Engaging Wester Hailes

Findings from the Valuing Different Perspectives Community Evaluation

Table of Contents

Introduction

Background

The 2014 *Valuing Different Perspectives* community evaluation explored the legacy of digital engagement activities in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh. It was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Connected Communities programme and led by three local community organisations (WHALE Arts, Prospect Community Housing Association and Wester Hailes Health Agency) that had collaborated since 2011 with one another and with academics on projects collectively called *Our Place in Time* (OPiT). These were partially supported through two AHRC grants*.* The outputs of these projects included: a digital totem pole; a community news site (the *Digital Sentinel*); a social history/health walks codebook accompanied by plans for wall plaques; and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support, training and equipment. A social history blog and Facebook page *From There to Here* did not receive AHRC support but is considered a key component of OPiT. Anticipated outcomes of the projects included improved health and wellbeing; digital inclusion; increased community voice and social capital, and improved place attachment and place identity for residents.

An additional AHRC-funded Community Hacking project *Communities within Spaces of Flow* focusing on the development and application of a 'sixth sense transport app' *LinkLocal* was underway during the period of this evaluation. As an ongoing project, its evaluation was not part of the *Valuing Different Perspectives* mandate to evaluate the legacy of previous grants. It was however considered as an emerging OPiT component that may shed light on digital engagement overall. Similarly, the partner organisations noted that the OPiT projects were situated within a broader context that needed to be considered. They also had deeper questions about processes of engagement. It was agreed that these questions could best be answered by looking at a range of activities in Wester Hailes, in effect by looking at the 'system' within which residents engage with their community.

This community evaluation was part of the larger Valuing Different Perspectives evaluation led by Dr Peter Matthews, University of Stirling. Along with the community partners, it involved academics from different institutions who each brought their disciplinary perspectives to bear on the legacy of the Connected Communities grants.

The community partners met with Dr Matthews on 18 March 2014 for a Community Logic Modelling session and determined that the following questions and issues should be the focus of the community evaluation:

- Reviving local democracy and engagement
- Resilience as long-term outcome, and personal and community resilience
  - Community resilience as empowering the community to change the neighbourhood for their benefit

- o Personal resilience as an increase in wellbeing and confidence and ability to respond to situations.
- Participation by the community in the projects themselves
  - o Who participated?
  - o What benefits did this provide for them?
  - o Who did not participate? What were the barriers to participation?
  - o Could new activities or interventions promote more participation?
- Partnership working by the community
  - o How has this improved as a result of the activities and the umbrella Our Place in Time partnership?
  - o Who has not joined these partnerships? Are there things the existing partners were doing that acted as a barrier?

Subsequently, a Community Research Assistant, Janice Astbury, was employed by Heriot-Watt University and based primarily at WHALE Arts to provide support to the community evaluation process for a period of six months (June-November 2014). Initial meetings between Research Assistant and partner organisations confirmed this focus and added a few nuances and additional questions:

- How and to what extent have people engaged with the projects? How much awareness is there of their existence? Do people value them?
- What are the most effective outreach mechanisms?
- Could existing activities be made more effective? (e.g. ways to increase readership and recruitment of reporters for the Digital Sentinel, revive interest in social history walks, increase interaction with totem pole)
- Would the projects be strengthened by formalising *Our Place in Time*, for example constituting it as an organisation?
- Are the activities offered by different organisations appropriately aligned? (Are opportunities being duplicated or insufficiently joined up?)
- Where should community efforts be directed in future? (e.g. Is community broadband and/or free public wifi a logical focus? Is there something to build on with respect to growing interest in gardening and food issues?)
- What are the new opportunities or challenges to which tools developed during previous work can be applied? (e.g. understanding and accessing benefits, job seeking, overcoming mobility challenges, bulk food purchase)
- What existing policy and funding mechanisms could provide support?
- What is the role of creativity and innovation in development processes in the community?
- Links between isolation and digital engagement, social capital and health and well-being
- Specific questions of interest to particular partner organisations e.g. How has the Health Agency's move to the Healthy Living Centre affected participation in its activities? (e.g. decreased use of drop-in)

The goal of the community led evaluation was thus articulated as follows:

Goal

to evaluate the legacy of the completed OPiT projects and to answer questions posed by the partners concerning the effectiveness of previous approaches, and lessons for future work in supporting local democracy and engagement for individual and community resilience

Methodology

Premises:

A **community-led evaluation** should:
1. Seek out and incorporate perspectives of diverse community members
2. Answer the questions that community partner organisations want answered in a way helpful to them in their work.
3. Generate products useful to the community in formats that can be directly disseminated or integrated e.g. text for funding applications or outreach, multi-media communications products, community gatherings for reflection and planning future action

The evaluation took a **developmental evaluation approach**[1], which involved adapting the evaluation process to reflect evolving understanding of what is being evaluated; encouraging reflection and learning amongst everyone involved; and trying to solve problems and seize opportunities as they emerge.

As one goal of this evaluation was to **examine community-academic collaboration practices**, the evaluation also sought to:
1. Surface community perspectives about previous experiences
2. Test and evaluate collaborative approaches that produce equitable outcomes e.g. as part of the evaluation process, make direct contributions to community efforts
3. Contribute to development of evaluation guidelines for community-university collaboration

The evaluation paid **attention to a broader legacy and to deeper questions**. While the focus was on the digital engagement projects, it was understood that these were situated in a broader context. Furthermore, the project partners raised deeper questions about processes of engagement that could best be answered by looking at a range of activities in Wester Hailes while highlighting those that were explicitly part of OPiT.

---

[1] See Patton (2010) *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use.*

Methods:

- Interviews to understand how and why people engage; documenting 'life histories of engagement'
- Interviews and participant observation to better understand the nature of different activities and people's participation in them, in order to 'dissect interventions', i.e. examine what really happened on the ground
- Creating a 'system map' to understand the relationships among people and activities, organisations and places, and the broader context, in order to see how community needs and assets link up, and to identify overall community characteristics produced by the 'community system'
- Mini 'experiments' to try to enhance effectiveness: (1) trying to engage more readers and contributors with the Digital Sentinel; (2) Reviving interest in the health/social history walks

Not all parts of the methodology were equally successful in implementation and this was reflected on in developing these findings.

Outputs

- Contributions to research blog and Digital Sentinel; dissemination of information about community activities; facilitating community connections
- Identifying and testing possible enhancements to existing activities
- Evidence base in the form of texts for insertion into reports and funding proposals
- Facilitation of community gatherings for reflection and planning
- System map for ongoing use
- Community evaluation report and presentations
- Initiating development of a video about current forms of community engagement in Wester Hailes

Presenting findings

The structure of the rest of this report is as follows: (1) the digital engagement projects are introduced followed by descriptions of community perspectives on each of them; (2) the effectiveness of the approach, which combined digital engagement and social history is discussed, followed by an attempt to sum up the legacy of the AHRC supported projects; (3) other forms of effective engagement identified by community actors are identified; (4) in an effort to deepen the analysis, archetypal routes to engagement are identified and situated within an 'Engaging Wester Hailes system map', which is briefly is described; (5) using the system map, assets, gaps and opportunities are identified; (6) the overall conclusions of the evaluation are summarised.

