Addressing the disconnect

public involvement as a method for practical change

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Urban Forestry and Urban Greening
The University of Copenhagen

Wednesday 21st September 2011

The University Of Sheffield.

MP4
making places profitable

Addressing the disconnect

Today's presentation

1. What have we lost?
2. People vs. the professions
3. Hidden Voices
4. Transforming transport
5. Evolving involvement
6. Conclusions on addressing the disconnect
7. Community communication
8. Questions

What we have lost?
The challenges facing our discipline

1. A sense of belonging
2. A connection to those around us
3. Over professionalisation
4. Control over everyday human-environment interactions

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The challenges facing our discipline

1. A culture of fear and risk aversion
2. Apathy
3. A polarised territorial stance
   (MINE and THEIRS)
4. Increased mental and physical stress
5. Segregation of ages, communities and individuals

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People vs. the professions

General issue

As the planning and design of the environments continues to move away from an understanding of human experience and towards a submission to professionalism that ignores the personal, we are in danger of creating spaces in which those who are most vulnerable to change have no place to be and are therefore absent or removed.

People vs. the professions

Within planning:

"Paternalism and filialism…are still very common attitudes in Britain. These are especially evident in the common assumption that the 'ordinary' citizen or 'layman', is utterly dependent upon the 'extraordinary' citizen or the 'professional', who cultivates the mystery of his or her activity in order to increase dependency and professional fees" (Turner, 1976, p.22)

Within architecture:

"From Palladio on, architecture has been identified with individual architects. Everything else – the entirety of the ordinary built field where form, inhabitant and maker are functionally integrated and semantically joined – has remained obscure or self-evident. This has inevitably led to emancipation – and the isolation – of an entire professional culture from the integrated field of form and people" (Habraken, 2005, p.28)

Hidden Voices

Hidden Voices

2003 - 2004

Research bursary

to develop a project proposal leading to PhD

2004 - 2008

ESRC funded PhD

'Hidden Voices: the participation of people with learning disabilities in the experience of public open space'

Hidden Voices

Focused issue

Among those often absent from our everyday environments are people with learning disabilities who have been identified under the 'Socially excluded adults Public Service Agreement' (PSA 16) (2007) as being one of the UK's four most vulnerable social groups, and are therefore at high risk of exclusion and deprivation.

Hidden Voices

Disability

Social Model of disability: recognition of the effect that socially constructed environmental barriers have in our defining of individuals as disabled.

Learning disability

'the presence of a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and learn new skills. Often accompanied by a reduced ability to cope independently, that will have started before adulthood and have a lasting affect on development' (Department of Health (UK) 2001)

Hidden Voices

In three years (2004 - 2007) we studied five sites around Sheffield (with Sheffield Mencap participants) and six sites across North East England (with Dilston College participants)

Questions:

1. How do people with learning disabilities experience green space?

2. What methods are effective in facilitating communication between people with learning disabilities and green space designers and providers?

