Community-Led Television, Local Voice and Climate Change

Policy Summary of Key Project Insights

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Introduction

Edge Hill University and the Heseltine Institute at the University of Liverpool in collaboration with Love Wavertree CIC conducted a study into sustainability, community and local voice between January and July 2022. Local residents were asked about their existing knowledge about climate change and then invited to four climate assemblies, organised around the themes of food, transport, housing and business. These as well as some community initiatives were filmed and edited into eight television programmes as well as some short content that were shared via a local screening and via YouTube. The screening was followed up by a short survey and interviews.

The following document collates our main findings and recommendations for policy and local action.

Three Branches of a Sustainable Community

The project was particularly focused on climate change as a sustainable development goal. However, as the project developed it became increasingly clear that other aspects, such as food poverty, health inequalities, life expectancy, quality of life, mental health and many more intersect so strongly with this goal that they need to be understood as co-dependent. We have grouped these into three 'branches'. Like branches on one tree, they are intricately interconnected. If one breaks off, the others suffer. We have grouped them in the following way:

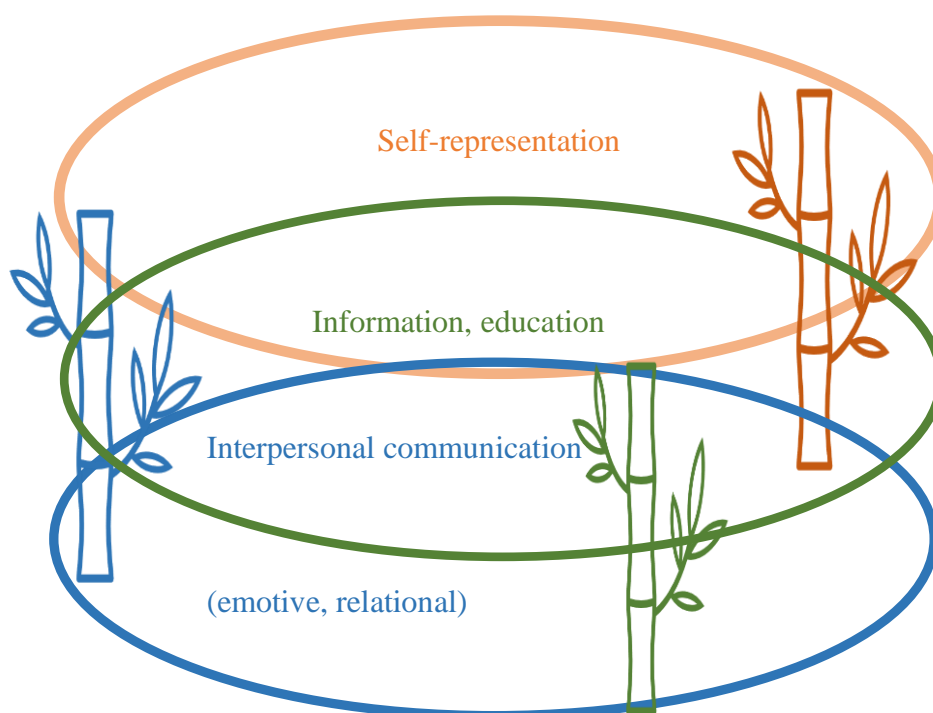| **Community**	**Climate Justice**	**Social Equality and Inclusion**
Sense of belonging	Net zero	Health
Mental health	Sustainable futures	poverty
Identity	Climate action	Social exclusion

These three branches operate in conjunction with each other: when aspects of net zero are considered, such as the retrofitting of houses in order to bring them closer to a passive house standard, then it becomes clear that the resourcing of this needs to operate at a community level

to make it financially viable. By doing so, however, individuals benefitting from the retrofitting also find that issues of fuel poverty can be addressed.

A key finding of our research is the need for better communication to hold these branches together and allow them to thrive. Communication here is not just about direct, interpersonal communication, but requires other levels to be involved. Again, we have separated these key levels and functions of communication out into three rings surrounding the branches and holding them together, thus making the branches stable and sustainable:

If they branches are to grow, they need to come together and be held together by the three layers of communicative facilitation.

Three Layers of Communicative Facilitation

Self-representation

Information, education

Interpersonal communication

(emotive, relational)

For communities and individuals to thrive, for climate action to be effective and for key social problems of our current social environment to be solved, then, these communicative levels need to also be taken into consideration. This too will require a holistic strategy that involves local street design as much as support for local media initiatives, including local television. Self-representation appeared as a particularly important theme in our findings that fed back into

emotive and relational experiences: seeing yourself, a friend or a neighbour represented on television had a beneficial effect on people's emotional sense of well-being that enthused and inspired them to become more involved.

The following pages list key policy recommendations that come out of these insights.