Findings

The digital engagement projects

Introduction

The two AHRC-funded research projects that received support were called *Community web2.0: Creative Control through Hacking* (£25,000) and *Ladders to the Cloud* (£40,000). The first project developed social history/health walks codebooks and accompanying plans for wall plaques, and supported the design and carving of the digital totem pole. The second project provided support for erecting the totem pole and for revival of a local newspaper in digital form: the *Digital Sentinel.*

These projects supported collaboration between academics and local community organisations to develop initiatives within the conceptual framework of *Community Hacking*. The initial idea was to explore ways in which communities could 'hack' the Big Society vision, to see "whether concepts and vocabularies emerging in relation to the Internet could usefully be applied to understandings of off-line contemporary community relations and practices" focusing particularly on "the role of hacking and read-writing as a characteristic of contemporary online practices and how this is mirrored in aspects of actual life within and across communities", and leading to "design interventions for the area that would offer 'write back' facilities as constructive hacking platforms". (http://www.chrisspeed.net/?page_id=797) The project was also "aimed at exploring the potential of information communication technology (ICT) for facilitating the ability of individuals and communities to meet everyday challenges by networking with each other and with service providers", allowing them particularly "to get by or overcome current reduction in service provision emanating from financial cuts". (http://www.communityhacking.org/about/)

It was interesting to note the lack of attention in the evaluation questions to the aspect of applying online concepts to understanding and intervening in the offline world, relative to questions about the role of ICTs in facilitating engagement. This was perhaps because the latter was more tangible and potentially offered more explicit and practical routes to addressing some specific community needs. At the same time, community actors continued to insist on the importance of reflecting on activities beyond those concerning digital engagement. They also drew on ideas from both online and offline worlds to frame their analysis of community relations and practices (as discussed later in this report) indicating that the original conceptual framework was still implicitly present.

The ways in which the local community experienced each of the three initiatives are described below, along with suggestions for how their impact might be enhanced in future.

The digital totem pole

The digital totem pole was designed as a means to access local news and information from a local *physical* site and to 'write back' using QR code readable links to relevant websites.

With the exception of one respondent who claimed to have seen young people frequently interacting with it, others who viewed the totem pole regularly said that they had rarely seen anyone with their phone out— except to take pictures of the totem pole (and themselves with the totem pole). A number of people commented that they did not have the sort of phones that would allow them to make use of the totem pole. They did not indicate that this lack of access made them feel they were missing anything.

It is possible that some of the QR links (leading to the Digital Sentinel; information about the totem pole on the WHALE Arts site; the Wester Hailes Community Council site; the From There to Here Facebook page; and the Wester Hailes section of the Tales of Things platform[2]) have suffered from insufficient investment in keeping them active and attractive to people interacting via the totem pole, but this was never mentioned.

While the digital element does not seem to attract much interest, the totem pole is still appreciated by many people who see it as good public art and as something that, while seeming rather strange and incongruous, contributes to a positive sense of place. Part of this positivity is that it has become a monument to 'not being vandalised' (this is its most frequently mentioned characteristic). This led some respondents to presume that the totem pole inspires some sort of appreciation or respect among the wider community. Some attributed this to a mystical element because of its links to indigenous peoples in North America.

The designs on the Wester Hailes totem pole, like those of its counterparts on the Northwest coast of North America, convey community stories. Local residents contributed significantly to the designs; many mentioned their involvement when asked about the totem pole. Participation was however limited relative to similar community projects because much of the actual carving needed to be done by a professional sculptor with a chain saw (assisted by a community member with woodworking experience) and erected with heavy machinery.

Part of the totem pole's allure may be ascribed to its location. It sits on a commanding site visible from the canal and the main road and at a crossroads of a well-used footpath that connects different neighbourhoods and community facilities such as the Wester Hailes Education Centre (secondary school, adult education and leisure centre) and the main plaza with shopping centre, library and other government

---

[2] Tales of Things allows users "to add stories to their own treasured objects and to connect to other people who share similar experiences. This will enable future generations to have a greater understanding of the object's past and offers a new way of preserving social history." This is facilitated using "an online platform which enables users to tag physical objects and share object-related stories and memories through homemade media…Tagging technology can be used to physically attach information (including hyperlinks) to real objects or places using a kind of barcode or label." (http://talesofthings.com/faq/) QR codes are the primary tagging technology used to date for Tales of Things and have been employed in several Wester Hailes projects. See the collection of Wester Hailes 'things' at http://talesofthings.com/thing/7308/.

services. Along with the restored and revitalised canal, the totem pole appears to redefine the Wester Hailes landscape.

It should also be mentioned that while many people expressed appreciation for the totem pole, several others claimed to have never noticed it, to have no interest in it and/or to have never heard anyone talk about it.

Developing the totem pole

There does seem to be sufficient interest in the totem pole that it is worth considering what else may be done with it in future, particularly as a focus for place-making. Several people talked about enhancing its value as a place by perhaps putting benches or picnic tables around it so that people might stop and enjoy the space. Bridge 8 Hub[3] bicycle tours (where participants are largely young people) sometimes stop at the totem pole and participants are encouraged to take out their phones to interact with it. It might be worth having a QR link to Bridge 8 and asking tour participants to leave behind some virtual graffiti about when they were at the totem pole. Some social history walks also include the totem pole and similarly guides could suggest specific opportunities for interaction. As in the case of other digital engagement projects, linking specific activities to the totem pole could enhance its use.

There may also be some potential for strengthening the Pacific Northwest coast connection. Canoeing is a key activity at Bridge 8 and the organisation has aspirations to set up exchanges with British Columbia, Canada. There is also both a local resident and a Health Agency staff person with artistic talents and interest in working in styles that bear resemblance to the indigenous art of that region.

It is worth considering proposals to put up another totem pole or poles in order to strengthen the contribution of the totem pole concept to a community narrative. The original idea was to erect several totem poles but the cost and complications (associated with planning permission) represented a major barrier. There could however be smaller versions (or virtual versions e.g. a totem pole on a screen at the library or the Healthy Living Centre[4]). It has been proposed that a totem pole at the latter site inviting people to communicate how they were feeling could be used to compile a barometer of community wellbeing. A digital totem pole with a specific focus may attract more interaction. It was also originally proposed that the existing totem pole be erected in the plaza with the idea that this would be a central location and people waiting for the bus might use it. There was clearly some logic to this idea but it seems likely that current negative perceptions of the plaza would have cancelled out the positive value of the totem pole.

The desire to link the totem pole QR codes to active local news sources contributed to the development of an online community news site as described below.

---

[3] Bridge 8 Hub (http://bridge8hub.co.uk/) is a social enterprise offering canal-based outdoor activities. It is situated in the Calders neighbourhood of Wester Hailes.
[4] The Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre provides a range of health, social care and family support services. Among other organisations, it houses the community led Wester Hailes Health Agency.
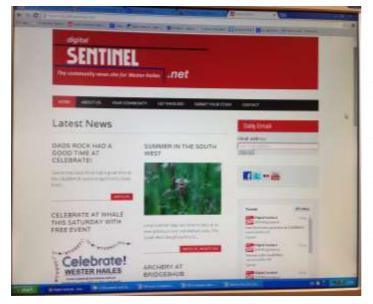
Summary of recommendations:

- **Build on placemaking value by enhancing the totem pole site Integrate totem pole more explicitly with community activities**
- **Potentially expand placemaking impact by reference to totem pole symbolism**
- **Possibly add additional (smaller or virtual) digital totem poles**

The Digital Sentinel

For many years Wester Hailes had its own local newspaper, the *Wester Hailes Sentinel*. The Sentinel, first published in 1976, was succeeded by the *West Edinburgh Times*, which closed in 2008 due to funding cuts. The newspaper was much missed and many people expressed interest in the possibility of its revival. The right moment for its reincarnation in digital form came when the totem pole was erected and local partners thought that it would be appropriate to have a QR code link to an active source of local news. Fortunately, there was a small amount of funding available in the *Ladders to the Cloud* grant that could be directed to setting up an online version of the former newspaper. The *Digital Sentinel* came into being and benefitted from additional support (£10,000) from the Carnegie Trust for its development.

The Digital Sentinel was seen as a way to help Wester Hailes residents access information and opportunities, address local issues, and also tell their own stories—particularly the positive stories about life in Wester Hailes that receive little coverage in the mainstream press. In Community Hacking terms, the latter function represents an opportunity for people in Wester Hailes to hack the stigmatised image of their community often conveyed in Edinburgh.

