning environments'. It is acknowledged that the university has been missing opportunities to align with communities through linking students and curricula activity. In order to convince senior management and the wider academic community of the benefits of community engagement the link needs to be made between community engagement and national legislation on such as skills development, lifelong learning, volunteering, 'flourishing mental health', equalities, social justice and corporate social responsibility.

There is no mention of the reallocation of discretionary funds towards the further embedding of community engagement. The emphasis appears to be on raising awareness of its practice in research projects and the appropriation of engagement activity within existing research and teaching agendas. However, senior management leadership may help convince increasing numbers of management and academic staff of its mutual benefits. And, as with all Scottish universities it is early days and therefore staff are still grappling with both defining and implementing a wider culture and infrastructure of community engagement beyond the confines of SFC-funded programmes.

5 THE PROJECT

5.1 BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT

‘Everyone has loads of talent; I just unlock the door and let them in’

The focus of study is a community arts project initiated in 2001 and headed by a university lecturer qualified in a range of art subjects as well as interior/furniture design. He also has a long history of community-oriented work that includes tutoring at community arts classes. In particular, he has sought to make art accessible to those who are convinced that they can’t draw, paint, sketch, or be in any way creative. His community work has brought him into contact with a number of disadvantaged communities surrounding the university as well as networking opportunities with a range of community organisations.

In 2000 one such community organisation contacted the university to suggest the development of a formal programme of university-community education that would align with widening access objectives. The aim was to extend access to higher education (HE) for individuals from disadvantaged communities in close proximity to the university. The organisation would utilise their community links to recruit students and the university would design, accredit and deliver a range of modules that could be added to a library of course material accessible at first year undergraduate level. Individuals would be able to choose modules of interest and work towards a ‘combined studies’ degree validated by the university. Critical to the success of the initiative would be the provision of HE in a community setting rather than on campus because it was a strongly-held belief within the organisation that people ‘would be intimidated ... and [therefore] wouldn’t set foot inside the university’.

The proposal aimed to replicate a model of university-community education witnessed at the ‘Bromley by Bow Centre’.³ First established in 1984 this Centre is now the third largest provider of adult education in Tower Hamlets. It also provides a range of integrated services around the themes of ‘health and well-being’, ‘employment’, ‘enterprise’ as well as ‘learning’. It currently has an annual turnover of £3 million and has been credited with helping to define the concept of ‘social enterprise’ long before the term became popular. The organisation was hoping to emulate the Bromley model of flexible learning in local communities with the university’s help. Indeed the organisation wanted the project to be the precursor of a community-oriented centre of activities and services based on the Bromley by Bow model. Yet it was never going to happen, primarily because of the required resources but also because of the fragmentation of agencies and programmes operating in the relevant communities. It was noted that the locality in question is a ‘seriously political place’ with a lot of money supporting a web of agencies and organisations involved in its regeneration.

As a consequence of his work and contacts in the relevant communities the then Vice Principal asked Peter⁴ to explore the possibility of working on the initiative suggested. He readily agreed and over a period of 6 months developed a number of arts-based

³ See: <http://www.bbbc.org.uk/> (Accessed 14 July 2009)

⁴ All names have been changed to retain anonymity

modules suitable to both community and university objectives. Responding to the community demand to be based off campus Peter utilised local contacts to seek-out premises and was offered 2 rooms to rent in a local Business Centre. Location-wise the rooms were ideal but they required a lot of work to make them suitable for the intended classes. Whilst Widening Access monies from the then Scottish Higher Education Funding Council covered the rent it wouldn't pay for refurbishment. And so Peter sought help to re-paint, re-wire and stock the rooms to make them fit for purpose. Focus was then placed on advertising the classes. Peter designed flyers and posters that emphasised support for those who had no experience of art. In order to broaden access he also promoted both informal drop-in sessions (flexible to suit people's commitments, health and skills) as well as formal teaching. Distributed in local doctor's surgeries, libraries, book shops and supermarkets the publicity helped to raise awareness of both the classes and the university across a range of communities and local organisations.

The classes opened in 2001 with 20 local residents as students. Over time the numbers increased and classes were running 5 days per week. Modules covered ceramics, water colour painting, interior design, public art and drawing and media studies and attracted a variety of different age groups and backgrounds. On Fridays the classes were opened to school children as an after-school initiative. In keeping with the widening access remit Peter hoped that the introduction to further education would raise the aspirations of the young people taking part. In return Peter procured old ceramic and pottery equipment from the school for use in the relevant classes. Around 12 young people were attending the Friday class, with their parents and grandparents, initially in a supervisory capacity. Over time the class developed as a social event for both adults and young people. Based in a local Centre meant that participants were also in regular contact with other community groups. As noted by one member: 'It was a really happy place ... [and] we used to take part in community lunches'. As the project became well known and 'well regarded' in the community the numbers grew to around 90 with many more on a waiting list of people wanting to enrol.

However, whilst successful in terms of widening access not everyone in the university was supportive of the project. Although the previous Vice Principal had been keen to use the community organisation to help engage with local communities others were not convinced of its status as an instrument of university-level education. There was thus a reluctance to validate the modules, which effectively undermined the project's aims of FE and HE progression. Funding was also a key issue, including the covering of Peter's salary. The salary issue was subsequently resolved when Peter formally moved from the faculty to which he had initially been appointed to Lifelong Learning, although funding of the project would remain a persistent problem.

To partly offset managerial scepticism, but also to help raise awareness of the project with the then new Principal (2003), Peter had the idea to publicly exhibit the work of the project and invite the Principal to open it. The event, held at the local Business Centre, was very well attended by both university management and local citizens and representatives. A letter sent to the Principal from a participant expressing her gratitude to the classes for helping her recover from depression and other illnesses was read out in celebration of the social benefits of the project. The exhibition was successful not only in raising the project's profile amongst both official and public audiences but also in revealing the learning achievements of the projects' participants.

Somewhat paradoxically the senior management turn-around coincided with the funding for the studio rent ending later that year.

Within the project itself tensions were developing between the local organisation and Peter as the university's voice. The organisation wanted ownership of the project; 'adamant that it should be a community driven thing'. But given that the university was providing Peter's salary he insisted that it had a say in the project's development and delivery and receive credit for its outreach initiative in the community. Other problems included the determination of those heading the organisation to run it as an arm of their wider community/political objectives, thus using the classes to discuss organisational business. It was not only disruptive but the majority of students attending the classes wanted nothing to do with the wider concerns of this particular organisation. Peter was thus forced to clarify the boundaries of the project, which soured relations. From the organisation's perspective Peter was being disloyal to the project. But for Peter it was important 'to keep the university on side'. The two couldn't be reconciled and therefore the organisation withdrew from the project in 2003. 'Loyalties are very fierce in the community' and so on parting company people in the project 'had to come down on one side or the other'. A few people did leave the project but the vast majority continued to attend classes and support the project.

At the same time accreditation was finally awarded to the project's modules by the Lifelong Learning department. Until that time Peter was under the impression that the obstacle to accreditation was the necessity for all modules to be 'owned' by a department. He was later informed that Lifelong Learning could own the modules and the required validation took place. Perhaps it helped that by this time Peter had officially transferred to Lifelong Learning from his Faculty. Modules were now extended to include water colour painting, drawing, media studies, public art, interior design and portraiture. Peter was also framing student's work as well as offering this service to external organisations as a way of raising income for the project.

However, funding for the studios was coming to an end. To allow some breathing space the university agreed to cover the studio costs for a further 3 months, then at almost £1,000 per month, forcing Peter to reconsider the future viability of the project. Discussions with all participants revealed that the majority wanted the classes to continue, prompting the search for alternative and affordable premises. Support came from both participants and interested staff in lifelong learning. One participant's daughter is the Head of a local school and she suggested that the group apply to the local authority for permission to use an available room in the school annexe, as well as request that only a 'peppercorn rent' be charged. An application was successfully submitted and the room was made available immediately. However, not everyone wanted to move to the new site. There was also some resentment expressed amongst those who had been the original class members at what was viewed as a loss of ownership of the project to identified 'newcomers'. A vote of then around 60 members resulted in the majority moving to the new site. Eventually most misgivings were addressed and resolved. All monies then held by the project were split between the new and remaining groups.

At the same time a colleague in Lifelong Learning looked to secure premises on campus. He was reminded that the former library at one of the campuses had been vacated and was lying empty. It was the 'size of a football pitch' and ideal as a creative space, although needing refurbishment. Permission to use the room was first followed by the re-painting and sectioning of the room by Peter and a group of

volunteers with '8'x4' laminated display boards retrieved from a skip' and then the design of publicity to help recruit for the campus classes. He advertised in the local community paper and organised a number of Saturday morning classes in a local Community Centre to help publicise the project. Over a 2-3 month period around a dozen new people joined the project on campus. Despite some participants feeling intimidated by the idea of being on university premises the size and facilities soon won everyone over.

'I think I was quite nervous when I heard it was the university, but when you walked in it was just great'

The partitioning of the room effectively provided each student with their own studio space. But the open-plan layout also encouraged students to collaborate and exchange knowledge where possible. The group also had sole access to the room 5 days per week, which allowed participants to leave their equipment and any unfinished work in place until the next time. It also had secure space for Peter to house and utilise his framing equipment. The project, and Peter's time, was now divided amongst those opting to attend on campus and those moving to the new community site. Unfortunately the change of venues meant that the classes for school children held on Fridays had to come to an end.

5.2 CONSOLIDATION AND EXTENSION OF THE PROJECT

Over the next few years (2004-2007) the groups flourished both educationally and socially. For example, members based in the local School studied a range of accredited modules, participated in a number of public exhibitions, organised painting holidays and trips and submitted a successful lottery bid to raise additional monies (see below). On campus the group also studied for a range of accredited modules, which for some included contributing to an outdoor mural (Public Art module) located in local 'Teaching Gardens'; '3 acres of beautiful garden grounds' part-owned by an FE College and the National Trust. Members from both groups took part and produced a mural, under the theme of 'Scotland Meets Italy', that is on permanent display at the Italian Garden. Peter also ran a water colour class in the gardens in the evenings. Both initiatives generated further interest in the day groups. The campus group also organised a public exhibition of their work in 2005 to a mixed audience of individuals, businesses, university staff and local politicians. Over £4,000 of their artwork was sold. The artists were paid for their work, whilst 25% of the money raised was donated to the 'Amos Trust'⁵ in South Africa.