Hidden Voices

North east England site visits

Photo: Derwent Reservoir

North and South Shields

Newcastle Quayside

Photo: Newton-by-the-Sea

Whitley Chapel Wetlands

Alnwick Gardens

Hidden Voices

Research dissemination

The Fun Fair

HMS Linda at North Shields
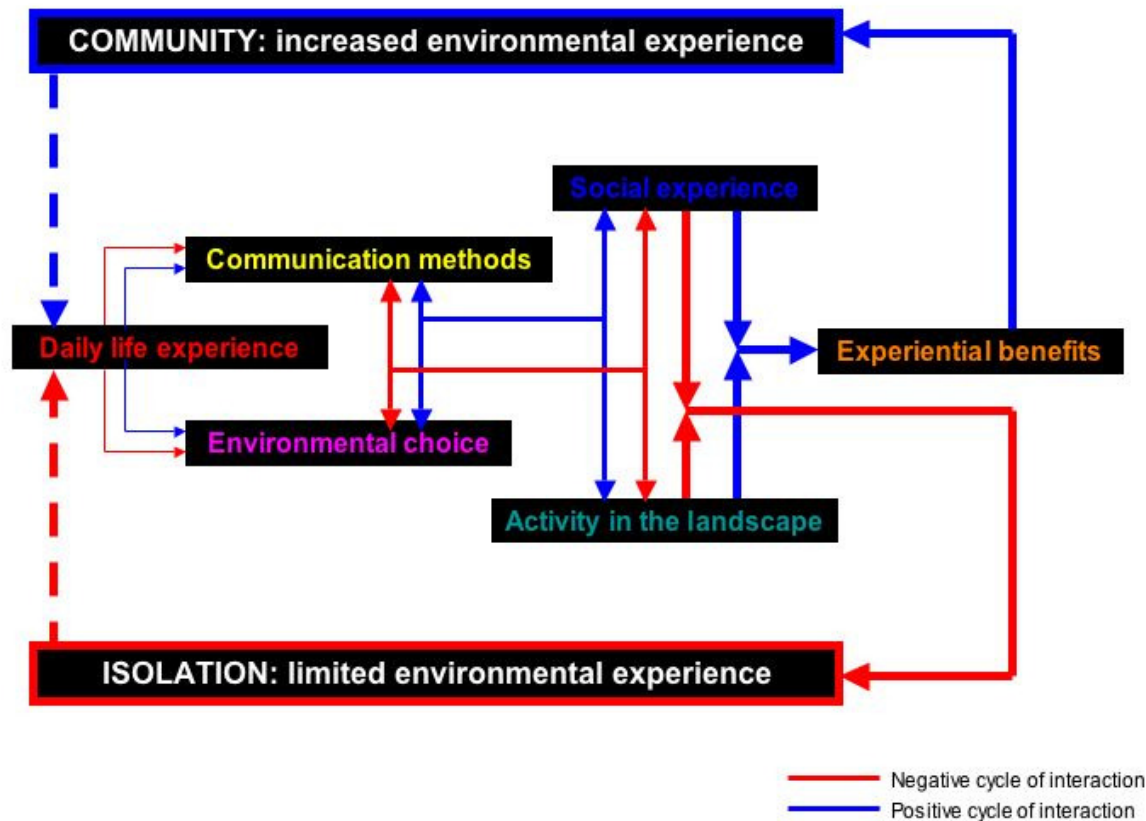
The Skate Park

The Rescue Boat

Fish and Chips at the coast

The Exhibition

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Hidden Voices

Understanding environmental experience

COMMUNITY: increased environmental experience

Social experience

Communication methods

Daily life experience

Experiential benefits

Environmental choice

Activity in the landscape

ISOLATION: limited environmental experience

Negative cycle of interaction
Positive cycle of interaction

Positive examples of participation do exist, where contributions by seemingly 'hidden' populations have resulted in noticeable improvements and developments to the wider public environment which they and the whole community use, as part of everyday life.

Transforming transport

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Transforming transport
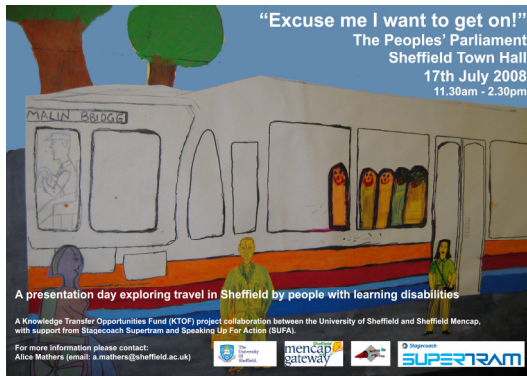
2008

'Excuse me I want to get on: negotiating the city'
Six month community participation project exploring experiences of public transport by people with learning disabilities.

2008 - 2010

'Experiential Landscape'
Two year research study developing participatory design and planning processes through qualitative fieldwork with underrepresented communities.