The Digital Sentinel has recently completed its first year of operation and is recognised by many people in Wester Hailes as having potential. However, it continues to have small numbers of readers and contributors. As staff of one partner organisation described the situation: "People say it's a great resource but not what they'll do with it."

Potential readers continue to laud the old paper Sentinel but show little interest in the online version and continually suggest that it would be great to have it "come through the door" again. Local residents also often mention the value of a

'What's On' print publication that they currently receive, which they wish was more locally focused and more frequent. The Digital Sentinel has the potential to effectively fulfil this function, and through the efforts of the current trainee Community Reporter, a lot of information about local activities is being posted—the challenge remains in getting people to access it. Few people interviewed reported viewing news online. They talked about liking to have a paper in their hands and of not making much use of the Internet in general. A number of people were not aware of the Digital Sentinel's existence. It became increasingly clear during the evaluation that there could be value in putting out an occasional print edition (which could be as simple as a folded double-sided A3 printout) in order to develop a readership who would then perhaps make the effort to go online. This print version could be delivered door to door or with a more limited distribution where copies would be available at key locations and distributed by active community members. It was also suggested that putting headlines up on screens at the library or Healthy Living Centre could be an effective way of transmitting news and attracting readers.

With regards to contributors, there are two types: those who contribute information of the 'What's On' sort; and those who contribute stories or other items they wish to share. With respect to the former, an effort was made during the course of this evaluation to encourage more organisations and active community members to regularly submit information about their activities. They should continue to be encouraged and asked how this could be made easier for them, e.g. a reminder, a custom form for their activities, etc. Similarly, they should continue to be encouraged to include links to the Digital Sentinel 'for updated information about activities' in their publications.

With respect to contributors submitting stories (or pictures, poems, recipes, etc.), these are few and far between. There was some development in this area when the Digital Sentinel was originally set up: training was offered and a number of local residents apparently got excited about contributing, with a few people becoming regular contributors. Unfortunately, contributions have diminished over time. Respondents offered several explanations for this: The first was that many people were simply not interested enough to regularly contribute on a voluntary basis. This explanation was often accompanied by comments about how the original Sentinel always had some paid workers/reporters, or about how small newspapers are often driven by one or two passionate people with the right skill set. Secondly, it was mentioned that many potential contributors needed more support than could feasibly be provided; this was most often in relation to their limited ICT skills. A third reason mentioned was that the management approach had shifted in ways that alienated existing and potential contributors. The initial approach was situated within a vision of local media as a vehicle for community development where the

emphasis was on empowering and supporting local people to tell their own stories. The current approach is on providing an effective local news site with emphasis on quantity and quality of content. This has led to more centralised control of the site, which limits opportunities for local contributors to post stories when and how they wish.

This evaluation process has indicated that all three of these issues are playing a part in limiting contributions, and also that there are some technical problems that are inhibiting contributors. As part of the mini experiment process described in the methodology, the Community Research Assistant sat with two potential contributors as they attempted to navigate the site and submit a story. There were several technical/interface problems, which meant that they were left feeling frustrated and reluctant to try submitting a story again in the future. The problems primarily concerned difficulties with the 'Submit a Story' page. When text was pasted into the text box, part of it became invisible making it appear that it had not been successfully entered. It was also not possible to submit .doc or .pdf files (only picture files were allowed). Most significantly, when the 'submit' button was clicked, the text simply disappeared and no automatic acknowledgment of receipt was displayed. This led contributors to suspect that their submissions had not been successful. Stories also often took some time to be posted so that contributors continued to fear that their submission hadn't worked. They also wondered if time-sensitive contributions would be posted in time to be relevant.

Developing the Digital Sentinel

Efforts to resolve these problems could encourage more people to contribute online, as could clearly communicating that help is available. Drop-in sessions or community cafés specific to the Digital Sentinel have not been very effective in attracting potential participants. A telephone helpline or offers to make 'house calls' may have better results. People can also be invited to write stories on paper or tell them orally and get help with transcribing/typing up (possibly through the Time Bank[5]).

Contributions might also be increased and enhanced by making explicit links between the Digital Sentinel and local activities. The mini experiments and the community system mapping exercise made it clear that there are many local actors with things to share that could be of benefit to other members of the community. However, they need a more specific invitation. Part of this invitation concerns providing a specific online space, such as a poetry or recipe corner,

---

[5] The West Edinburgh Time Bank operates out of the Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre. Most of its members are Wester Hailes residents and it has been effective in connecting up needs and resources.

gardening tips, a local artists gallery or nature notes (a local resident told someone active with the Digital Sentinel that the current lack of cygnets on the canal should be reported). The other component involves linking each space to a specific group of people or activity, such as the smART craft class or the Flour Pot Budget Cookery Group or the gardening groups, and asking them to commit to regular contributions. As former Sentinel readers frequently commented, what they particularly enjoyed was seeing themselves and their activities/creations documented. Wester Hailes has a plethora of interesting activities and people with many interests, all of which could logically be shared with a broader community via the Digital Sentinel.

The mini experiment to enhance engagement with the Digital Sentinel included outreach to agencies managing potentially related sets of activities. One of these was the Digital Skills Academy, which offers IT training and drop in support at WHALE and at Clovenstone Community Centre on behalf of Prospect Community Housing and the Jobcentre. The Community Research Assistant both encouraged a potential Digital Sentinel contributor to participate in the drop in and asked the Digital Skills Academy manager and instructors for permission to make a presentation about the Digital Sentinel to learners, as well as to explore potential collaboration. The Community Reporter was invited to do a Digital Sentinel demonstration in order to introduce him to learners and facilitate ongoing contact. Digital Skills Academy staff showed themselves to be very willing collaborators but there was no significant response from the (very small) group of learners. This ICT training is an excellent but underused resource. The current instructor is keen to pursue closer collaboration with the Digital Sentinel to publicise activities and recruit learners. There is similarly an opportunity for the Community Reporter to spend time with ICT learners in order to do regular stories on ICT learning experiences and offer tips adapted to the needs of local residents.

An effort was also made to integrate reading (of both old Sentinel newspapers and the Digital Sentinel) and writing for the Digital Sentinel into ESOL and literacy classes offered at Gate 55[6]. The manager of these classes expressed interest in trying this out with support from the Community Research Assistant but did not follow-up. It was clear that ongoing funding cuts had made it very difficult to effectively offer these classes and this probably limited capacity to explore new possibilities.

In summary, it appears that the Digital Sentinel has potential to meet a range of community needs. There are some issues to address, as well as some

---

[6] Gate 55 is a community centre in Sighthill that offers activities and learning opportunities ranging from early childhood to adult education and employability.

opportunities to pursue, and dealing with these will require further resources. This evaluation process has indicated that this would constitute a worthwhile investment. Unfortunately, resources for even basic maintenance of the Digital Sentinel are currently lacking.

There is a process underway to further enhance collaboration among community actors in Wester Hailes in line with efforts to increase joint working. This is partly due to a move by Edinburgh City Council to introduce a Total Place[7] approach. The Digital Sentinel represents an excellent platform for enhancing communication and connecting up the different components of the community system. Hopefully its role will be considered as collaborative efforts develop.