Unfortunately for the campus group the site was under consideration for a new university campus development from 2008 and so they were asked to vacate the premises by November of the same year. Hence the project was once again faced with the closure of a successful class. On relating the news to the group a number of individuals came forward to first elicit a commitment from participants to the maintenance of the group and then to support Peter in finding alternative premises. It was a very stressful time as the university had only given a few months notice and the group had no independent money for rent. They also needed premises that were local and had the space to host a class of around 25 and their equipment. Once again staff in lifelong learning offered support and one colleague in particular, through his

⁵ A world-wide organisation that promotes human rights and local responses to situations of injustice. See: <http://www.amostrust.org/> (Accessed 22 July 2009)

community contacts, suggested a local arts and leisure centre. Although limited in terms of space and availability it was the cheapest option (see below). The university covered the rent for the first 3 months, which allowed the group some time to organise resources, and, in order to formalise the group's independence, to develop a financial and management structure (see Group 2 below). Once again the room provided required refurbishment. Peter retrieved necessary equipment from the campus site as well as tables, chairs and some soft seating to donate to the local arts centre. The class officially re-opened in January 2008.

The project was further extended to a third site in early 2008 and a fourth site in November 2008. As with Groups 1 and 2 both new groups are located in areas of economic and social disadvantage. The classes are held in a church and community centre respectively. The extension of the project was a deliberate strategy to widen its geographical spread. Rather uniquely for the project the question of premises was not a problem in the third site as Peter was offered a room, free of charge, in his local church. However it was a different story in the south side of the city. Once again a colleague in lifelong learning utilised local contacts to secure a room at another community centre and generated monies for rent. As with previous premises the room offered needed renovation and with the same colleague's help funds were found to provide materials for Peter to sand the floors and paint the walls. He also got permission from the Centre manager to re-paint the external corridor, then 'bright yellow with red door facings', and turn it into an art gallery space; with additional funding provided by the Board of the Centre. A carpet was donated by a local Housing Association, once again through local contacts made by lifelong learning staff. Spotlights were bought through a few savings in the project budget and with monies raised by the raffling of a number of Peter's paintings. To furnish the room Peter rescued chairs, tables, cupboards and a fridge from skips as well as from his former campus furniture supply.⁶

Attracting people to the classes in the third site was relatively easy because of Peter's affiliation to the church. A substantial number of its participants are members of the same church, whilst word of mouth attracted additional members (see Group 3 below). To recruit for the fourth group advertisements for the classes were placed in the local community newspaper, which attracted around 12 people. Peter also asked people from the initial group to attend the classes to help get it off the ground. Word of mouth has since increased group numbers to around 25. As the most recent class, and because of time restraints, Peter had intended to offer a series of 6 week courses at the fourth site, with a new intake of people every 6 weeks. However, people were impressed with their progress and wanted to remain with the class and so Peter has tried to incorporate different levels of tuition for a larger and more varied membership. He is currently in discussions with the university about future modules for accreditation for this class.

The project's success can be measured by its longevity and expansion, now with an average attendance of around 80 local residents every week. It can also be measured by the growing confidence and outputs of its participants, evidenced in a number of public exhibitions and sale of their work. For example, at the afore-mentioned exhibition on campus more than 50 paintings were sold for a total value of £4,000.

⁶ The room is also used for a number of other lifelong learning courses in interior design and 'Write On' classes

More recently the permanent Art Gallery at the fourth site had its opening exhibition on March 25 2009, attended by university management and staff as well as members of the public and group artists. Also, as a permanent Gallery the outputs from all the groups will be on public display all year round, whilst specific exhibitions will be organised to both help advertise the project and provide sales opportunities for its participants.

The majority of participants across the groups are retired women, comfortable and familiar with formal education, although not necessarily higher education. Indeed the following remarks are representative of a view held by some that perceive universities as intimidating:

‘I love it here but I would draw the line at going to a formal course ... it would be competitive and I wouldn’t feel good enough. It would take away the enjoyment because I really like to do it and try things. Whereas, if I felt I was having to do things to get into a course it would completely change the nature of it’

‘I actually want to know the techniques in an academic way but not in an academic setting. ... [If advertised as a university course] I would have thought ... I can’t do that. I know it’s ridiculous but it’s true’

A number of men attend three of the four groups but they are very much in the minority. Most participants are white. One Palestinian woman has been attending one of the groups since the very beginning until the birth of her child. Over the years other individuals from other minority ethnic backgrounds have attended the classes. Although based in designated social exclusion areas group members are largely unrepresentative of the disadvantaged communities hosting the project. Those attending below retirement age tend to be registered unemployed due to ill health. The one exception is a man in his 40’s who is self-employed and attends the class because of an interest in art as a semi-professional photographer.

Peter is proud not only of the longevity of the project but of the independence of the original 2 groups. Both are examples of good practice of how local people ‘can take ownership of something and literally run it themselves’. Whilst Peter continues to be supportive of both groups specific individuals have been crucial to their survival providing both continuity and leadership. These individuals have utilised a range of skills to first manage the transition to independence and then motivate others to take-on identified administrative responsibilities.

The project continues to be a formal part of the university’s widening access and lifelong learning programmes. It is also a celebrated project since winning an industry newspaper award for Widening Participation. Judges praised the project’s ‘innovation’ in helping ‘people build their self-esteem and discover their creativity through painting and drawing’.

‘This is a highly original programme that has established a strong network of external partners. Its impact is clear and likely to increase further in the future’

5.3 PROJECT LIMITATIONS

Course content now covers general drawing and painting, mural design, public art, portraiture and figure drawing, interior design, and water colour painting, with six of its modules being accredited. However, these modules are external to any under-

graduate course at present. Peter would like them to be part of the 'elective' system in which every undergraduate has to select 1 or 2 'elective modules' outside of the discipline of their degree. However, it has been suggested that the off campus locations of Peter's classes would be a major barrier to student take-up; somewhat contradictory to the university's community engagement objectives. The modules initially carried 15 credits but Peter has rewritten the module descriptors as 20 credit modules in line with other university courses. Currently the modules are awaiting validation. It has been suggested that people attending community-based programmes should take the modules as 10 blocks. Peter does not accept this as many community students have already completed 15 credit modules successfully. For Peter the 'only downside with modules is that unless someone is on an ILA⁷ or benefit they have to pay £145 per module'. Hence the current emphasis on applying for ILAs (see below). Peter is also keen to introduce other artists and creative styles into the groups. However funding is once again a limitation to such work.

Peter would like to encourage younger people to attend the classes. He is concerned that many young people aren't aware of the opportunities offered by the creative industries. He has visited a number of schools in various areas and is surprised at the number of 'kids out there who don't know what they want to do, even if they have some school education behind them'. He would like to link-up with schools to raise awareness and interest amongst young people regarding the creative industries. Having suggested this to a number of local schools:

'they have been really slow to take it up, if they have bothered at all. ... It was almost as if there was some kind of resentment that we were offering. ... Yet everyone is getting extra maths or English yet some arts departments couldn't handle that you could do it with art. ... We just have to keep plugging away at the community and offer it through all channels'

He is hoping that the gallery at the fourth site will help encourage more local people to take an interest in art, including young people. He is aware, however, that the times of the classes may be a disincentive as they are held during school and/or work hours. Only one of the current premises can be accessed in the evening, with day time access effectively restricting attendance for those who work or have care responsibilities. Peter is also concerned that the classes could be more representative of the communities in which they are based. The restrictions on premises, and the success of classes in terms of the retention of existing participants, are barriers to opening-up the classes to new recruits. There is evidence of increased interest and Peter is willing to organise more classes but to do so would also require more staff. However, the funding of additional staff, especially in the current economic climate, is a problem and thus inhibits this type of expansion.

Whilst the outreach work is officially recognised and appreciated the university's links with the every-day running and management of the projects is minimal; its main source of support being Peter's salary, which allows him to be a full-time tutor across the current 4 project sites. In keeping with the objectives of community-based access and education all groups are physically detached from the university and based in community sites. As the Group summaries will show being off campus has encouraged interested people with ability to attend courses they would not have

⁷ Independent Learning Accounts

otherwise thought relevant or possible. The more 'hands-off' approach has also encouraged participants within the original two groups to become independent, and arguably empowered. Yet, rather paradoxically, being based off campus has reinforced a sense of isolation from the university amongst the various groups. Indeed, very few of the participants felt part of the university, with any shared identity being very clearly aligned with the project and Peter.

'I think we all feel now we are more or less independent to the university except for Peter ... Peter is from the university, that's the link'

Mixed feelings about the university are evident amongst all 4 groups. Some were overtly aware and appreciative of the link with the university and its support, both past and present.

'We were always part of [the university] definitely ... and there were times when [it] was really brilliant and there were times up [on campus] that they let us use the canteen facilities and we were a big part of [the university] and it was a bit sad when [they] shut [the room] down to refurbish it. I would have appreciated it if they had found a way to carry on as part of the university'

'We had to be independent as we weren't going to get any help apart from Peter. Peter was a great help; that was one thing the university have given us and they haven't gone back on that which is great'

'I am absolutely aware it is connected with [the university]. I think it's a terrific thing that [it] can come outside into the various places that Peter goes to. I think it's wonderful because half of these people would not go ... to a university'

Some were especially grateful for support provided by colleagues in the lifelong learning department.

'Even though we are now independent you still know you are part of the university, if push came to shove I could phone Michael [lifelong learning] and say could you do this etc.; they never ever say no. You know you always have the back-up from them even if it's not in a monetary value, they maybe give you advice'

Yet others lamented the increased blurring of the link between the project and the university:

'Sometimes I feel as if I am out on a limb a bit, quite a lot in fact. It's quite difficult to feel that you are part of the university when you are in fact not physically going into it'

'I think it could be more visible. I think the people have just realised that the group is part of [the university] ...'

A substantial number were disappointed by a perceived lack of support. Indeed, it was noted that the only time the university has a visible presence is when senior staff attend public exhibitions and when the project was rewarded at the Industry Award ceremony in 2007, where they won a prize for widening in higher education.

'I think the university could do much more. I have never thought of [it] as being a particularly elitist university; I would expect [others] to be quite a

fuddy-duddy place, too academic inclined. I think [the university] could make much more of this than they have done but ... they are driven by finance ... by the expectations of their funding committees ... by their academic and research ... [that] is the priority'

'I would like to know exactly what [the university] is going to give us in the future. I was going to write to the Principal but I didn't want to get Peter into trouble. ... We have the university 'name on ... the classes and they must be getting kudos for what we are doing. We bought this into the neighbourhood ... we are doing community work ...'