The Experiemic process
communication, partnerships and social change

THE EXPERIEMIC CODE
A mechanism for evaluation of Information throughout the process

1	**Establishing Project Context** determined by client group/environmental and/or social context.
2	**Identifying Project Partners** creating a network of equal partnership with community, service providers, policy makers, practitioners.
3	**Revealing the Issues** facilitation sessions with project partners to reveal 'grass roots' issues of significance or concern within project context.
4	**Bringing together the Issues** commonalities and differences identified in stage 3 are grouped to determine a project focus.
5	**Project Methods** project focus explored through an inclusive process of participation using person centred methods appropriate to the individuals and project brief.
6	**Representation and Evaluation** tools of representation and evaluation identify and reveal project outputs.
7	**Findings and Recommendations** project outputs framed to achieve: • understanding of issues from all partners perspectives. • identification of opportunities for change. • ownership of existing and aspirational project processes and outputs. • changes identified to generate socially restorative environment and fulfil the project brief.

EXPERIEMIC PROCESS MONITOR
The monitoring mechanism throughout the process (monitors the growth in social capital against criteria for environmental competence)

Transforming transport

A network of project partners was created for "What's the fuss we want the bus!"

Academia:
The University of Sheffield
Community:
Sheffield Mencap
Voices and Choices
Speaking up for Advocacy (SUFA)
W.O.R.K. Ltd.
Policy:
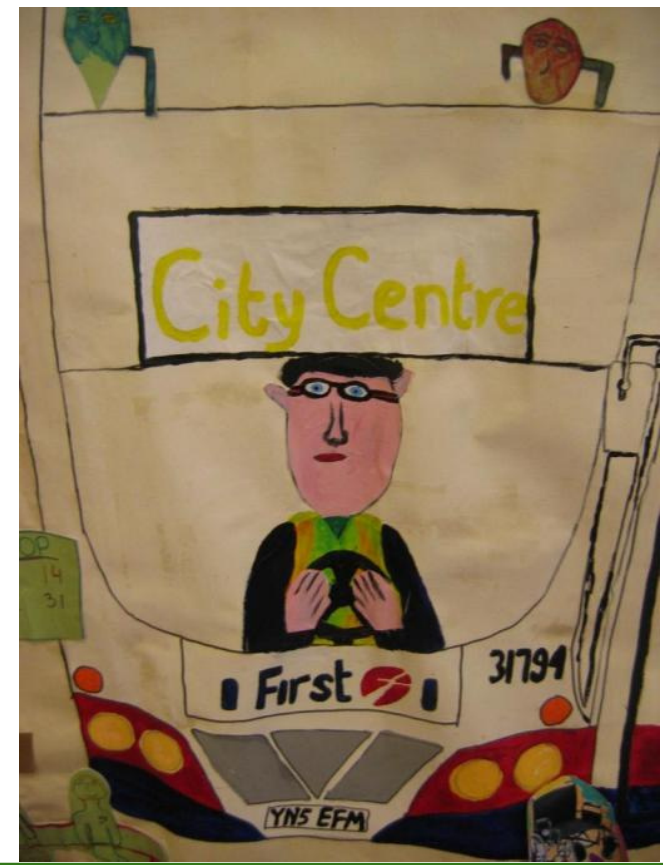Sheffield City Council Mobility Strategy Team
Practice:
South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive
First South Yorkshire
Stagecoach Sheffield
Sheffield Community Transport

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Transforming transport

Initial facilitating sessions were held with the project partners to determine their interest for being involved.