Summary of recommendations:

- **Resolve technical problems with 'Submit a Story'**
- **Make explicit links to relevant community activities and provide themed spaces to attract regular contributors**
- **Provide targeted assistance to contributors**
- **Distribute occasional print editions to attract wider readership**
- **Use the Digital Sentinel as a platform for community collaboration**

Social History Walks Codebook

The development of social history walks by the Wester Hailes Health Agency[8] represented a way of meeting several objectives, including promoting exercise and participation in social activities, and sharing stories about the history of Wester Hailes in ways that could encourage a sense of place and belonging. Ten walks were developed around the neighbourhoods and areas of interest of Wester Hailes. It was expected that these walks could be accompanied by a walk leader or taken independently. It was thought that development of a codebook would help people to access more information both from the short description in the codebook and through a QR code link, as described below:

---

[7] "Total Place looks at new ways of working together to make life better for local people." (http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20133/community_planning/624/get_involved_in_community_planning)

[8] The community led Wester Hailes Health Agency seeks "to enable local people to take action that makes a positive impact on their own and their community's physical, mental and emotional well-being". (https://sites.google.com/a/whhealthagency.org.uk/home/home)

It is also intended to introduce i-Pads to these walks so that the guide can show participants additional online historical photographs & maps of the areas they are passing through & the purpose of the booklets is to enable these participants & other walkers to access their own relevant online information independently. This is achieved by using a suitably enabled mobile phone to scan the QR codes on each page of the booklet which lead to a dedicated web page relevant to the particular Walk underway and providing further (& easily updated) multi-media historical information on the locality concerned. (http://www.communityhacking.org/code-book/code-book)

Unfortunately the QR codes that should lead to "regularly updated information, photographs and maps etc for the walk or topic concerned" (Wester Hailes Social History Walks Codebook, p. 3) only lead to a web page with the same information that is in the codebooks. As a result, the QR codes in the codebook do not currently serve any purpose. These same QR codes were also supposed to be on plaques in the areas where walks had been developed but these plaques have not been put in place because of cost and complications (particularly with respect to securing permission to install them).

Many people in Wester Hailes have seen the codebooks, most often because they have been given one or asked to distribute some at events. However, some regular walkers claim to have never seen them at all. None of the respondents answered affirmatively when asked if they had used the codebooks (people directly involved in designing or promoting the social history walks were not asked this question).

This indicates that the codebooks are not currently serving their intended purpose. Organised walks were also reported to be attracting dwindling numbers of people. It was therefore decided that one of the mini experiments in the evaluation process should explore ways to reinvigorate the social history walks and potentially make the codebooks more useful. One key idea was to recruit new walk leaders and encourage them to appropriate the neighbourhood walks and integrate their own stories. These could then be added to the Social History Walks section of the Health Agency web site[9] so that the QR codes would actually lead to the promised additional information. A number of local walk leaders might then feel ownership for this information and therefore make an effort to keep it up to date and encourage others to add their own stories.

In fact it turned out to be very difficult to recruit social history walk leaders. Engaged residents who lived in different neighbourhoods were approached but they generally declined. Reasons given included being too busy, facing physical limitations, and the lack of response to their previous efforts to organise walks. Only one local resident agreed to pursue the possibility. A few new walk leaders

---

[9] See Social History Walks section of the Health Agency web site at
https://sites.google.com/a/whhealthagency.org.uk/home/physical-activities/walking-group2/social-history-walk-details-and-further-information

did come forward but they were not very interested in the social history focus. They suggested instead nature walks, foraging walks and walks connecting up the community gardens. These could potentially be integrated with information about local history but this was not the piece that people seemed most excited about.

Developing the code books

There may be potential to better link the social history walks with the totem pole in ways that would strengthen both as mentioned above. Some walks could begin at the totem pole, which is an ideal starting point for walks along the canal for example, and participants could be given specific opportunities to leave their virtual mark on the totem pole. There was discussion about associating each walk with a specific design created by a talented Health Agency worker, which have something of a Native American style. These would be integrated into a new version of the codebook, which could integrate the totem pole image and concept in some way that could reference the multiple stories of Wester Hailes and the opportunity for residents to add their own stories to the walks/totem pole.

At the same time, it is worth considering whether digital technology could be used more effectively to promote walking through tools other than the codebooks. For example, there has been discussion of an app that would support an emerging 'Walk on the Wild Side' project by providing people, particularly children and families, with information about local nature as they move about the area.

Walk on the Wild Side is one of a number of walking projects existing or in development in Wester Hailes. The library has been active in promoting walking, including walks that connect up libraries in Edinburgh. SCOREscotland[10] also organises walks. It would be useful for all of the agencies involved to explore possible collaboration that might result in a more integrated approach to promoting walking and connecting people to local places, as well as to each other. One idea might be to organise a local walking festival. It could be attached to something like Jane's Walks (as in the urbanist Jane Jacobs), which has become a very successful global festival that invites and supports people to organise walks with goals similar to those of the Wester Hailes social history walks. It has an effective online platform to support its growing movement. (See http://www.janeswalk.org)
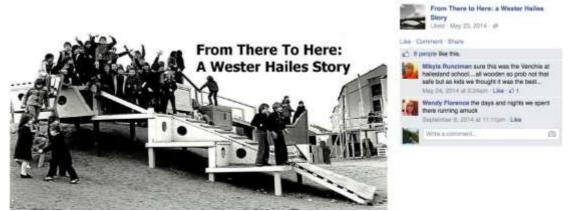
Summary of recommendations:

- **Continue efforts to recruit new walk leaders and invite them to develop walks related to any theme that interests them**
- **Make more explicit links to the totem pole**

---

[10] SCOREscotland strives to "work in partnership with others to address the causes and effects of racism and to promote race equality" and to "break down barriers to the full participation of minority ethnic communities in all aspects of civic life". (www.scorescotland.org.uk) It is based at WHALE in the Westburn neighbourhood of Wester Hailes.

- **Increase cooperation among organisations involved in promoting walking and better align their activities; explore other opportunities for using digital technology**
- **Consider organising a community wide walking event or festival**

From There to Here blog and Facebook page

As was mentioned in the Introduction, the 'From There to Here' blog (https://hailesmatters.wordpress.com) and Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/FromThereToHereaWesterHailesStory) are considered important components of local digital engagement efforts. They were created as a result of the opportunity provided by the extensive archive of photographs and articles that Prospect Community Housing Association inherited when the Sentinel newspaper closed down. These online platforms have been effective both in creating a sense of place and of shared history, and providing current information. They have been credited with having revived the Wester Hailes Fun Run and with having contributed to moving forward the campaign for an accessible pedestrian underpass joining the Healthy Living Centre with the shopping centre.

The role of social history

While social history was cited as a contributor to reviving community activities and strengthening campaigns, some respondents downplayed its role in engagement and others claimed that it was as much an obstacle as a facilitator. There is a persistent community narrative about a golden age of engagement in Wester Hailes. Accordingly, when the goals of this community evaluation were initially articulated (during the 18 March 2014 Community Logic Modelling session), the first question concerned whether the AHRC supported projects had contributed to *reviving* local democracy and engagement. Any conversation with engaged Wester Hailes residents who have lived in the community for a long time is likely to involve mention of both the early days when people had to find ways to fill the many gaps in provision themselves and of the Representative Council and the constituent neighbourhood councils (closed in 2008). Wester Hailes is particular in having a history of tremendous investment in setting up and staffing local democratic structures. People laud this golden age and mourn

15

its disappearance, although deeper discussion often leads to comments about how the Representative Council supported but did not empower.[11]

Older residents frequently talked about the tremendous community engagement that got the 'huts'[12] erected and various community facilities and services set up, a time effectively portrayed in the 1985 film, *The Huts: a film from Wester Hailes*. The activities of this time have served as both an inspiration and a source of confidence for current efforts but have also undermined current forms of engagement by making people feel that the golden age is gone and today is characterised by apathy. After a showing of 'The Huts' during a week of Wester Hailes celebration events in August 2014, one local resident commented: "There's no spirit in Wester Hailes anymore." This was a recurring refrain throughout the evaluation process, which led to an attempt to tackle this negative comparison of present with past by documenting current forms of engagement and initiating production of a video to communicate these, as well as including them in a system map.

Narratives about the superiority of community engagement in bygone days can also serve to limit the aspirations and roles of newcomers, as do the images of Wester Hailes residents in the old photographs. The community has worked hard over the years to break down negative stereotypes and demonstrate that, as stated in 'The Huts',"People in Wester Hailes are just like people anywhere else." This has met with a certain degree of success in terms of communicating an image of Wester Hailes characterised by more than poverty and anti-social behaviour, while at the same time failing to tackle the stereotype of a Wester Hailes community member as white, English-speaking and with some degree of Scottish ancestry. Furthermore, in the course of this evaluation, two comments were noted that communicated a belief that community engagement may have diminished in part as a result of an increasingly diverse community.