'We have come to realise that we are not going back to [the campus], we are now our own group ... so no I think that we are getting out of the idea that we are [part of the university] ... I mean we won a prize ... and things like that so we are still part of [P] and I think we always will be but just not at [the university] anymore'

Since effectively leaving Peter 'to get on with it' the project can be perceived as more of a personal commitment rather than an institutional initiative or continued priority. And although he is in regular contact with colleagues in lifelong learning there is a growing sense amongst the groups of a dislocation of their institutional links. Indeed there is a marked distrust of the university evident amongst some of the groups (see below). Hence when staff within Lifelong Learning recently asked Peter to encourage the groups to apply for Independent Learning Accounts (ILAs)⁸, as a source of funding, the most common response has been a concern that ILAs are all about generating income for the university rather than the project. Participants are likewise concerned that the monies may be directed to other module disciplines that will charge fees and take Peter away from the project. Also that the focus on ILAs is part of a drive to charge for all community-based work. If this is the case then there is a danger that potential community participants will be excluded, the very antithesis of the project ethos and core to why it won the award. Indeed, its current 'no fee' agreement is why the project was offered a room at the fourth community site.⁹ Hence some participants relayed a lack of trust in the university's bureaucracy that was 'more concerned with keeping people in jobs than viewing learning opportunities as a community resource'.

Despite these concerns Peter is more optimistic about university support from recently appointed senior management, as well as his immediate line manager,¹⁰ because of a vision for community work 'which hasn't been evidenced in the past'.

⁸ With £200.00 per person offered to those earning less than £22,000 who would like to access FE or HE (2009)

⁹ It has since come to light that the so-called 'leisure industries' don't attract ILA funding and so these concerns are now not relevant to the project

¹⁰ This member of staff has since left the university

6 THE GROUPS

6.1 GROUP 1 (TUESDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS)

Some of the members of this group were the original participants in the project, whilst others have discovered the classes through word of mouth, local adverts or attendance at past exhibitions. An interest in art both motivates and binds the group. The majority have waited until retirement to pursue their interest having previously perceived art as something that other people did. Thus many now attending this group had never picked up a pencil or paintbrush and had been intimidated by the notion of 'art'.

'I had never had an art lesson in my life, I just fancied it in my old age, and it's very therapeutic. I have no talent, but I can paint. I get encouragement and it's thanks to Peter and Jack and everyone else'.

'... we never got art at school; we got the three R's in my generation and you go out to work when you're 14. I never had the opportunity and for some odd reason I just took it upon myself, went in and said can I join this class; I hadn't a clue ... [but] I am the defiant kind and that's how I get myself into so much trouble. Peter helped me ...'

The average age of the group is around 70, with the youngest in her 50's and the oldest in his 80's. The majority are familiar with lifelong learning courses and undaunted by notions of further education. Indeed many were enthusiastic about studying for accredited modules even if having no intention of combining modules to degree level.

'I did a design module at Peter's and I got 97% and he said if the young people who come in here work as hard as you work; you have done 2 years in 1 year. He displayed ... my work, it's on the wall just there'

However, if the classes had been advertised as a university course many would not have attended because of their perceptions of higher education.

'I would never have had the confidence to go to something that was attached to a university'

'I think a lot of times it's the jargon and how you're treated ... Sometimes you get stuff and it looks so complicated ... it's all aimed at the academic ... I think that if I'd got there earlier I would have been at university, if I'd had a different background'

This group has been self-financing and self-managing since 2003. It has its own constitution and bank account and is co-ordinated and managed by a committee elected at its AGM. Regular monies are generated through a £25.00 annual membership fee (£30.00 from 2009), which can be paid in instalments if required. An additional 50p is collected every week for 'tea money' and to help support any planned painting and other holidays. A successful lottery bid awarded the group £4,000, which helped to buy framing equipment and additional tutorage for modules on portraiture and figure drawing. The group has a bank account, managed by a treasurer. After their successful lottery bid they have considered applying again but at the moment the monies collected as 'tea money' and annual fees 'keeps us ticking over'. Group members are keen to bring in other artists and have been willing to pay

for any extra tuition. Any additional monies required for such as brushes, paper, paint, exhibition fees or painting trips are generated amongst the group. It helps that the group is not charged a fee for the room because of the familial link between two of the participants and the Head of the School. However, the familial link also places a huge responsibility on these individuals in terms of being able to vouch for all members. As taking place within the grounds of a primary school all members have to fill in a 'Disclosure Scotland' form. Hence no-one can just 'pop-in' to the classes unless endorsed by someone in the group.

Two people are key to the running and survival of the group: Liz and Jack. It was Liz and Jack who took responsibility for securing alternative premises when having to leave the campus site and they have continued to provide leadership as well as practical administration of the group. Liz is chair and treasurer and Jack is secretary, with other participants elected to a wider Committee of around 8 and tasked with a variety of responsibilities that cover lottery collection, library, exhibition organisation and stock control. Committee meetings are held every 3 to 6 months. A book is open for comments or complaints to be raised at the committee meetings. Peter is President and asked to attend to input any information from the university, the other groups or any other art-related news but he does not hold any ultimate authority within the Committee. As noted an AGM is held to re-elect committee members as well as discuss and plan past and future events and issues. All those interviewed recognised the benefits of a formal structure as both useful and empowering.

'I like being on the committee because we discuss everything and deciding if something isn't right if we can do it this way or that way. We get everyone's opinion on it and then it goes for the vote'

'It's the first time in my life that I really got involved in anything ... I offered to go on the committee'. ... I just thought somebody's got to do it and I thought I could do it'

'I like to do things when I want to do them. I think that is the thing that surprised me the most about being the secretary; that I have done something. ... I have never done anything like that before and I quite like the fact that if we didn't do it, it wouldn't happen'

'Over the first year it was all very new but now if you want or need anything everyone contributes, everyone discusses if we need anything ... I think it is more of an organisation now where everybody is equal and its just gone that way; everyone had their say and its evolved to what it is today'

Despite the formality of its administration the running of the group is very informal and this is why it works. Also its members have no wider agenda or purpose other than to learn about art and to paint. People have different opinions 'but they are there to paint not to discuss local politics'. And whilst painting is indeed the key motivation of the group it is also a space through which a range of other expertise and knowledge is shared amongst group members. For example, Peter taught one of the members to frame, who, in turn, framed the work of a number of groups in preparation for exhibitions. Framing equipment was purchased with monies from the Lottery Fund and is now owned by the group. This same member also used skills learnt at a computer course to design and maintain the group's web-site. Another member did a course at a local art college and passed on the new techniques she'd

learnt to the group. One member's links with the British Legion made her aware of the possibility of lottery monies. These same links helped to identify relevant staff within the local authority's art department who, in turn, helped with the group's lottery submission. This same group member has fund-raising expertise because of voluntary work and has passed on this expertise to other members of the group. As noted by a number of interviewees:

'Everyone is active and doing different things. ... I was skilled in ceramics, Dot was a dancer and a painter ... you do stain glass I play bowls and I'm a spinner. ... We have all come together with different skills ... the development is great'.

'I learnt computing ... I was a self-employed taxi driver and I did the accounts every year and so now I can do them on the computer ... I thought it might be a good idea to set up a website for the group ... [and now] keep the website going'

Group participants are now experienced in identifying and organising exhibitions at arts festivals and other sites. Group exhibits have taken place at local sites, whilst individuals have further shown their work in a variety of exhibitions across Scotland. As friendships have grown a number of participants have organised painting holidays, including a very successful trip to Spain. More recently Committee members agreed to approach a local hospital to offer paintings to its breast clinic after a group member using the clinic was dismayed at the bare walls.

The group is also a site of social networking and support; a side of the group that everyone highlighted as one of its most positive contributions over and above the learning process. And it is very clearly a group that is bonded to each other. In particular, for those who had experienced ill-health the group has provided a support network that has been crucial to their well-being. One man, who had previously been very physically active, had been diagnosed with ME approximately 12 years ago. The art class was both a place of learning and therapy that had helped him to become motivated again whilst trying to manage a very debilitating illness. Another member attends with his carer and likewise is supported by the group. Yet another member with ME had gained both confidence and a sense of self worth through group support.

'This group for me is totally relaxed, it's therapeutic, I can do what I like in here. I am surrounded by support if I need it'

'Its not just the art that keeps you together it's the social thing. You can come in here and talk about anything, there is always somebody there to listen'. ... It's something else; it's a whole group of people you get on with. For a start how many groups do you get where everybody gets on? I thoroughly love this group'

'We look after each other; we phone each other and visit each other in hospital, we do all that'

Furthermore all participants commented on how participation in the group had boosted their confidence.

'I really lack confidence in everything I do and I think this group gives you confidence. Everyone helps each other in this group, if you are stuck they all come up with suggestions, they boost your confidence. It's unthinkable for it to stop'

‘I think it makes me more sociable. ... I go to dancing as well and I feel I am more sociable than I would normally be. They inspire confidence in you and that’s what you take outside into your other life’

‘First I didn’t have any confidence at all and Peter said keep trying ... when I went the next week I had it framed and that gives you confidence as well. I never thought about it; I just lose myself in it. Peter helps and sits and listens to you. ... I have sold some; I was jumping up and down like a kid’

Many participants also feel that they transfer a range of skills now learnt into other social and learning contexts. Some have used their growing confidence to pass on techniques to other classes they attend, whilst one group member was asked by the university’s lifelong learning department to be a tutor on a number of community-based art classes. Yet others have looked to offer art as an ‘enabling’ tool in a voluntary sector context. Confidence and enthusiasm has also transferred to family and friends, encouraging a broader circle of interest in art. One member spoke of her grandchildren’s interest in drawing once seeing her work exhibited and, as a consequence, of their friends coming to her house to ‘have a go’.

‘The very first watercolour I ever did is now hanging above one of my friend’s fireplaces; she bought it from me you know and I was gobsmacked ... ’

All of the group share a very strong sense of identity with the project.

‘I am always plugging it. I’ve never belonged to a group like this’

‘It’s funny when the group is the project and the project is the group. They are just one; we joined the project and became a group’

They are in contact with a number of the other groups through attendance at additional art classes, exhibitions, and, for some, because of previous links to the campus classes.

‘We have all become friends now and we like to pop in and see people’

‘I feel I could go to any of these groups and take part and say I’m here for the day and pay my fee; you don’t feel unwelcome’

However, despite their long-term link to the university any identity has weakened over the years. Indeed, many were critical of what they perceived as a lack of support for a now celebrated university project.

‘Unless you get involved in the university in various things you don’t see them much except for Peter’

‘Peter’s been great but he has struggled financially and I think that’s sad that he’s grabbing at straws rather than getting support to run the project, which can eventually support itself’.