Recommendations and Connecting with Policy Makers

- **All policy needs to be place sensitive**, which can be best achieved by empowering local communities to suggest solutions. We found that local communities are already working hard towards a more sustainable future which includes both environmental and social elements. However, a key issue is that these initiatives often operate in silos and without knowledge of each other. As a result, a **key policy recommendation is to facilitate knowledge exchange through local space planning, event facilitation and local media initiatives.**

- **The assemblies** proved to be an incredibly successful mechanism to bring people together, but there are place-sensitive issues around social and economic barriers to engagement which need to be considered and which would need longer-term engagement and planning.

- **Planning** The way neighbourhoods are planned can support or restrict levels of interaction and increase or limit the formation of community bonds which have been identified as a key element of delivering improved outcomes in both local and national policy. Therefore, it is essential that policy makers seek to have meaningful discussions with communities. This may include using mechanisms such as citizen assemblies, listening events and citizen researchers. Having the "space" to speak with each other as part of everyday life within the neighbourhood was something seen as important by those who participated across the assemblies. Many of those who participated felt that those public and social spaces for casual interaction where missing within their neighbourhood.

  The development of such spaces requires the radical de-centring of the car as the main mode of transport in Liverpool and elsewhere. Spaces need to be taken away from car transport and handed over to local communities. This approach is in line with concepts of the 15-minute neighbourhood/city which reduces the need for car journeys but also enables local neighbourhoods to thrive as businesses find local customers, and local residents find their public spaces re-become places to see and connect emotionally and

relationally with their neighbourhood. To facilitate the 15-minute city, approaches to planning the high street should consult with the community, engage more creative approaches such as the one-pound shop initiative recently started by Liverpool City Council and should enable the use of empty shops for pop up initiatives, including as community venues. In addition, active travel, which in contrast to car journeys makes people's faces visible to each other, is important not just from the points of view of a reduction of environmental impact and the improvement of people's health, but also in relation to community building.

- **Community Experience as Knowledge Asset.** There is a wealth of local knowledge, cultural understanding and skills within not just Wavertree but across the city region. Bound in reciprocity the network of local community groups can offer both deep engagement with and solutions to challenging issues. The perspective that members of the community can offer, one which provides more novel approaches created by the lived experience of individuals, is a valuable tool in breaking down policy silos, enabling connections to be made between different areas of public policy, potentially maximising resources and creating sustainable outcomes for local communities. This requires both regular listening exercises (such as through community engagement as is being used by the Liverpool City Council), but also an effort to coordinate between the groups as well as initiatives in Liverpool and, ideally, map them for knowledge sharing purposes. There are local initiatives already taking place to map green businesses and community groups, such as Transitions Liverpool CIC, but this requires more support and a more systematic approach. How to gain information was regularly mentioned as a problem by assembly participants, pointing to the need for a central hub of information. This is likely to require a website which is searchable and lists different community efforts, groups and knowledge bases, but should also be disseminated via push media as audiences do not always know what they need to search for. As long as most of the local media are in commercial hands, there is no requirement placed on them to deliver that information. It is for that reason that we believe a public service focused, community-led approach would be ideal in that it can showcase the existing knowledge asset and push it out to a wider community.

- Both national (Levelling Up White Paper, HM Gov. 22) and local policy makers (LCRCA Plan for Prosperity 2022, Liverpool City Council City Plan) have recognised

the **important role communities** can and should **play in addressing economic, environmental and social challenges.** As part of our survey we were able to identify a number of small groups who have been active within their neighbourhood or in some cases their connected streets. These groups, including Love Wavertree, Litter Clear, Good Gym, Lawrence Road Residents and many more, are vital assets, connecting social/ cultural, economic and environmental concerns, to create a clear identity around which sustainable and thriving communities can be built. However, it is important to recognise that many groups are operating within constraints including capacity of volunteers. Although it is encouraging that the LCRCA and the City Council operate small grant programmes to support these groups it would be useful to think about other longer-term mechanisms to build capacity potentially adopting a "collective impact" approach which refers to the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem at scale.

This can again be achieved by dissemination through push media such as community-led television which enables people to find out about these initiatives. Importantly, they also give the opportunity for self-representation which validates the work that the groups are doing and inspires others to become involved too. Thus, community-led television can function as a crucial platform to help support the growth and sustainability of community projects and thus support local communities with issues around volunteer hours, etc.

Neighbouring councils, such as St Helen's, have adopted a localities model which maps both the assets and the gaps existing in local neighbourhoods to both utilise assets and develop interventions to fill potential gaps within provision and increase capacity in the system. A similar approach is being taken at neighbourhood level by North Birkenhead's Cradle to Career Programme which is a 15-year plan of activity. These approaches are both systematic and includes a long-term vision which creates the basis for longer-lasting change than a short-term approach focused on addressing specific problems at one time can create.