One of the most striking things noted in interviews with local residents was the experience of several people who had found a 'haven' in Wester Hailes after having suffered in other places from discrimination related to poverty and mental health. This may be an indication of another chapter in the social history of Wester Hailes that could usefully be communicated and extended to a broader range of newcomers.

Is digital engaging?
The initiatives described above do not seem to have met expectations with respect to digitally engaging Wester Hailes residents. Many active citizens in the community continue to make little use of email. Some of the contributors to the Digital Sentinel do not go online to read it. While time banks and other 'sharing economy' mechanisms are expanding worldwide based on digital platforms, the

---

[11] Some respondents talked about receiving support to join activities but not to develop the skills such as fundraising or the networks to sustain them. One also described being supported to take on a role in the representative structure and then feeling their opinions were not welcome. Another mentioned having taken the initiative to engage with a process and then having unwanted accompaniment by a paid worker once the process looked like it might have serious outcomes.

[12] The 'huts' were pre-fabricated ready-to-assemble buildings that were surplus from military operations. They were provided to the Wester Hailes community to house (once assembled) various community facilities that were missing in the original development.

local West Edinburgh Time Bank operates through face-to-face meetings and phone calls. The current AHRC-funded project *Communities within Spaces of Flow* has tried to build on the work of the Time Bank by testing a [LinkLocal](#) app developed within the [6th Sense Transport project](#) to link people travelling between different places with others who need a lift or something collecting. Similar to other digital engagement efforts, it appears that there has been little take up to date; a lot of organising of lifts and collecting things goes on in Wester Hailes but it seems to be primarily managed by phone.

There are many (mainly young) people who are regularly online but they appear to engage primarily in gaming and social networking that does not have direct links to local engagement. Some respondents pointed out that ICTs and social history constitute a challenging combination, with older people being most interested in the latter while younger people are more skilled and interested in the former.

That said, it should be noted that there is a small group of local residents, who are often also community organisation staff or volunteers, who make extensive use of digital technologies, including in ways that facilitate their own engagement and that of others.

Most of the digitally disconnected respondents did not seem to feel that they were missing anything by not being online. As mentioned above, there are some good ITC training resources available in Wester Hailes that are undersubscribed. When these resources were pointed out to people who might benefit, they generally displayed little enthusiasm about pursuing them. Many of them reported having other ways of interacting with their (mainly local) social networks. They also spoke about doing things that got them out of the house and literally into the same room with other people. Several Wester Hailes residents mentioned having experienced social isolation and/or being aware that other members of their community were isolated. Most respondents bemoaned the loss of physical spaces to interact. They did not seem to think that virtual spaces could compensate.

This indicates that using digital engagement to address lack of mobility and resulting isolation may actually be counter-productive in communities like Wester Hailes, where people seek face-to-face contact with nearby neighbours, in contrast to the broader trends described below:

 "The networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, a sense of belonging and social identity are now less likely to reside in place and are less able to react to local need. At the same time there is growing recognition of the importance of integrating digital technology and health (Tinder Foundation, 2011) and a need to find new mechanisms to support an ageing population with increasing accessibility needs (Musselwhite & Haddad, 2010)." (http://www.sixthsensetransport.com/mobile-apps/linklocal)

In Wester Hailes "place related connectivity of traditional communities" (Ibid.) was still very much in evidence. People currently make arrangements by telephone or by dropping in at local community facilities. This represents an opportunity for a chat (and perhaps a cup of tea) in addition to organising future activities.

At the same time, and somewhat counter-intuitively, a local resident active in the development of the OPiT projects described them as being all about 'being

outside'. The totem pole is outside; the walks take place outside; the photos on the blog and in the Digital Sentinel are largely of activities taking place outside. It is unusual to hear digital technology projects framed in this way, and also interesting to note that in Wester Hailes being outside is important with respect to fresh air and exercise for health, and also in relation to reducing isolation, appropriating public space, and moving beyond the confines of one's house or neighbourhood.

Turning to the capacity of digital engagement to address other needs, one evaluation question concerned whether ITCs helped with access to employment. Several respondents talked about having to go online to meet job search quotas as a condition to receive welfare benefits. This increased their amount of online activity but did not seem to create enthusiasm about the opportunities offered by the digital world. It was more likely to encourage negative associations. It also did not seem to help people to find jobs. The jobseekers faced a range of barriers, including gaps in their employment history created by a range of personal challenges. This perhaps made it unlikely that their applications would be retained in an online application process for scarce jobs. When asked if they had experienced any positive outcomes, one respondent mentioned the rare receipt of a response thanking them for their unsuccessful application.

While digital technologies do not currently seem to represent a direct route to meeting personal needs or enhancing community engagement in Wester Hailes, they may be able to support other forms of engagement. For example, digital technology might be applicable to addressing some current challenges, such as meeting urgent watering or weeding needs in the expanding community gardens. Such an initiative could start by using text messages[13] to alert people to these needs, and then gradually work up to using more sophisticated systems, which would help people to learn more about growing food and about their local environment.

As mentioned earlier, on-line platforms, of which the Digital Sentinel is a prime example, can play an important role in cementing and developing collaboration among community actors and helping to align their initiatives. SCOREscotland has also been working to get its members to make better use of social media and is a likely collaborator in ongoing digital engagement efforts.

Legacy of the AHRC funded projects
As described above, digitally engaging Wester Hailes residents has been a challenge. The social history focus seems to have had some benefits but was not generally cited as a prime motivator for engagement. There do however appear to be some indirect effects on place identity and attachment. Many people in Wester Hailes express a strong and positive connection to the place they live and it is probable that the opportunities offered by OPiT initiatives to tell and share stories, and to come together in a range of ways, has reinforced this sense of place and community.

Overall, the OPiT projects have not really been appropriated by the broader community. When asked about the projects, many respondents associated them

---

[13] Prospect's strategy of sending out text messages to all of its tenants has proved an effective means of letting people know about events and opportunities.

with a particular individual whose efforts they generally appreciated while they themselves did not feel any ownership. As a result of this lack of take-up, the digital engagement initiatives have had limited impact to date with respect to meeting individual needs and empowering community change. These initiatives have however created physical and virtual infrastructure that has potential to support local democracy and engagement, particularly if closer links are made to other forms of engagement.

Working together on the OPiT projects has served to cement collaboration among local organisations. AHRC support and partnership with academics to plan and carry out complex projects over several years has left a legacy of strong relationships that bodes well for future work. The existing constellation of collaborating anchor organisations provides a base for developing broader community-wide collaboration, where the existing group of partners can act as inspiration, backbone and facilitator.

AHRC support has contributed to making this collaborative space an open, flexible and thoughtful one. From an original idea concerning whether online concepts could be applied to understanding offline community relations and practices, the projects evaluated by this research evolved in emergent ways. An initiative premised on the potential of 'community hacking' stayed true to its nature by allowing itself to be continually hacked as new relationships and opportunities surfaced. An interesting example of this was the creation of the totem pole. One of the earlier (and rarely mentioned) community hacking activities was a "memory shed" where archival photographs inspired people to record their memories. The memories were then linked to the photographs using QR code labels that led to the recorded memories on the [Tales of Things website](). The full title of the project *Tales of Things and Electronic Memory* was abbreviated as TOTeM which led to musing about a totem pole and ended in the physical manifestation of one.