‘One of the problems is that a university is there to train people with a goal in mind to give them a job and give them financial stability. Whereas the type of learning they are doing for us is not for that purpose’

‘I don’t think it’s the ideas of the people at the university who keep it going; it’s people like Peter, they are at the sharp end and they are generally interested in keeping it going. He works his socks off to get

things from the university, they don't offer they only give when he asks and pleads They don't think we better help them because it's a good idea, they take the kudos when Peter wins an award ... then they put it on the back burner and let Peter get on with it'

The successful bonding between and management of the group means that the future viability of this group is not in doubt. It is the only group that has exclusive access to premises 5 days per week, although participants tend to attend on Tuesday and/or Wednesday in line with Peter's scheduled times. The flexibility of access is viewed as vital to both allowing time for instruction and practice as well as social networking and group interaction. The longevity of the group and experience of those taking part means that Peter now acts as more of a mentor than a tutor. With the exception of one member it was generally thought that despite the important input from Peter the group was sufficiently independent to survive if he was no longer able to be involved. Over the two days the group has a membership of around 40. There is a waiting list of others who want to join the group.

6.2 GROUP 2 (FRIDAY)

This group have re-located from the university's campus to a local arts centre in December 2007. As noted above, when informed of the need to vacate the campus the group was forced to reconsider its future viability. Discussions held amongst the group revealed a commitment to keep the class going, 'we all wanted to stay together because we got on so well ...', but there were no resources to fund alternative premises or any future materials and running costs. As with Group 1 a few individuals [Janis and Cynthia] volunteered to negotiate the transition, which, initially, they thought was provisional until the university re-opened its new campus in 2010. When informed that moving back on campus was not an option meetings were held with Peter and a representative from lifelong learning about the practicalities of forming an independent group.

'We had one or two meetings about what we were going to do and we, to be honest, were like headless chickens. We asked everybody would they be willing to come with us, but it would cost money. There was one or two that dropped out; you were talking about a whole day and you might have been up to maybe about ten pounds a day which a lot of people wouldn't pay ...'

Janis and Cynthia agreed to take responsibility for finding alternative premises. Cost and location were major issues but with the help of a colleague from lifelong learning a room was found at a local arts centre. After a little negotiation the centre agreed to rent the room one day a week for £50.00 per day. The university provided rental support for a few months 'because I think they were happy to see us go'. Necessary equipment, such as desks and easels, was retrieved from the campus premises.

'If we had more room we would have brought more stuff; there was an awful lot of stuff that got chucked out ... which was a crying shame'

Other equipment, such as cupboards to store paint, had to be paid for by the group. It was recognised that to operate independently, and certainly if people were going to be asked to hand over money, then the group would have to be formally constituted and managed. They also needed a written constitution for access to the centre and any

future funding applications. Hence after allowing a few weeks 'to settle in' Janis organised the group's first AGM in February 2008. The main objective was to agree a constitution that would help define and formalise the group and cover essential financial arrangements.

'We had to have some rules; you have to have something written down, it's to do with a charity status ... because we wanted to raise some money for ourselves in order to buy equipment and things like that ... so anyway we got together and sorted it out and sorted out who was doing what ... and we just started from there'

The constitution, agreed on 15 February 2008, thus outlines the aims, membership and formal management and structure of the group. It also notes the group's formal title. Ultimately the group aims:

'To promote and support the participation of quality art experiences for the community To facilitate life long learning and training in all mediums of art. To develop the memberships skills in arts and encourage members to produce work which can eventually be shown at venues throughout [the community] and beyond'

The Constitution outlines regulations on membership, the AGM, the Committee, use of the studio, finance and dissolution. It clarifies agreement on the fees, set at each AGM, thus reaffirming the payment of fees regardless of attendance but also specifying that any member who fails to attend for 3 consecutive weeks will be sent a letter by the Committee advising that their membership will be revoked unless attending the following week. It was further agreed at the 2009 AGM that members on holiday had to pay the full weekly fee for the duration of their holiday. Only in the case of a hospital stay or long illness would a 'retaining fee of £1.00 per week' be allowed to secure continued membership. All members are asked to sign a membership agreement form assenting to the terms of the Constitution. Dissolution can be advised by the Committee after giving the membership 28 days notice of a General Meeting. If confirmed by at least two-thirds of those present any monies left in the account will be donated to charities or to a 'trust formed for similar purposes'. The group shall then be declared dissolved.

A Committee of 5 elected members is responsible for the general management of the group and for the 'formulation of policy'. Elected at the AGM, to be held in March of each year, the Committee consists of a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and 2 others. The full committee meets every 3 months, with the chair and secretary meeting once or twice a month to discuss up-to-date administration and any matters arising in between committee meetings. All committee meetings are minuted and circulated to the wider group. Anyone can ask for an item to be added to the meeting's agenda.

A 'hanging committee' has just recently been formed that is responsible for organising the practical delivery and 'hanging' of group work at selected exhibitions. All members look out for exhibitions and inform the group who then decide if they want to get involved. Since it is the hanging committee's first year it is currently the Secretary who will continue to organise the administration involved in registration and sales as well as authorise the choice of exhibitions. If the committee is successful it is thought that greater authority will be transferred to those responsible. This year (2009) they are planning to exhibit at a number of local sites and in a number of hospitals through 'Art Link'.

Some of the original campus participants didn't make the transition to the centre but local press coverage and word of mouth has attracted new members. Membership is limited to 20 because of the size of the room and there is now a waiting list to join the group. There is more of a diversity of age ranges in this group, although the majority are again retired women and white, and once again the majority are unrepresentative of the disadvantaged communities in which they are based.

'Maybe more should be made of that. I mean ... I suppose from that point of view it's quite elitist because you are not opening doors to everybody from the community to come and participate ...'

Covering the cost of the room is a constant problem and hence the specific mention of fees in the Constitution. Fees have to be charged and paid in advance to cover the costs of the room and essential equipment. And because the £50.00 has to be paid whether one attends or not there can be no fee holidays. At the time of writing the charge is £3.00 per week plus 50p for tea/coffee. The other major cost is materials, but Janis has developed a system through which she buys what the groups needs on-line as well as looking out for special offers. Cost also limits the group to only 1 day per week. At the moment the group have a surplus of £1,000, some of which will be used to hire a bus to take the group to attend an art festival in Fife later this year (2009).

'We were laughing just before you came in, saying I made a profit and I was going to give them free painting materials ... canvas or water colour paper or something but then ... came up with the idea that we would go to Pittenweem ... Art Festival. ... It's a little seaside resort and what they do is they have exhibitions in houses, so houses and shops have all got exhibitions. It's really good'

The restrictive hours and multi-purpose use of the room on other days are also constant problems for the group. Access is only allowed between 10a.m. and 4p.m. on Friday's and all work has to be cleared away and taken home. Unlike the campus studio this means that participants can't leave equipment or unfinished work until the next week, which is a problem for those without cars. It is also disruptive for those who can't attend until later in the day or for those whose work hasn't dried by the end of the session. Both the size of the room and limited access were also highlighted as barriers to group interaction and progress. People don't stay as long because of its confinement. Likewise, people may feel they can't liaise as much because people want to utilise the brief time available as efficiently as possible. Weekly access is also more likely to disturb one's thinking and creative flow.

'It's hard when there isn't much space. Also people don't stay as long. It's more confined. And when your painting gets to the stage where you think I don't know what to do next [previously] ... you could leave it and come back the next day whereas here it's a week'

'People only tend to stay 2 or 3 hours. When we were in the one at [the university] you could paint for an hour and talk for two hours and then get home. You could leave everything there and the door was locked. Then the next day you could come in and all you had to do was get some water or whatever; it made a big difference. The atmosphere was more free ... '

Yet despite the confinement and limited access it is evident that the group has successfully managed the transition from art class to independent project. From a

learning perspective all of those interviewed highlighted the degree of progress they had made in terms of art outputs. And once again Peter was identified as crucial to this progress:

‘I discovered that I can actually paint. It’s very satisfying to discover when you’ve never really done anything creative all your life’

‘My husband was amazed and so was my family. My daughter has commissioned all sorts of paintings for her flat. It’s very satisfying and quite unexpected. ... I sold my first painting last year ... at the Fine Art exhibition in [the] central library’

‘I personally am not trained at all in art. I mean I didn’t do it as school so I am one of those people who over the years has been looking for somebody who would teach me the basics. And Peter is excellent at that ... I think my painting has developed ... it has opened up a whole new world for me ...’

‘This has definitely broadened my horizons ... I have been on various art holidays and various courses and it also made me go along to a history of art course ...’

‘When I first started to look at Peter paint I thought I could never paint like that in my life ... but Peter was so easy going and he inspired us with whatever we were doing ... When I look back a few years ago I would have never dreamt in my life that I would be able to have paintings hanging up in my living room of what I have done or to give a painting as a present. To me it’s a kind of goal I’ve set myself; I’m not so worthless after all, I can do things when I want to’

‘Sometimes I think I have never accomplished anything or that I should of in my life. When someone says to you ‘that’s brilliant’ about your art it gives you a buzz which is tremendous’

However, since the move from the campus and withdrawal of funding the provision of modular work has stopped. For many this is not a problem but a few had welcomed the motivation involved. One member of the group had found the possibility of working towards a higher qualification, perhaps even a degree, a huge incentive to test herself. Unfortunately personal circumstances prevent her from enrolling on more formal types of courses because of the time commitments demanded. One other member had appreciated being on campus and the greater affiliation then recognised with the university.

‘It was nice to say I’m attending an art class at the university; [better] than saying you were going to a site at ... ¹¹, which doesn’t have a very good reputation’

One other member has been encouraged to apply to study a degree and will start in 2010.

‘I’ve just been accepted to do my degree foundation in art and design for next year, but you see that’s because I went to [this group]. You sort of start off in a group like that and then you think well yes I can do that and

¹¹ Location has been omitted to retain anonymity

maybe I can do more ... And they are talking about going to ...¹² university after that and I think well why not. Age is not a barrier these days is it?’

As with Group 1 Peter is now more of a mentor than tutor and as a consequence there is evidence that collaboration has taken over as the main source of instruction. There is also evidence of a wider process of socialised learning taking place external to the group as members utilise the skills they have acquired to apply them to other audiences and projects.

‘Yes we all have different talents within art. ... We all work together and everyone asks each other different questions. We also walk round and look at each other’s work’

‘Through [the project] we are in touch with the people who run [the centre] here and they got us involved with jewellery. ... I am hoping to get some sort of [funding] from the council to run 15 courses here to show people how to make jewellery ... We are going to have an open day here and have a stall and we will show them how to make bracelets, necklaces etc. and it may go on from there ... I think some of the youngsters and some of the older people who are in the house all day might like an hour out; it’s something that different ...’