"Buses, not always friendly with people with learning disabilities, bus   drivers need training (to be more kind and considerate)" (Sheffield Mencap, 2008)

"Fear of missing your stop due to lack of time to get down the bus – therefore people get up the stop before. Unwanted attention – due to visibility of disability. Disturbance and noise – made by other passengers throwing things and shouting at each other (vulnerable people feel more insecure)" (SUFA, 2008)

"A number of us (trainees) use the bus to get to work. At the moment, travelling on the bus can be confusing and scary. We would really like to work with other organisations to make bus journeys easier, safer and a more enjoyable part of our day". (W.O.R.K, 2008)

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Transforming transport

Commonalities and differences were identified among arising issues

These were grouped to determine project focus as a result of initial discussion workshops and focused on four questions about present (NOW) bus travel experiences:

1. What's it like getting to the bus stop?

2. What's it like at the bus stop?

3. What's it like on the bus?

4. What's it like getting off?

Transforming transport

Review and feedback sessions with the groups refined the main issues arising from the project. This provided a particular focus for each group to represent methods of their choice, which included the following:

1. Interviews and canvas displays by W.O.R.K. Ltd.

2. A secondary bus journey to town and drama by SUFA.

3. An animated film by the Voices and Choices group.

Transforming transport

W.O.R.K. Ltd. trainees wanted to ask questions of key organisations regarding their roles in improving bus travel experiences. Four interviews took place, these were with:

1. The Sheffield City Council Mobility Strategy Officer.

2. The Senior Network Accessibility Officer (Mobility) South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive.

3. The Customer Services Manager and Business Development Director, First South Yorkshire Ltd.

4. The Head Teacher and Student Representatives of a local college.

Transforming transport

A second discussion workshop was held with **SUFA**, and their main themes were identified. The group decided that their final work would be to explore and refine these issues revisiting their bus journey to the city centre.

1. Need for safer crossings.
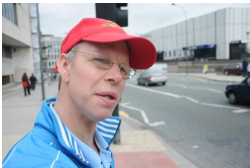
2. Difficulties stopping the bus.

3. Bus shelters and bus stops.

4. Attitudes.

Transforming transport

The **Voices and Choices** group decided to communicate their issues by making an animated film (virtual environment), this looked at the following points:
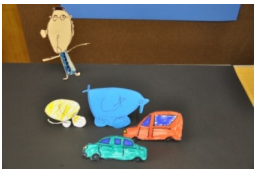
1. Why people don't use public transport now.

2. Concerns about safety.
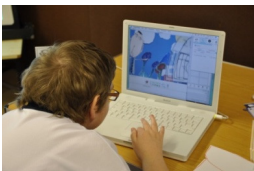
3. Difficulties with information.

4. Issues at the Interchange.

5. Aspects of bus travel that they were happy with.

Transforming transport

Qualitative evaluation of the fieldwork information resulted in the emergence of 5 key themes:

1. Social Issues
2. Safety
3. Customer Care
4. Information
5. Place and Object issues

These findings were disseminated in the following ways:

• Production of an accessible report
• Creation of a project DVD
• Orchestration of a public dissemination event

"What's the fuss we want the bus!"
Research findings: reaching our destination

City Centre

First

16th July 2009
The Peoples' Parliament

Experiential Landscape

JK Leverhulme trust funded research

The University Of Sheffield.

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Transforming transport

Safety

1. The City Council should examine the relationship between road

crossings and the position of bus stops.

2. Consider more crossing points.

3. Inclusion of signals that make a sound seems important to all:
        - particularly to partially sighted people.
        - consider as a standard specification for crossings.

Transforming transport

Information

1. Use the 12 hour clock on bus timetables.
2. Train staff at travel centres in different ways of communication such as British Sign Language (BSL) and Makaton as a positive step of inclusion.
3. Remove jargon, consider meanings like 'Interchange'.
4. Produce clearer maps.
5. Consider the effect of using colours.
6. Signs should be in a clearer language and positioned at appropriate places so that people can find their way easily.

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Transforming transport

Place and Object issues

1. Travel operators to maintain buses, bus stops and shelters to be clean and tidy and free from graffiti and vandalism.
2. City Council to do the same for the areas around bus stops.
3. Seats should be at an appropriate height in order that people can easily use them.
4. City Council should consider the surfaces it uses for footpaths as well as considering hand rails where there are slopes.
5. Review position and number of litter bins and their location in relation to the bus stops.
6. Travel operators should work in conjunction with the City Council to improve access to the bus station.
7. Lighting should be improved as well as the steps and pathways.