It should also be noted that the £10,000 allocated to community partners to use as they deemed fit has had several positive outcomes. Firstly, it recognised the significant investment of time in the evaluation process by the community partners and gave them the opportunity to cover some of their costs--although none of the funding was actually used for this purpose. The funding did allow the community partners to sustain one of the projects being evaluated (the Digital Sentinel), which meant that the evaluation process could both explore ways to enhance its impact and provide information that could contribute to decision making about its future. The funding also allowed the partners to pursue possibilities that emerged from the evaluation, including designating funding for a video about current community engagement in Wester Hailes. Overall the availability of the £10,000 created an additional space for key community actors to have discussions about current priorities.

Small amounts of money can be very important with respect to offering space for reflection and creative responses to needs and opportunities as they arise. This was also evident within the second AHRC funded project Ladders to the Cloud where a small amount of available funding allowed the community partners to respond to the need/opportunity for an active local news source linked to the totem pole by reviving the Sentinel newspaper in digital form. There are other

such examples in the recent history of Wester Hailes, which demonstrate the value of some flexibility in the use of funds; allowing a line in the budget for 'emergent opportunities' is a good idea.

Other forms of engagement - Arts, gardening and a cup of tea…

As described in the introduction to this report, the community partners did not want to limit the scope of the evaluation to digital engagement. They wanted to know what forms of engagement were effective in general. The evaluation process indicated that arts, gardening and sharing a cup of tea or a meal are activities that currently seem to effectively engage people in Wester Hailes.

Teatime at the Calders Community Garden by Gavin Henry

Engagement through arts

Wester Hailes offers a diverse and highly creative range of arts-based activities, which are broadly accessible to the community. Most of these are run out of the community arts centre WHALE Arts and a quick scan of their web site (www.whalearts.co.uk) gives a sense of what's on offer, including the engaged and engaging drama group *Whales with a cause*; *Dads Rock*, a musical playgroup by and for dads and their children; *Street Arts*, which takes artists out to the streets to engage children in a range of creative activities; and *Stitch'n'Time*, a highly inclusive textile arts group whose products are geared to meeting community needs.

Many respondents mentioned their participation in local arts activities as their entry point into the community and the impetus for developing their confidence and their capacity as active participants at multiple levels. The existing community offer has clear potential to develop further in Wester Hailes and beyond. More stable funding is needed for ongoing proven activities, which would allow for more effective delivery than currently results from having to

continually start from scratch to fundraise, organise and do outreach. There are also potential opportunities for spinoff social enterprises and Dads Rock is an example of one activity where the organisers are currently exploring this possibility.

Most of the current arts activities are offered in the WHALE building in the Westburn neighbourhood of Wester Hailes and several respondents mentioned the need to extend activities to other neighbourhoods. Many Wester Hailes residents find it a challenge to move among neighbourhoods, which are divided by major thoroughfares and unpleasant underpasses. They often express concerns about safety and some have limited mobility. Some people also pointed out that making arts activities available in more neighbourhoods would not only make them more accessible but could also help to transform the neighbourhoods through the products of community arts. Many saw the potential of arts to make an expanded contribution to placemaking in Wester Hailes.

Community gardens--the new huts?

In interviews and in discussions about citizen engagement, community gardens were mentioned most often as the activity that currently has the most momentum. The Calders Community Garden developed by the Wester Hailes Health Agency and cared for by participants in its Green Gym programme has now been joined by other 'growing hubs' in Calders and in Clovenstone developed by Wester Hailes Edible Estates, which also operates out of the Health Agency. There are plans for additional gardens in other Wester Hailes neighbourhoods to be managed in collaboration with local organisations.

The community gardens offer ideal spaces for diverse community members to come together, develop social ties and new skills and have the experience of growing their own food and transforming the places they live. Children are also attracted to the gardens and their needs are increasingly being taken into consideration, as are opportunities to involve their parents. As a result, the growing spaces may also become places for children to grow in innovative play spaces, thus reinventing a Wester Hailes tradition of community created adventure playgrounds, or in local parlance 'venchies' (there are also discussions about recreating more traditional venchies).

Food growing is linked to other activities such as cooking and eating together, where there is opportunity to make use of garden produce and therefore learn what to do with it. This is particularly important given that food insecurity is currently a significant feature in Wester Hailes in terms of accessing both adequate quality and quantity. Food production also has the potential to be the basis for social enterprises including perhaps reviving a former proposal for sending 'Grown in Wester Hailes' produce and/or lunchtime fare to the city centre on a canal boat market stall/café. This range of different activities, social

interaction and the momentum for further development bear considerable resemblance to the opportunities created by the installation of the Huts in earlier times.

Where to get a cup of tea?

As mentioned earlier, Wester Hailes residents frequently mourned the loss of spaces to meet informally and socialise—to have a cup of tea. Such spaces offer opportunities to overcome social isolation, to develop social networks to meet one's own needs, and also to potentially come together and engage in making the community better. The community gardens are beginning to fill this gap for some people but there is also a need for more indoor spaces--particularly given the weather!

As well as enjoying a cup of tea or coffee, it is important that there be places to eat (and ideally cook) together. It was mentioned above that food insecurity is an issue. Fuel poverty adds an additional challenge to enjoying good home cooked meals. Coming together to eat is one way to combat this problem and has many other positive outcomes, as is very visible during the gatherings of the Flour Pot Budget Cookery Group. The group meets weekly at the Health Agency to cook and share healthy meals (increasingly making use of ingredients from local gardens). This is an important social gathering and many of the diners go on to work in one of the community gardens afterwards.

A number of previously existing community spaces have disappeared. None of the original huts remain in use and some community centres such as that at Calders have fallen into disrepair after being closed down. The Health Agency used to serve as a community centre of sorts for Dumbryden before it moved to the Healthy Living Centre. Its new location is more central and therefore potentially more accessible to people from different neighbourhoods (although serious accessibility problems have resulted from the lack of both a nearby bus stop and a wheelchair/pushchair accessible underpass from the shopping centre). However many respondents remarked that at its new location where it is integrated with a range of medical services, it has a more clinical feel and seems like "a place where you only go if you have an appointment". The Health Agency's own reception reinforces this feeling and seems to serve as a barrier to interaction with staff who "are now out of sight in offices". Some respondents missed being able to just go and have a chat and a cup of tea with whoever was at the reception and generally feel they could just drop in whenever they liked. The Healthy Living Centre does have a small café with a few tables but again it feels like somewhere you might go while waiting for an appointment rather than a place you might go to spend time with neighbours and friends.

The broader community of Wester Hailes also lacks coffee shops and other meeting spaces. The Clovenstone Community Centre is one exception and it has a café which is open in the early part of day from Monday to Thursday. The Calders Community flat offers some opportunities for informal interaction but it has

space limitations and relies on volunteer staffing, which means that it is only open to small groups at specific times. WHALE serves as a community centre of sorts for the Westburn neighbourhood but it has never had the resources required to open the café that was in the original plan. The library functions as quite an effective community meeting space but it must also fulfil its essential function as a library, which places some restrictions on what can occur there.

Residents and staff of local organisations have a variety of suggestions for how to tackle this lack of informal spaces, which include overcoming some of the limitations of the existing places mentioned above and creating new spaces. Additional resources would allow existing centres to stay open for longer hours and to staff informal spaces (including on weekends when many facilities are currently closed).

With respect to new spaces, there has been discussion about the possibility of a new 'pod' on a site that has been set aside within the new housing development, centrally located between the Healthy Living Centre and the shopping centre. It was suggested at a Health Agency board meeting that it would be appropriate to begin by installing a yurt "to see what sort of space it becomes" in order to then decide on the characteristics of a more permanent structure. It was suggested that the Health Agency Drop In could be located there, which seemed like a very good way to restore the more informal space that was lost in moving the Health Agency to the more functional and in many ways better space it now occupies in the Healthy Living Centre. There seemed to be general consensus around the idea that the pod should offer both arts-based and food-focused activities as well as informal meeting space. Similar ideas were suggested for an abandoned garage located across from the shopping centre, which it was suggested had the particular advantage of being next to the canal and could therefore more fully integrate the canal and all its assets with the broader community space.