‘This class is hugely supportive. It doesn’t have a lot of tutoring but people will help me and make suggestions and they ask my help ... even though I’ve only been painting a couple of years. Occasionally I am sometime able to help someone else’

‘We all go round and look at each other’s work; we are all at different stages, some people are very good. Others can teach me things, so the end result is very good’

‘Now we have evolved into our own group what we are finding is that people ... help other people; somebody gets stuck with a picture and so one of us will go and say perhaps if you try this and perhaps if you do that. We are finding that those who are more experienced are helping those that aren’t’

Perhaps the most visible initiative they have all been involved with as a group was the recent collaboration with the Scottish National Gallery. Through their base at the centre an outreach worker from the Gallery approached the group to get involved in a community project called ‘Parallel Lives 2’. Together with a liaison worker from the Gallery it was agreed that the group would visit different locations in the locality over a number of months with disposable cameras and ask people to take photos of anything they wanted to record. The pictures would then be displayed in pixel format and run as a slide show that picks up different shots every rotation. Thousands of local people took part and their assembled work was first exhibited in the National Gallery and is now on tour at a number of venues across different communities. It was a huge source of pride for those taking part. The exhibition was at the centre in February 2009, although a lack of publicity limited attendance.

¹² The name has been omitted to retain anonymity

Equally important to the learning process is the social support generated amongst the group. All interviewees identified the social side of the group as crucial to their well-being, and, in turn, to the success of the group.

‘Apart from the art I think that they get the social integration. People like to talk with others and also we’ve got one or two with health problems and problems at home and because we’ve known each other for a long time ... it makes it easier to talk with people and you can see how people are’

‘It’s a social thing I think. You come here and meet your friends because we are all friends and you have a little chat. You might paint a little bit you might not but the social aspect is the biggest thing’

‘We have a lady ... she’s in her 70’s and she looks after her husband full-time and this is her day out; this is her respite It’s a place we can come to and forget what is going on in the outside world ... It’s a bit of escapism I suppose’

‘People are aware of the needs of other people so you know somebody is ill or somebody for instance needs a lift somewhere; you know people are interested in each other as people’

‘We are quite a close knit group, we know that if any of us has problems we can talk to each other; to me it’s like a second branch of my family I’ve got close to them’

Whilst the link with the university is still recognised participants were both concerned and critical of its lack of support for the group despite winning a prestigious award on behalf of the university.

‘It was very visible when we were still in-situ within the university but it wasn’t when we left; it’s just a title now and Peter. ... I still think we should be able to use the university’s facilities’ like the modular things, I still think we should be able to do that’

‘We have come to realise that we are not going back to [the university], we are now our own group ... so no I think that we are getting out of the idea that we are [the university] ... I mean we won a prize ... and things like that so we are still part of [the project] and I think we always will be but just not at [the university] anymore’

All of the members recognised the necessary work done by the committee, especially Janis and Cynthia, in sustaining the group as well as the danger involved in depending on a small number of active members. The issue is especially pertinent at the moment since an active member of the committee will be standing down next year to begin a full-time course. The formation of the ‘hanging committee’ was a first step in involving more people in the running of the group, adding three more members into the group’s management. Other members expressed a willingness to get more involved if asked and/or needed. The group have also discussed applying for external funding.

‘ ... your criteria for that is you have got to be self-sufficient and that is why we did the constitution so that if we did go down that route ... so you have to prove to them that you are an up-and-coming group before you can apply. So we have asked and were talking to a woman who does that

sort of thing it has sort of gone by the wayside because we have got quite a bit in the bank we felt that we could manage without it. There's such a lot of criteria to go through to get that money'

Whilst this group has additional problems in terms of the cost of and restricted access to premises it is similar to Group 1 in having put in place a successful management infrastructure that, together with its current leadership and social bonding, looks to secure the future longevity of this group.

6.3 GROUP 3 (MONDAY)

Group 3 is one of the more recent; initiated by Peter in early 2008 because of an opportunity arising to utilise premises in his local church and because of the aim to extend the university's geographical reach. A substantial number of participants are active members of the same church and have strong community ties through their church membership. Community engagement is an active goal of the church and therefore it operates an open-door policy in order to act as a community centre for both practising and non-practising Christians. Whilst a strong church presence amongst its membership religion is more implicit than explicit amongst the group. Other members heard of the group through word of mouth.

The majority of members are retired men and women, familiar with adult learning courses. A long-stranding interest in art binds the group although most are looking for informal instruction rather than accreditation. Some members have health problems and attend the class 'because it is comforting'. Whilst based in an area that includes the most disadvantaged community in the region very few participants would identify with this label. The reasons given were (1) the group has yet to raise its visibility amongst the wider community and (2) people in certain communities are not comfortable with art classes. As with the other groups there is already a waiting list of people wanting to enrol for the class.

Since relatively new the group is more structured and participants need and want formal instruction. But they likewise appreciate Peter's flexibility and 'laid-back attitude' to learning, with particular praise for his continuous encouragement and non-competitive approach.

'Peter is a marvellous tutor and he is always positive, never negative; he will always find something in it. Through his tuition it takes shape and before you know it you have a beautiful painting'

'There is definitely something different about this group. You can put the onus all on our tutor because he's wonderful. He's always possible and never negative; nothing is too much bother and he can transform things into beautiful paintings'

'Peter is really good; he knows what he's doing. He communicates with people ... He actually sits down and demonstrates how to paint ... and he shows you how it all happens ...'

There is already evidence of processes of socialised learning taking place both amongst and external to the group.

'We go round and look at each other's painting and give our opinion and they then tell us what they think and why they are doing this and that. ... I once brought a newspaper clipping in and I said to Peter I want to try and

paint this and he said I will make it the lesson of the day, so he did. When I looked at the finished painting it was nothing how it started out but it was brilliant and everyone had done a totally different perception of it and it was quite exciting'

'I actually run a workshop for making cards and memory albums. Last week I painted a card and I thought perhaps we [the workshop] could try to do that. I made the card with a hole in it and put it [the painting] behind that and it looked quite good. When the children see you doing this, my great grandchildren, they seem quite enthusiastic'

'In terms of passing information on ... I am giving a talk here [in the church] in a few weeks about photography ... it's apt in some ways with regard to colour and light and everything; they all relate to each other'

There is likewise evidence of group interaction and support. This may be especially the case amongst those already connected through the church but others also expressed a sense of belonging.

'It's definitely a group and I think it's got to this stage even within a year when people look out for each other not just in the group but outside the group as well'

'I remember one person whose son has alcohol problems; I remember just sitting talking to her in the middle of the class and everybody else just got on and ignored us. There was something valuable being done. That's not what I expected; it's relaxed, it's not competitive'

Participants are impressed at their progress after such a short period of time. They also identify a range of accompanying benefits as a consequence of their participation in the group.

'I had no talents whatsoever and said there was no way I could draw or paint but ... since then I have amazed myself with the paintings I have done and that people want them'

'I didn't ever think I would be able to do it. It gives you great satisfaction, it's wonderful. When I go home when my painting is finished I hang it up on my wall for a couple to weeks to see what I think of it and funnily enough someone has always come and said I would like that and now they've got it hanging on their wall'

'I get a sense of achievement and also it's one place I can come and where nobody can find me or get me. It's total relaxation'

'I suppose I am more confident with myself coming here and doing things. It's definitely been a great thing for me'

'For me it's given me confidence for things I wouldn't have done and you get a lot of confidence from people; obviously from Peter but also from other people in the class'

The link with the university is known amongst the group but since largely invisible any sense of identity is with Peter and the project.

'We know we are part of it [the university]. Peter speaks about his other work so we know'

‘I wasn’t aware when I joined that Peter was through the university so I have to be honest I don’t [feel an identity with the university]’

‘... [the] university doesn’t get outside into [communities] ... this is one thing that is bringing it out and getting it going’

However, in contrast to the other groups the majority of participants thought that the group could not be sustained if Peter were to leave.

‘It would probably continue to exist for a fair length of time but I think it needs the figure-head to join it together’

‘I think there would be efforts made but I don’t [think] it’s cohesive enough; it still needs someone fronting it up’

‘Peter does make a big difference. He’s the one who started it and I think it is quite possible if he wasn’t here ... then I think the group would probably fold. I might be wrong but I think that’

6.4 GROUP 4 (TUESDAY)

As the most recent addition to the project, beginning in November 2008, this group looks and performs more like a traditional classroom. The vast majority of members are retired women who live locally. Most are familiar with further education, through lifelong learning courses, whilst some have higher education qualifications. As with the other groups it was noted that the majority are not representative of the area’s disadvantaged communities.

‘I feel aware that [the project] might have been directed at an audience that ... I couldn’t be classified [socially excluded]... but from another aspect I am exactly the target audience because I’m afraid of something [art] ...’

But being based in a community centre is viewed as positive in terms of feeling part of something both local and communal.

‘They [the Community Centre] had an open day and it drew me into community activities that I would not have done (a book club, selling fruit and vegetables). ... The main thing is coming to the art club but there are spin-offs as well. It gives you the opportunity to engage with a larger community’

Despite a general familiarity with the educational process the majority of participants would not have enrolled on an arts course if advertised as a university course. Abiding perceptions of universities as competitive and judgemental and therefore intimidating places were the main barriers expressed. As noted by a number of participants:

‘I think it would be intimidating to put together a portfolio and have it looked at to see if you are good enough or not. I think because it’s in the community you feel as if it’s part of the community project’

‘I once went to a pottery class at [a local college] and found it terrifying. I would still, if I wanted to do a painting class, be afraid and feel intimidated to go. I would be thinking [the university thinks] these people are just coming to night classes [so] they won’t be any good. ... When it’s in the community centre you feel alright’

‘I went into the art college a few months ago because I was in another art class and I was told you could get art materials from the art shop. So I went in and felt terrible. I felt everyone was looking at this old granny, thinking ‘what’s she doing coming into the art college with young people who could actually draw and paint?’

And whilst everyone in the group is aware of the link there isn’t yet a sense of identify with the university. Since they have never been on campus, and it is early days for this group, perhaps the lack of association is to be expected. In contrast, within a period of just over 4 months (at the time of interviewing) participants had already formed a group identity with the project and were also aware of being part of a wider initiative. The gallery now based in the community centre hosting this group has provided both discussion and motivation for its members as well as offering an important link with the other project groups.

Although a more formal class Peter has organised the room to allow group interaction, which was very much in evidence on the days observed. He does not like to dominate the class and so attempts to combine instruction with individual initiative. Indeed Peter’s style of teaching was praised by all participants:

‘It’s just so interesting. Peter gives you clear instructions on what to do and he gives you confidence as well. It’s that kind of class and it’s not so structured either so it’s quite flexible. You can come in and do your own thing’

‘I think it’s more relaxed here; it’s informal, people come and go. Everyone is made to feel very welcome. I think because Peter is very supportive in everything that we paint and he will point out something good; it’s taught us to look at other people’s paintings in a new way. ... I think Peter’s enthusiasm comes through with everything so it inspires us’

‘Peter is such a good teacher. I didn’t think I could do art at all and I went to a class where the teacher was an artist and she basically didn’t teach you anything. ... So when I saw Peter doing the demonstration I thought ‘he’s the man for me’. I came to this class and he is very encouraging; he shows you things and tells you things’

Many participants were astonished at the degree of progress they had made in such a short time, especially with something previously perceived as inaccessible. Indeed learning had not only taken the form of practice. Many also expressed a growing appreciation of art as a medium.