Transforming transport

… a fine tuning of the environment rather than an overhaul of the major infrastructure!

Transforming transport

As a result of this participatory process, positive changes have occurred in the following ways:

1. Policy recommendations –
for the 2009 Sheffield City Council Mobility Strategy.

2. Practitioner training resource –
for South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive,
First South Yorkshire and Stagecoach Sheffield.

3. Community empowerment and cohesion –
through participation and sharing experiences.

4. Research consultancy –
to the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board,
Sheffield City Council.

5. Research partnership –
with the Association for Real Change (ARC) for
'Service User and Carer Participation, Involvement and Qualitative
performance feedback' study (2010) Aberdeenshire Council, Scotland

research unpacked

Road to inclusion

Dr Alice Mathers describes how the 'What's the fuss, we want the bus!' project has informed transport policy in Sheffield

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Evolving Involvement

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Evolving Involvement

Applying participatory knowledge on an international stage...

Making Places Profitable – public and private open spaces (MP4) is a transnational collaborative research and practical implementation project funded through INTERREG IVB.

Evolving Involvement

MP4 is undertaken by a partnership of nine Project Partners that include Universities and public bodies in the EU 'North Sea Region'.

The project aims to demonstrate how the positive socio-economic impacts of open space improvements can be maintained in the long term through innovative 'place-keeping' approaches.

Placekeeping is defined as maintaining and enhancing the qualities and benefits of places through long-term management.

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Evolving Involvement

In April 2011 Julie Molin of the University of Copenhagen joined the University of Sheffield MP4 team as part of a research exchange to work collaboratively on the role of local government and community partnerships in place keeping.

Question: what is the impact of increased localism upon public and community partnerships and to what extent community-led management is truly sustainable?

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Evolving Involvement

Six community involvement case studies within Sheffield and Stockton-on-Tees were undertaken to investigate the open space involvement of Friends groups and their relationship with the local authority.

In Sheffield these comprised:
Firth Park, Sheaf Valley, Porter Valley and Millhouses Park.

In Stockton-on-Tees two urban case study sites were identified:
Newham Grange Park and Ropner Park.

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Evolving Involvement

The Friends of Firth Park have been involved in the park's regeneration through a sustained commitment since their formation in 1999. Their involvement follows a number of modes but after the anticipated completion and launch of their latest project (Ripples in the Pond) in September 2011 they expect to be primarily event orientated. The group relies upon the local authority for support in the construction of funding bids and other expert matters, and does not want to take on further responsibility for the site. A great concern for the group is their capacity to sustain involvement as their members are generally older and it is difficult to recruit younger people.

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Evolving Involvement

The Friends of Millhouses Park are a high capacity community group in terms of membership numbers and individual capabilities. Since their constitution in 1991 the Friends have attracted considerable funding to the site and in partnership with the local authority have transformed a number of areas within the site, including creation of a sensory garden, outdoor gym, water play area, fish pass and most recently a children's road way and new tree avenue (September 2011). The Friends have many plans for the site's future development and are well networked to achieve this.