Further analysis

Routes to engagement and the Engaging Wester Hailes System Map

Interviews with Wester Hailes residents concerning their life histories of engagement both contributed to the findings described above and allowed for identification of a number of routes to engagement, which can be illustrated using the archetypes below. The archetypes are divided into four categories representing different levels of engagement ranging from: awaiting an invitation to participate; pursuing particular interests; helping out; and taking initiative. It should be noted that individual people might fit into more than one archetype both at the same time or at different stages in their lives. A community organiser may draw sustenance from participating in arts activities while an initially reluctant participant may go on to become a community leader.

Archetypes of Routes to Engagement	
Level of Participation	**Description of archetypal route to engagement**
Awaiting Invitation	Reluctant Participant - Would like to participate but fearful of unfamiliar situations; reluctant to take initiative; needs support
	Participant - Ready to join in activities and events; does not necessarily take initiative to organise them
	Newcomer - Trying to make a new home but does not always feel welcome; may have many capabilities but be uncertain about if and how to invest them in local community
Pursuing Interests	Artistically engaged - Finds an art form they enjoy and it becomes a vehicle for a range of benefits and other possibilities
	Gardener - Likes to get their hands dirty and cultivate healthy places
	Potentially digitally engaged - Making use of the available digital platforms but not necessarily directly motivated by the possibilities of ITCs
Helping Out	Hut Builder - Hands on team worker in clearly defined projects/community events
	Welcoming friend - Invites and supports other to participate in community activities
Taking Initiative	Community Storyteller - Interested in their community and the perspectives of everyone who lives there; able to articulate and share the stories that create community identity
	Natural leader - Able to enthuse and motivate others
	Facilitator - Brings to bear needed skills and resources to help make various community initiatives work more effectively
	Ideator - Brings big ideas to the table
	Campaigner - Stands up for the community's rights and makes sure needs are met
	Organiser - Takes responsibility to make things happen in the community

These archetypes (indicated by circles), including their particular assets and needs, are portrayed at the centre of a system map of community engagement in Wester Hailes. This system map can be viewed in Prezi format via the following link: http://prezi.com/p7cr0bu26g79/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

In order to provide opportunities for people to follow their different routes to engagement, a range of activities is required. These activities need to be structured in ways that ensure that potential participants are informed of opportunities, that reluctant participants feel invited, and that roles are available for those who want to help out. Space also needs to be made for those who want to initiate activities or play other leadership roles in the community. This means that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to engaging people. The 'hard to

engage' are actually those for whom a route to engagement is not currently available in their community. The fact that people follow more than one route means that activities should be linked so that engagement with one part of the system opens doors to other opportunities for participation.

The system map shows the range of existing activities (indicated by broken squares) and also physical places (indicated by unbroken squares) in Wester Hailes, along with their assets and shortcomings or needs. The goal is to portray the range of activities/places and their correspondence with people's needs, and also the things that the activities and places need to be more effective or valuable. It is assumed that some of these latter needs may be fulfilled using the assets held by people, organisations and other activities or places.

Local organisations (represented by larger circles—because they are composed of people) offer the activities in which people engage and create spaces for engagement. They are represented by different sizes indicating their current significance in the community landscape, as explored in this study, and aligned along a larger circle according to the extent to which they are working in collaboration

The local community system is situated within a broader system of policy and governance, some elements of which support (green font) and others which undermine (red font) the effective functioning of the community engagement system.

The black text boxes on the outer edge of the system map highlight the community characteristics that emerge from the interaction of the overall system. These are grouped into challenges and opportunities, which if respectively confronted and seized will contribute to community resilience.

There are many links among the different components of the community engagement system and showing all of these would make the map unreadable, but it can be manipulated to highlight different sub-sets of relationships. The overall system will of course continue to evolve and changes, or different perspectives, can be reflected in the system map by the community organisations that continue to use it.

For the purposes of the current evaluation, the system map was used to identify key assets, gaps and opportunities. These are primarily related to the changing demographics of the community and physical characteristics of the area; the opportunities that arise from these changes and from existing collaborative community infrastructure; as well as gaps in support for seizing current opportunities and confronting challenges.

Assets

Collaborative relationships among effective community organisations provide a diverse offer and achieve 'BOLD' outcomes

The existing constellation of local organisations collectively offers diverse and creative activities that engage a variety of people. The outcomes they achieve with very limited resources are in line with a range of local and national targets. They are already fulfilling many of the objectives of Edinburgh City Council initiatives such as BOLD (which stands for Better Outcomes Leaner Delivery) and Total Place (see footnote 7).

The real greening of Wester Hailes

The Wester Hailes estate was built on farmland on the outskirts of Edinburgh in the 1960s. It was envisaged as a green and open place where people could enjoy the outdoor spaces of their neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, those spaces turned out to be uninviting and were not conducive to either social interaction or physical activity. Furthermore, the covering over of the section of the Union Canal that passed through Wester Hailes deprived the community of an important natural and recreational asset.

The Wester Hailes section of the canal was reopened in 2001 as part of the Millennium Link project that made the Union Canal navigable once more between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Its restoration has had a significant visual impact on Wester Hailes and the canal now serves as an important amenity. People make frequent reference to it and it seems to contribute significantly to the place identify of Wester Hailes.

It appears to have fostered an interest in nature and provided space for new activities such as those offered at Bridge 8 hub, as well as fishing and bird watching/feeding, which seem to have particular appeal for families. The canal towpath is also a well-used cycle way and footpath and serves to connect Wester

Hailes to other areas of Edinburgh. The Gehl Architects placemaking study could be revisited for its recommendations on improving on these assets.

Hailes Quarry Park, which adjoins the canal, is as large and varied green space that is co-managed my community members and local organisations. It has a popular outdoor gym and a range of family oriented activities. The Calders Community Garden also borders the canal and offers an inviting social space. The expansion of community gardens is making an important contribution to what could be described as the real greening of Wester Hailes. All of these assets, around which momentum seems to be growing, are contributing to a sense of

Wester Hailes as an increasingly green and inviting place, shifting its reputation from a place to be avoided to a place to be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

Gaps

Lack of information about what's on in Wester Hailes

There is a lot going on in Wester Hailes but people are not always well informed about events and opportunities. There is a need for an effective communication channel, for which the Digital Sentinel could logically form the backbone if aligned with other community infrastructure.

Newcomers not being sufficiently welcomed and included

Changing demographics are bringing new needs, challenges and opportunities. Newcomers need to be recognised in the community image (new stories and histories should be shared) and also better served with respect to community activities and opportunities for engagement.

Wester Hailes is seen by many residents as a place where people are good to each other, 'a haven'. For others it feels less welcoming. Some visible minority respondents talked about experiencing intimidating behaviours and damage to their homes or cars. Police statistics document the presence of hate crime in the community. Children are sometimes reluctant to participate in mainstream recreational activities for fear of exposing themselves to racist behaviours they have experienced at school.

Gaps in basic infrastructural provision and unresponsive local government

Wester Hailes still seems to face challenges with respect to provision of basic infrastructure. Community actors waste a lot of energy trying to get core needs met; energy that could be better employed elsewhere. Key examples during the period of this evaluation were related to access to the Healthy Living Centre, which in its first year of operation has been inaccessible to many people needing health services. This was due to both an inadequate underpass that involves

going up and down stairs (and crossing a large car park) and lack of a nearby bus stop. There have been many efforts by the local community to get these needs met, while councillors claim they do not hear enough from Wester Hailes residents. The local Neighbourhood office, although physically located in Wester Hailes, is seen by the local community as very inaccessible. There is clearly a breakdown in communication and/or a problem at the level of service delivery that needs to be addressed

Lack of recognition and support for the work of community organisations

The tremendous work being done by community organisations seems to go largely unrecognised by government. This is evident in the scant attention paid to what is happening in the community while introducing initiatives like BOLD and Total Place that ignore and duplicate processes that are already underway.