‘You know ... the things that he’s taught us, you wouldn’t believe it. I have been going to art for 3 years and the things I didn’t know, the things I am still learning, it’s incredible, honestly. The things I have learned in the 6 weeks since I came here are unbelievable ...’

‘I find that when I look at art I look at it through different eyes. I can’t quite put my finger on what that is but you find yourself looking at it and thinking I could do that’

It’s education for life. You are learning to see differently and when you go to an art gallery you are getting more out of it. All the time we are learning more’

It's not just exhibitions, it's everywhere. Last week I drove out to the country because there had been a lot of snow and I just wanted to take photographs of the countryside in the snow ... I would never have stopped and taken photographs before. I now look at it and think could I make a picture from that?'

Their progress has also been noted by family and friends, further encouraging a wider network of people to both appreciate and try drawing and painting.

'It's good to show somebody I've never done this before in my life and you're never too old to learn. I think that's quite an important thing. It shows anybody can start and achieve something they never thought they could'

'My husband has asked if he can use some of my materials and he has started to draw at home now'

'Because my partner had seen me sketching he bought himself a sketch pad and pencils and said he would start as well. I did a painting ... and gave it to him for Christmas and ... when he opened it he thought I had bought it until he saw my signature and he was overwhelmed. He was so touched he told everybody'

It is too early to think of the group as providing a support network but friendships are already developing and there was a general air of companionship in evidence.

'I have got to know the girls. It's a sort of good feel, a nice feeling, it's like leisure; it's more than that but I can't put it into words. We are all sort of striving to do the same thing but different; it is just the whole atmosphere. ... I think this is close group'

'After the second week I just felt as if I had been here all the time ... the second week I came in and it was like "good morning"; it's amazing'

'We have learnt that our way of doing it is our way of doing it but somebody else's way of doing it is equally valid. So I think that makes us supportive of each other'

All participants intend to stay with the class as long as possible. Hence, with few exceptions, if funding became a problem they would act to keep the group going.

'I think people like it so much that they would pay whatever it is to pay ... and I think that if you couldn't afford to pay, which some people in the class couldn't, that would be accommodated'

'I think it's a good thing for groups to take ownership of themselves and move on ... but the fear is that it becomes bureaucratic ... things often go sour when that happens. I think people could take ownership of this group [but] it would still need Peter as a tutor'

'I would, and I have heard one or two voice their opinion on that [future payment] and I think they would, I really do. I think they would contribute'

And as elsewhere there is already a waiting list to join this group.

7 A SUCCESSFUL MODEL OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

7.1 THE BENEFITS OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project has been officially recognised and rewarded as an ‘innovation’ in helping ‘people build their self-esteem and discover their creativity through painting and drawing’. Its community base and longevity has extended the university’s reach to both wider audiences and geographic locations surrounding its campuses. It has helped to raise awareness of the university amongst local stakeholders as well as local residents and has contributed to widening access objectives. The project is therefore an initiative that combines to meet the university’s community engagement remit and future objective to ‘become the market leader in Scotland for Community Engagement in line with its aim to be “the best modern university in Scotland”’.

For the participants the project is a site of both formal and socialised learning. It has encouraged participants, many of whom had never thought themselves capable of being creative, to follow accredited courses as well as develop individual initiative and style. With a focus on group interaction the learning process combines formal instruction with group exchange, allowing and facilitating the sharing of experience and knowledge between people at different levels of expertise and qualification. The easy-going and flexible nature of the classes likewise facilitates debate about art in general thus helping to develop skills of appreciation and form. There is also evidence of a transferring of interest and practice to family and friends, with many participants especially pleased to have something to share with grandchildren. Indeed, many had been commissioned by family and friends to paint pictures as presents. Knowledge is also being transferred to other art classes, including, for one member, teaching on another art-related course at the university. There is also a sharing of wider skills amongst the groups, in particular amongst those that are now financially independent. Hence the project acts as a successful site of learning exchange through which expertise and experience is being shared and re-created in pursuit of a common set of goals; knowledge and production of art, the management and viability of a formal organisation and financial stability. As a consequence the project is arguably a site of evolving, and in the case of Groups 1 and 2 successful, communities of practice.

Progress as traditionally measured in terms of the quality and artistic reach of outputs is obvious. But there is also evidence of less quantifiable benefits. In the main a growing confidence amongst participants both inside and outside of the class, with the public display of their work and subsequent sales highlighted as both an effective system of reward and confidence-building. The exhibitions also serve to bring the groups together as well as make the project visible to senior university management and wider public audiences. And through the growth of confidence members are using a range of acquired skills to not only help inform other art groups but also to extend community benefit. For example, one woman is aiming to use contacts made through the project to organise jewellery-making classes for local residents, another is looking to offer art as a remedial benefit in a voluntary capacity, whilst another has used the confidence gained through the project to put herself forward as a student welfare officer. Furthermore, as noted in the individual summaries, all groups act as sites of social networking and support. Whilst a social aspect may be expected from

the longer-standing groups the foundations of companionship and friendship are also evident in those groups that have been running for less than 12 months (at the time of interviewing). Hence the project is a successful site of both bonding and bridging capital. Indeed, Peter's motto is very much 'in and for the community'.

Yet the project highlights the crucial role of individuals in both its practical longevity and qualitative and quantitative success. Whilst the project has benefited from collegiate support within lifelong learning its success is overwhelmingly attributed to Peter as tutor and continued driver of the project. As the group summaries show participants praised both his skills as an artist and ability to communicate instruction and nurture confidence. He was especially praised for his consistent encouragement and the fact that 'he was never critical'. Hence those attending other art courses had moved to the project once witnessing Peter's classes. Indeed the majority across all groups attribute the progress they have made to Peter's teaching style.

'I have tried painting before; I have tried on two occasions at two different places ... and I was terrible. I never learnt anything. ... So I thought I couldn't paint. And when I came to Peter's class he showed us, he did demonstrations and lo and behold I could paint'

'I have always loved art and I always drew, I never painted. At school when I was asked to paint it always intimidated me; I felt insecure, so I just drew. ... When I first brought the stuff in Peter said it was good, better than good, it's really good. I heard him but I didn't feel it. Now I feel and see what he's saying; if you can draw you can do anything. I could not relate drawing with painting, but now I do'

'Peter is the best tutor I have ever come across; he explains to you and you have an idea what you want to achieve'

But success is the result of more than Peter's teaching method; it is also a consequence of his level of commitment to the project and his personality. His biography as a practising Christian may go some way to site his motivation for community-oriented work. Indeed Peter has utilised church contacts to both recruit for, and, in the case of Group 3, host the project. But it is not a Christian project. Thus, although references to the church and god were made by several interviewees non-church members did not view the project as anything to do with the church or the Christian faith. Only one participant, a practising Christian, made reference to prayer meetings that had been held prior to the classes on campus and was sorry that they had come to an end. However, faith alone is an insufficient explanation for Peter's commitment to opening-up art to people long denied and intimidated by formal instruction. It is also an insufficient explanation for the personal characteristics observed that are responsible for framing the supportive nature of all groups. Peter has both a caring and engaging personality that reaches all participants. And the project is obviously more than a job to Peter, evident in the time and effort he puts into supporting the groups over and above class instruction. As already highlighted, he was instrumental in refurbishing the majority of rooms subsequently used as project studios and has worked voluntarily on organising exhibitions and installing the new gallery. He has also raffled his own paintings to raise money for the project. As noted by Peter:

'we are very much the poor relation ... I haven't time to think about where the money is coming from and how much we have to spend, I just

know that I have never had any so what you've never had you don't miss ... I just thought I ... just have to make some money and so I figured a way to do it and when I do need some materials I just cost it up. ... I'm just flying by the seat of my pants and doing the best job that I can under the severe financial limitations, it's just a miracle how we keep going and have so many people'

More recently the project has relied on a growing number of participants now responsible for the finance and management of two of the four groups currently constituting the project. Indeed, despite official recognition and Peter's unstinting input it is likely that this project would have come to an end in either 2003 or 2007 if it were not for the commitment of these individuals. The project has also benefited from the support of individuals as local community contacts, who, in recognition of its benefits for and within their local communities have provided affordable premises for the classes once official funding was withdrawn. Despite its celebrated status within the university, and overall corporate policy on community engagement, institutional support for the project is minimal; although the covering of a salary is recognised as an important investment in the project.

The project is therefore a good example of how university-community engagement could help meet both institutional policy and practice on engagement, as well as contributing to widening access and social inclusion and capital objectives. It is a model of engagement that has extended into empowerment for many of its participants. Arguably it is a model of learning that highlights the limitations of the existing education system in suppressing ability, and, conversely, the benefits of a diversity of education access points in encouraging and exposing a broader pool of talent.

'People our age didn't do art at school. It was just a pencil and paper then, nobody did much in the way of painting. I think it would give me pleasure in just thinking I might be able to do that'

'I think a lot of times it's the jargon and how you're treated ... Sometimes you get stuff and it looks so complicated ... it's all aimed at the academic ... I think that if I'd got there earlier I would have been at university, if I'd had a different background'

7.2 THE LIMITATIONS OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It is also a model of learning that highlights the limitations of an education system that ignores, undermines or undervalues a diversity of learning practice. Universities are part of the problem in which the focus and value placed on vertical, top-down and certificated education is ignoring the ability of those who are either intimidated by such methods and/or who learn through more socialised contexts and process.

'One of the problems is that a university is there to train people with a goal in mind to give them a job and give them financial stability. Whereas the type of learning they are doing for us is not for that purpose'

Arguably the success and benefits of the project are not fully realised by the university. It appears contradictory that the university celebrates the project at the same time as seemingly prepared to see it close when funding and premises have been withdrawn. Indeed, when the campus site closed down it was thought to be a classic example of 'people sitting in offices making decisions behind closed doors without

realising the implications for other people'. Yet once raised by Peter the Principal was keen to meet to discuss any potential support for the project. Also, when the project received the Award it was suggested by a senior manager that if Peter wanted anything 'to ask for it now'. Peter takes some responsibility for the continued marginalisation of the project, admitting that he is perhaps not 'pushy' enough. However, should a celebrated project rely on an individual having to constantly seek to raise its profile amongst senior management?