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Evolving Involvement

Hypothetical model of patterns of community-led involvement in place-keeping
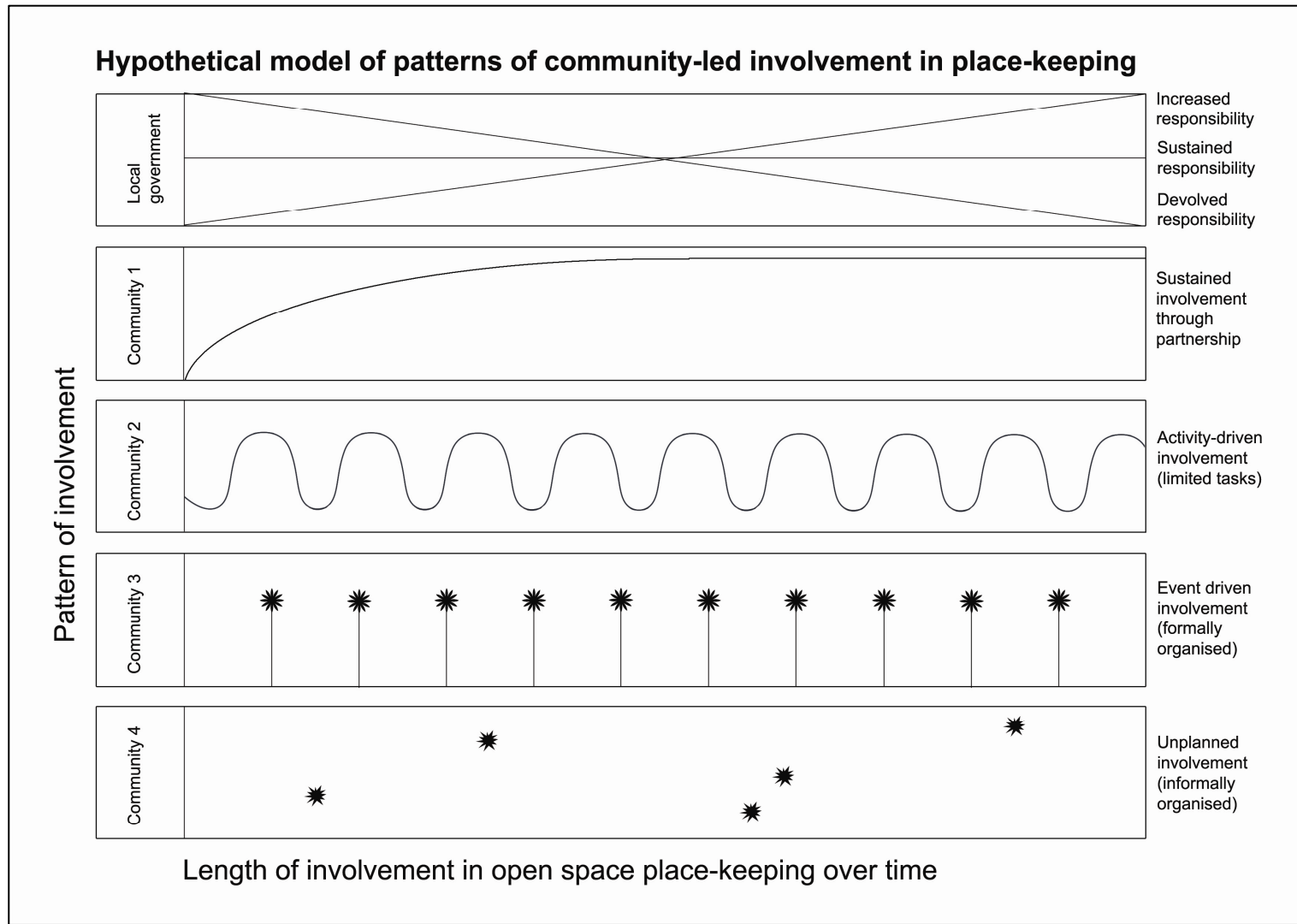
Conclusions on addressing the disconnect

1.Long-term community commitment is closely linked to recognition of value by the local authority, should the move towards greater self-support continue, the public sector must invest in further development of the community's skill base through appropriate training.
2.The involvement of community groups is a matter of evolutionary capacity building, and as such we suggest that in order for these groups to become more self-supporting, local government should look to providing support to develop partnerships outside that with the local authority.
3.Future research is needed regarding networks that facilitate community involvement.
4.Community involvement does bring many benefits, but it is not a quick fix in times of economical constraint!

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Community communication!

Thank you!

Questions?

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