Local community initiatives are also undermined in ways such as paving over citizen-managed green spaces or failing to grant permission for community initiatives that will clearly lead to improvements.

Inadequate funding for proven activities

Many effective community initiatives are underfunded, which creates tremendous stress for community organisations that invest an unreasonable proportion of their human resources in fundraising, have no certainty about continuity of programming, and no safety net when things go wrong (as for example when the illness of a SCOREscotland staffperson licensed to drive a van put a whole camping trip at risk). Participants are also stressed by the uncertainty or vulnerability of activities; in one case, the positive mental health outcomes for Stitch'n'Time participants were reduced by fears that this very important activity in their lives might not continue. It was also noted that ongoing cuts are resulting in provision of funding that ticks boxes without delivering results, such as through shortening the length of sessions in ways that make it very difficult to achieve learning and wellbeing objectives.

With respect to funding, it is worth noting that there are some assets in the community held by the Land & Property Trust. This evaluation process failed to surface an explanation concerning exactly how this entity works and if and how the assets benefit the community.

Opportunities

Better collaboration among community actors and with local government

There is tremendous collaboration among key organisations in Wester Hailes but this could be extended to all of the organisations working in the area to ensure that activities are appropriately aligned to meet the range of needs and routes to engagement, and to help facilitate transition among the stages of people's life histories of engagement. Closer collaboration among local organisations could ensure that initial contact with any one of them leads people to whatever else they need within the community system (the system map could be a helpful resource). SCOREscotland and Prospect/CHAI use this approach among its own

projects, i.e. a one-stop entry point geared toward the 'hard to reach' or 'difficult to engage'.

A particular effort needs to be made to close the gap mentioned above between community actors and local government. An Open Space event planned for 2015 could offer an excellent opportunity to connect up all of the pieces of the community system. It should ideally be accompanied by support for follow up to keep the community connected, possibly using the Digital Sentinel as a platform and staffing it with someone playing a 'community connector' role.

Building these relationships could produce a very effective Total Place approach. The groundwork has already been laid and local government could logically pay attention to the work of community organisations and effectively follow their lead in order to meet the goals established in the Community Plan recently presented by the Neighbourhood Partnership.

If approved, the Community Empowerment Bill may open up new opportunities for community organisations to take on provision of basic services and play a bigger role in directing development of the area.

Extending the welcome

The tolerance, the 'haven' that is Wester Hailes, needs to be extended to the whole community. Social events that attract a diversity of residents seem to be effective in breaking down barriers; informal interaction and people enjoying themselves in the same space are likely to lead to ongoing interaction in other community spaces and to generally thinking differently about 'others'. WHALE hosted a successful celebration in August 2014 and SCOREscotland has organised regular social events that bring together a good mix of people. The composition of participants in the latter's AGM was testament to their capacity to reach a broad range of local residents. SCOREscotland also runs successful children's activities which ensure a warm welcome for all children.

There are a number of existing activities that pay particular attention to making everyone feel welcome and to meeting the needs of newcomers. Stitch 'n' time and earlier sewing groups have made an effort to do this for some time. An evening activity club for children at Clovenstone Community Centre was converted to a family activity club when it was noticed that parents were hanging around waiting for children. It now offers an opportunity for parents as well as children to feel more part of the community. In Calders and at the Wester Hailes Library there are playgroups that provide English language learning opportunities for both parents and children. It was however mentioned by both organisers and potential participants that there are insufficient evening and weekend opportunities to meet the needs of residents who are in full time employment, many of whom are newcomers.

Generally more effort needs to be made to make everyone welcome and the presence of SCOREscotland in the community is a tremendous asset, as is its increasing collaboration with key community organisations such as WHALE, Prospect and the Health Agency. Similarly promising is SCOREscotland's success in communicating the perspectives of a broader range of residents to local

government as was demonstrated by inclusion of issues as hate crime in the new community plan.

Maximising the value of Wester Hailes combined natural and community assets for health generating activities

Current opportunities to develop much needed healthy local food systems (focusing on growing, cooking and eating) and outdoor exercise should be seized upon, as they are likely to make an important contribution to improving physical and mental health in the community.

Focusing on Livelihoods as well as job seeking – opportunities for social enterprise

It was noted that many very capable volunteers in the community seem unable to find work. This raises the question of whether a focus on finding jobs should be expanded to establishing livelihoods, such as through development of local social enterprises. There appears to be potential for arts, food and outdoor activity based social enterprises. The Time Bank, which has facilitated both one-to-one exchanges and contributions to community initiatives, has potential to play a bigger role in developing an alternative local economy.

Extending and deepening community engagement

The evaluation allowed us to identify ways in which the engagement of people with qualities from different "archetypes" listed above might deepen their engagement, or make it more productive for themselves and the community if they so wish.

Tailored approaches for the 'difficult to engage': SCOREscotland has lessons to share with respect to reaching the 'hard to reach' through experiences such as offering women's cycling lessons aimed at women who did not have the opportunity to learn to ride a bike in their countries of origin. Lack of access to outdoor activities has also been an issue for longer-term residents of Wester Hailes and similar approaches may be applicable. Similarly, SCORE has done energy audits in the homes of people who are suspicious of someone coming into their home and offering them something that will "benefit them"; their experiences could be applicable to other efforts to reach out.

Connecting and empowering local residents: The 'Link Up' approach (supported by Inspiring Scotland) facilitates development of relationships of trust among different people in a community; in Wester Hailes this would appropriately focus on relationships among different neighbourhoods and among different cultural communities. Social relationships lead to emergence of new initiatives and flexible funding is made available to support them.

Supporting emerging local leaders: As in the era of the Representative Council, Wester Hailes still seems to face limitations with respect to local residents (as opposed to paid staff) taking initiative. Some people who are currently somewhat passive participants could take on more of a leadership role. There is an opportunity to identify and support a new generation of community leaders. Again, this is something that SCOREscotland and Prospect have developed (while

noting that some volunteers failed to fulfil their potential because of the stresses they faced in dealing with meeting daily needs and/or confronting aggression on the part of other residents).

It would be useful to offer community leadership training and networking to potential local leaders who are not currently confident or connected enough to take initiative themselves. This could take the form of a one-year training programme with candidates identified by all local organisations forming a diverse cohort. Site visits/exchanges with projects and organisations outside Wester Hailes, along with support for participants to develop their own projects, would be key components of the training. There may be opportunities for corporate funding and networking support—perhaps a twinning with corporate leadership training (such as that hosted by Wester Hailes community organisations in October 2014).

Conclusions

Direct impact of the AHRC supported projects on local democracy and engagement in support of individual and community resilience has been difficult to establish. There is however a legacy of social, material and virtual infrastructure, relationships and creative spaces that will continue to sustain efforts to reach the stated goals. A way of working has developed that is likely to persist. One of the community partners offered a perspective on the OPiT projects as 'making manifest as the digital' the emergent and opportunistic characteristics of local activities and the relationships among them. This back and forth between the online and offline worlds seems to have expanded the space for creativity.

It is possible that not every community could take advantage of this particular interface. Through some combination of need and art (in several senses), community organisations and active citizens in Wester Hailes appear able to operate in a context of complexity and uncertainty, seizing emergent opportunities in ways that are at the core of resilience. The diversity of community actors and approaches underpins a capacity to support multiple routes to engagement. They should be sustained, strengthened, expanded and connected.

Together the active citizens and community organisations of Wester Hailes are co-constructing a set of practices that serve as models for how to achieve the goals laid out in the current Community Plan and targeted by initiatives mentioned above, such as BOLD and Total Place. Local government could benefit from paying attention to and learning from these adaptive and resilient ways of working—and figuring out how to work together more effectively. Recent suggestions about an Open Space event that would bring everyone together in 2015 are to be welcomed, particularly if accompanied by a framework for ongoing mutual learning and cooperation.