It is equally concerning that despite its celebrated success there is very limited shared identity between the projects participants and the university. With classes and groups held off-campus Peter is the sole link and bridge between the groups and the university. And whilst Peter reports back any developments impacting on the project the university tends to remain a distanced and even intimidatory 'partner'. Rather paradoxically its community bases may be fulfilling the university's aim to extend its reach into local communities but at the same time it is separating its learning communities within the project from the university. Its community bases may also rather paradoxically be responsible for sustaining often negative perceptions of universities within the very disadvantaged communities it is aiming to reach. Such perceptions were evident when aligned with the initial local organisation. Whilst managers within the university did not view this organisation as a credible educational provider, the organisation, in turn, viewed the university as elitist and ill-equipped to deliver wider community education. Certainly there was evidence of distrust of the university amongst many project participants that is not helped by the continued invisibility of the university. Hence the current concern amongst the groups over the ILA initiative highlighted earlier. Being off campus also does nothing to challenge the notion that higher education is the prerogative of a certain student type.

Arguably the marginalisation of the project is short-sighted in failing to appreciate its extended potential both as a model of widening access and as complementary input into a wider curricula and range of policy governing community engagement, lifelong learning and volunteering. For example, the project could contribute to the wider curricula if its modules and students were incorporated into relevant courses. Likewise, it could operate as a site of student placement and thus contribute to both community engagement and volunteering agendas. Greater incorporation would also help challenge abiding perceptions amongst participants of universities being 'competitive', 'judgemental' and overall 'intimidating places' as well as raise awareness amongst more traditional students of the diversity of learning method and student ability and experience.

With more support the project could extend to even more areas and potential community students. Peter's time is now stretched over 4 groups with different demands and needs. Each group also has long waiting lists. Anyone who comes into contact with the project expresses interest. A lack of financial and institutional support is therefore limiting the project's potential. It could also be a model that could be marketed to other universities and colleges. These opportunities are not realised by the university and thus, despite its celebrated status, the project is a wasted opportunity of both policy and practice. Arguably, therefore, whilst from both community and university perspectives the project is a successful university-community engagement initiative, it is successful *despite* its link to the university.

7.3 THE POSSIBILITIES OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

However, its success does not mean that the project is without fault. The intention of offering art to disadvantaged and marginalised communities is partly met through its base in such communities. But the majority of its members are not representative of these communities. There is also a lack of diversity of participant, with the majority of each group being female, retired and white. The vast majority are also comfortable with further, and for some higher, education. And whilst many were intimidated by the thought of attending a formal university course, largely because of the aforementioned perceptions, the vast majority have enjoyed a long-standing relationship with education. This relationship is not representative of the type of communities the project aimed to reach. As already noted Peter is aware of the unrepresentative nature of the current groups but a lack of resources is the major barrier to any redress.

The reliance on individuals has already been highlighted. Arguably it was luck that in both Groups 1 and 2 there was a number of people both able and willing to provide leadership, initially to secure wider commitment and then the administration and management of the transition period from university-led project to an independent group. In both groups these same people have remained core to the daily/weekly running of the groups both in terms of the application of existing skills pertinent to independence and the transferring of those skills to a wider cohort of participants. Whilst others in both groups have expressed an interest in taking-up greater responsibility for the maintenance of their respective group there arguably remains a disproportionate level of reliance of the continued leadership and management of the same few people.

Likewise, whilst Peter is, arguably, not necessary to the sustainability of Groups 1 and 2, acting as a mentor rather than a formal tutor, he remains the driving force behind the project. He is also the bridge between the 4 groups currently constituting the project and between the project and the university. Whilst none of these links may be necessary to retain the project's presence as a number of art groups it is highly probable that the removal of someone in Peter's position, acting as co-ordinated leadership, would further distance, if not sever, its links with the university. Equally pertinent, if Peter were to leave would any replacement have the same mix of skills and personality identified as crucial to the success of the project both amongst participants and the wider community bases?

'Peter's got both; he had an educational background and he's a very good teacher. That's the sort of people you should first present to people coming into the university. ... You need a good teacher to develop people'

'Some people know their subjects but they can't teach; Peter knows his subject and he can teach'

'He has never forgotten what it's like to paint and I have heard that so often from people who have had five, six, seven, eight art teachers over 10 or 20 years and they say he has never forgotten how to paint and that is the difference'

Leaving the last word in this chapter to Peter:

'I would like to think that if I was to leave, when I do retire, that [the university] will take a serious look at new staff and what we've done and

what we have achieved and what could be done in the future ... as a means to reaching out to communities’.

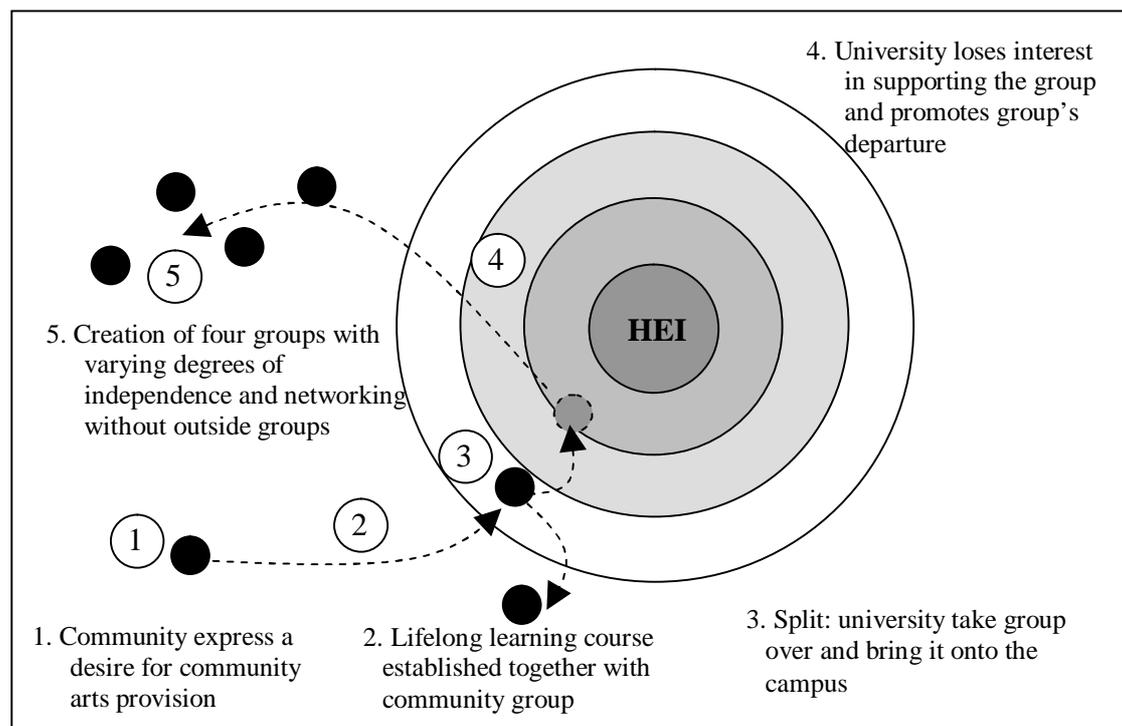
8 COMMUNITY LEARNING AROUND UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The example of this community arts project is instructive in providing an insight into the life of community activities centred around the university, and the role that universities can play in supporting their evolution. It is clear that there is limited capacity within universities to allow community groups to participate in learning activities which do not have a clear underpinning rationale, and the current incentives system is quite some way remote from the ideas of a People's University supporting informal learning. Nevertheless, the project is an example of a university being involved in activities which led to the development of new learning communities, in which the university was also temporarily involved.

8.1 A FIRST-CUT MODEL OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The first-cut model of this process can be regarded that a group within a community came to the university and asked them to help with a particular problem, the absence of arts provision. The university configured a temporary solution, and this worked for a time. However, they could not stabilise the tension between community group and university, and so the group moved closer into the university, at least temporarily, with those group members unable to agree with this process leaving. The university supported the group for a period, during which time the group continued to grow. The group then had to leave the university, and this led to an institutionalisation of the group as free standing organisations, and indeed the formation of subsequent groups. The final situation was with four groups which were in varying senses free-standing, independent from the university and self-reproducing.

Figure 6 A first cut model of the process of community network formation



Chapter 7 points to a number of the concrete indicators of the success of these learning communities. In terms of the development of internal bonding capital within the community, there was the development of a strong sense of group feeling, as well as the organisation of activities as groups, such as the second group organising a short tour to use up a small surplus. The bonding capital is also indicated in the first group by the way they have developed as a group and been able to iterate their procedures to ensure their survival, drawing on trust and tacit knowledge between the workers. They have a self-managing capacity – indicated by the second group developing rules for how to deal with the tricky issue of non-attendance by participants, as well as the need for a softer approach for those in genuine need, necessary given the background of many of the participants. A final indicator of this capital was the sense of collective identify the group had built up, with the fourth group having very little sense of the university because they had arrived at the project after the departure of the university.

There were also indications that bringing capital had been built up in this learning process. Part of this was with the university, indicated by a sense of regret that the contact with the university had come to an end. But there were other indications that the groups had managed to make external contacts that validated what they were doing, both as artists and genuine community grants. So the organisation of exhibitions and displays, as well as the sale of art works to outside groups helped to underscore the fact that in the course of working in these groups, there had been a generalisation in the way these individuals were regarded, from being people in a deprived community on a project to ‘artists based in deprived communities but part of a wider artistic movement’. This repositioning within a broader field of artists is further suggested by their participation within the Scottish National Gallery Parallel Lives programme.

The other element was that they were validated as a self-standing community through their involvement with various other networks. On the one hand, the university did in the early days help to connect the community groups to various sources of potential help formally and informally. But over time, as they developed into free-standing groups, they developed their own capacity to bid for funds. The fact that they were awarded lottery funding hints at the fact that they are regarded as a valid community organisation by external partners, as well as having developed internally the skills to bid for the money. This development of legitimacy – as part of an autonomous identify – seems an important component in terms of what has to be developed in the community learning activity over time.

8.2 THE STYLISTED FACTS OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In this final section, we use the case study to reflect on a set of stylised facts about university-community engagement in excluded communities more generally. These are derived both from the case study as well as the more general findings presented in working paper 2. They do not therefore relate exclusively to the university studied in this report, but rather to the kinds of universities which this projects has studied. We conclude with seven stylised facts about the process of university-community engagement which help to frame expectations of what is realistic and what are the real contributions which universities are making in these situations.

8.2.1 Community engagement spaces can be sites of social learning

The activities supported around this project were genuine sites of socialised learning, demonstrated by the evolving roles of people in the projects, with Peter moving from tutor to mentor, and individuals both peer tutoring as well as one individual developing into a tutor for the university concerned. The individuals came together to study art, but to give themselves space to study art, they needed to undertake collective action, to raise funds, to make mutual commitments, to elect spokespeople, to take decisions, to constitute themselves formally. This tension between the content and structure drove a set of collective learning processes in which the groups developed clearly identifiable bonding and bridging social capital. This social capital helped to improve their position within the local political economy, and at least partly addressing some of the problems of social exclusion identified in 2.1.1 above.

8.2.2 The key learning outcomes for the community are not easily accredited

This resulted in a duality of learning process, learning on the one hand a set of technical skills in art, and then on the other a set of contextual skills about delivering arts exhibitions within a community organisation setting. From the community perspective, these different learning elements were parallel, complementary and indivisible. However, from the perspective of the university, clearly the set of technical arts skills which were easily accredited and which hence unlocked funding were of primary interest, and the other skills only were of occasional interest when they led to external recognition and acknowledgement. At the heart of the engagement activity therefore lay a dissonance in goals and desired learning, and this created a fundamental tension for the activity, manifested in the trajectory through which it progressed (see figure 6 above).

8.2.3 Universities have difficulties articulating long-term support for these activities

The reality arising from this is that the tension between university and community interest in engagement activities is not trivial and not easily addressed. On the one hand, it is possible to envisage systems where community engagement was valued honestly for its contribution to learning activities. But the reality is that it is fairly ingrained into institutions in England and Scotland that engagement activities have to be fundable, that is to say they have to be underlain by a robust business plan that brings identifiable income sources to pay for the costs of their delivery. In some cases, it may be possible to create degrees in Combined Studies open to communities that release fees and subsidies into the university. But there nevertheless remain substantial pressures on the universities to deliver these courses in ways that reduce their burden on and risk to the university, which in turn militates against their use for the support of community learning activities.

8.2.4 University-community engagement activities are peripheral and temporary

The effect of this is that it is clear that under current circumstances, community engagement activities have to be regarded as temporary. The tensions between what universities and communities want from community learning are so great that it is unreasonable to expect them to be resolved. Rather, these tensions can only be

temporarily finessed, or postponed, and then after a temporary resolution, the problems then recur. This means that it is necessary to be realistic about what university-community engagement in this mould can achieve – one must start from the point that the activities are temporary. Activities appear to have to be peripheral in and to the university in order for them to have sufficient latitude to develop as much the collective socialised learning as the accredited learning elements, otherwise they become purely accredited and individualised activities. This issue of a fit or temporary accommodation is important, because universities' needs and priorities do change rapidly in response to a bewildering array of opportunities – so for example winning the Award was a means to prolong the life of the activity because of the profile.

8.2.5 Activities need to find a fit in the university...

There has to be a clearly identified fit between the activities and the interests of the university that extends beyond individual learning activities and outcomes leading to accredited awards. These 'fits' are always negotiated, because excluded communities have no means to hold a university to account and to 'demand' its place in the university, because the way the sector is currently constructed, such communities do not have a rightful place. The 'fit' is only temporary, and in this case we saw that the fit has to come through a correspondence between what the group could offer, and the perceptions of engagement in a set of prevailing strategies, leadership and university culture. Nevertheless, the failure of the project to fit into a particular faculty led the project to land in the department of lifelong learning, which further reinforced its peripherality and segmentation of the community from the university, and reducing the contact between these community groups and the mainstream students.

8.2.6 ... where they can still live as a community

The key issue for the community activities being peripheral within a university is that it is a good finessing strategy. By remaining peripheral, and without attracting too many rights, the group can nevertheless benefit from the incubation by the university. At the same time, by being peripheral within the university, the group can also achieve a degree of autonomy. By being a group within the university, there is the space to undertake collectively activities which would not necessarily within the confines of accredited courses, and which for other students happen in other forums such as the Student Union. The social life of the community was important in providing a sense of cohesion in the turning points of the life of the group, such as the point of the move to the university, or the departure from the university. There are therefore clear benefits to the community group in not being so tightly coupled to the university, and therefore being constricted by its demands. At the same time, there were clearly problems this caused for the group in coming to terms with the temporary nature of the affiliation with the university.

8.2.7 Universities can act as good sources of contacts for solving problems ...

Emphasising the temporary nature of the contacts, and the loose coupling between the university and community activity allows a refocusing on the benefits of these temporary relationships. In this study, there were many informal lubricating activities undertaken by university contacts – if not the university institutionally – to help the groups to establish themselves. The university also demonstrated a degree of moral

responsibility in continuing the funding and rent support to help the groups off campus. In that sense, the location on campus allows the development of links which allow the community groups to draw on the wider social networks of the university staff. The optimum environments for supporting community activities would therefore be those kinds of universities where there are already many links – formal, informal, contractual and altruistic – between the university and other organisations which help to support these activities. One could hypothesise (and indeed in the case of Working Paper 4, this hypothesis is to some extent borne out) that one element of what a university can do to configure itself to be of value is indeed supporting staff developing their own small-scale networks which can then be deployed in helping to make community engagement activities fit into the university, and leave having taken a substantive step forward in establishing their independence.

8.2.8 ... but the groups have to do it for themselves

The final stylised fact is to highlight the importance of the agency of the group, the community and the individuals in this process. In the literature review there is almost an implicit disempowering of the community in setting up a structural picture of the issue of exclusion. This research highlights the fact that exclusion operates through processes which can be contested and challenged by a matter of degree, and do not require that *in toto* exclusion is addressed. There was a community group which initiated this activity and provided the initial impulse, and the community has been a strong driver of the dynamic through the process. But the community is not just the formal groups, and not just the participating individuals, but also the way those individuals come together or not and form themselves into more or less groups. This has implications also for the way that the university chooses to engage with the community groups.

This is not to be read as an argument that social exclusion is a fault of excluded communities for not being dynamic enough, rather that at a micro-level it is dynamic communities which offer the opportunities to deliver activities which can grow sufficiently over a short timescale and therefore benefit from their (inevitable) temporary life within the university. Perversely enough, such mobilised and articulate communities may actually raise the antipathy of the university – by making claims on the university and asking what the university will do for them which are out of step with the university's own needs to control and restrict its external liabilities and commitments. Nevertheless, resolving this temporary tension between demanding community groups and committed university leadership and structures is central to delivering the temporary soft coupling necessary to allow community learning spaces to find their space, live and thrive within the university structural ecology.

9 OTHER PROJECT OUTPUTS

9.1 RESEARCH PAPERS

Benneworth, P. S., Charles, D. R. & Madnipour, A. (2010) “Universities as agents of urban change in the global knowledge economy” *European Planning Studies* (forthcoming).

Benneworth, P. & Jongbloed, B.W.A (2009) “Who matters to universities? A stakeholder perspective on humanities, arts and social sciences valorisation” *Higher Education* DOI 10.1007/s10734-009-9265-2

Benneworth, P. & Sanderson, A. (2009) “Building institutional capacity for HEI regional engagement in a sparse innovation environment: a case study of Knowledge House” *Higher Education Management and Policy*, March 2009.

9.2 CONFERENCE PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS

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Benneworth, P. Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R.; & Hodgson, C. (2008) “Universities and community engagement: addressing the causes of social exclusion” Paper presented to *Regions: The Dilemmas of Integration and Competition, International Conference of the Regional Studies Association*, Prague, Czech Republic 27th-29th May 2008

Benneworth, P. Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R.; & Hodgson, C. (2008) “Universities and community engagement: addressing the causes of social exclusion” Paper presented to *Bridging the divide, celebrating the city, 3rd Joint AESOP/ACSP Congress*, Chicago, USA, 6th-11th July 2008.

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Benneworth, P. Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R.; & Hodgson, C. (2009) “University engagement with excluded communities”, paper presented to *Edge Hill University Research Seminar Series*, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancashire, 13th January 2009.

Benneworth, P. Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R.; & Hodgson, C. (2009) "University engagement with hard-to-reach communities" paper presented to *Higher Education making a difference to economies & communities*, Initiative Meeting of Impact of HEIs on Regional Economies, Belfast Castle, Northern Ireland, 28th January 2009.

Benneworth, P. Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R.; & Hodgson, C. (2009) "University engagement with hard-to-reach communities" *Paper presented to Center for Higher Education Policy Studies seminar series*, University of Twente, the Netherlands, 18th February 2009

Benneworth, P. Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R.; & Hodgson, C. (2009) "University Community engagement" *Paper presented to Centre for Enterprise and Innovation Research seminar series*, Salford Business School, University of Salford, 25th March 2009

Benneworth, P. (2009) "University engagement with excluded communities: reflections on Hope and the West Everton Community Council", presentation to the West Everton Community Council trustees, Everton, Liverpool, 26th March 2009.

Benneworth, P. Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R.; & Hodgson, C. (2009) "University engagement with hard-to-reach communities" Paper presented to *Unequal Places: Planning and Territorial Cohesion* The UK-Ireland Planning Research Conference, Newcastle upon-Tyne, UK, 1st-3rd April 2009.

Benneworth, P. Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R.; & Hodgson, C. (2009) "University engagement with hard-to-reach communities" Paper presented to *Understanding and Shaping Regions: Spatial, Social and Economic Futures*, Regional Studies Association International Conference, Leuven, Flanders, 6th-8th April 2009.

Charles, D.R., Benneworth, P., Hodgson, L. and Humphrey, L. (2009) One country, many systems: community engagement in England and Scotland, PASCAL conference on Community Engagement and Service: The Third Mission of Universities, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 18th -20th May.

Humphrey, L. Benneworth, P. & Charles, D R. (2009) "Universities and Community Engagement: capacity-building and empowerment of excluded communities?" Paper presented to *Higher Education and Civic Engagement Partnerships: Create, Challenge, Change*, Campus Engage Conference, Dublin, Ireland, 4th-5th June 2009.

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Charles, D. R., Benneworth, P. S., Humphrey, L. & Hodgson, C. M. (2009) "Universities' engagement with excluded communities" paper presented to *Excellence in engagement: policies and practices for university-community engagement*, HEIs' Impact Initiative Symposium, KITE, Newcastle University, 22nd June 2009.

Humphrey, L., Charles, D. R., Benneworth, P. S., & Hodgson, C. M. (2009) "University-community engagement: core business or third strand?" paper presented to *Excellence in engagement: policies and practices for university-community engagement*, HEIs' Impact Initiative Symposium, KITE, Newcastle University, 22nd June 2009.

Benneworth, P. S. (2009) “Innovation and social exclusion in the knowledge society: The hidden conundrum for regeneration management” Paper presented to *Innovation and knowledge exchange in regeneration management: The challenges and barriers for innovation practice?* 9th Regeneration Management Research Network meeting, Lancaster Business School, 25th June 2009.

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