

**Sustainable by action:** Cultivating  
Creative Engagement in Urban  
Greenspaces.



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Creative Engagement in Urban  
Greenspaces.



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## Abstract

This research investigates how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within urban greenspaces. Recent literature indicates an increasing disconnection between people and the natural environment, a situation worsened by urban development that threatens these critical spaces. Urban greenspaces are essential for improving citizens' quality of life and mitigating climate change across the UK, yet decisions about them are often inequitable.

This research reveals that, despite these challenges, environmental action within urban greenspaces in Manchester is often overlooked and unrecognised by decision-makers. Aiming to promote collaborative and informed decision-making, this research seeks to bridge design thinking with urban planning to investigate the dynamics among environmental volunteers, social enterprises, organisations, and institutions. Through interviews, focus groups, and co-production, the research engages in a reflective and open dialogue to uncover motivations, perceptions, and connections between people and urban nature.

Research through Design provided a flexible and iterative approach to knowledge generation, helping to develop an in-depth narrative of environmental action and where creative engagement can address the barriers to engagement in urban greenspace decision-making. This research identifies the key variables, drivers, and considerations of environmental action, helping to co-produce a Creative Engagement Framework. Central to this framework are the MASCO drivers: Motivation, Access, Support, Communication, and Openness. These drivers systematically address how to enhance engagement, and decision-making in urban greenspaces, forging stronger connections between people and place.

The Creative Engagement Framework is designed to nurture and strengthen the relationships between individuals and organisers of environmental action dedicated to creative engagement or the stewardship of urban greenspaces. By bridging the gap between these varied stakeholders, this research lays the groundwork for a nuanced understanding of the limitations and approaches of creative public engagement within urban greenspaces, underscoring its potential for decision-making.

This holistic investigation incorporates multiple perspectives to craft a narrative on environmental action in Manchester. It builds an inclusive, transparent evidence base which emphasises the profound connection between communities and their environments. This approach not only highlights the significance of this relationship but also champions the collaborative approach essential for fostering meaningful interactions with urban greenspaces.

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
Figures	11
Tables	12
<b>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>13</b>
1.0 Overview	13
1.1 Background to the research	13
1.2 Motivation of the research	16
1.3 The Research problem	16
1.4 Focus of the research	17
1.4.i Research Aim, Objectives, and Research Questions	19
1.5 Structure of the thesis	20
1.6 Summary	21
<b>CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>22</b>
2.0 Introduction	22
2.1 Key Definitions	22
2.1.i Urban Greenspace(s) (UGS)	22
2.1.ii Public Participation / Engagement	23
2.1.iii Creative Engagement	23
2.1.iv Environmental Action	24
2.2 Context	25
2.3 Key Topic 1: Urban Greenspace (UGS)	25
2.3.i People and Governance	28
2.3.ii Place	31
2.3.iii Planet	33
2.3.iv COVID-19	35
2.3.v Summary	36
2.4 Key Topic 2: Creative approaches in engagement	37
2.4.i Participation Challenges	37
2.4.ii Applying Design Thinking to Collaborative Practices	40

2.4.iii Creative Engagement in Urban Greenspaces	43
2.4.iv Summary	45
2.5 Example of Creative Engagement: <i>Jam and Justice: Co-producing urban governance for social innovation (Perry et al., 2019)</i> .	47
2.5.i How can co-production be successful?	49
2.5.ii Co-production Example Summary	50
2.6 Discussion	51
2.7 Systematic review of engagement frameworks	54
2.7.i Findings	56
2.7.ii Systematic Literature Review Summary	63
2.8 Summary	65
CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH DESIGN	67
3.0 Introduction	67
3.1 Approach	68
3.2 Research Focus	72
3.3 Types of Research	72
3.3.i Interpretive Research	73
3.3.ii Interpretive and Descriptive Data	73
3.3.iii Qualitative and Quantitative	74
3.4 Research Design	75
3.4.i Research Methods	75
3.5 Data Collection	76
3.5.i Participants and Ethical Considerations	80
3.6 Phase One	81
3.6.i Interviews	81
3.6.ii Designing the Questions	83
3.7 Phase two	84
3.7.i Case Studies	85
3.7.i.i Case Selection	86
3.7.ii Surveys	91
3.7.iii Participant Observation	92
3.7.iv Focus Groups	94

3.8 Phase Three	96
3.8.i Co-producing the framework	96
3.9 Data Analysis	97
3.9.i Preparing the data	98
3.9.ii Exploring the data	99
3.9.iii Analysing the data	99
3.9.iv Representing the data	100
3.9.v Validating the data	102
3.10 Summary	103
CHAPTER 4 - DATA FINDINGS	104
4.0 Introduction	104
4.1 A Brief Overview of Findings	104
<i>4.1.i Interviews</i>	104
<i>4.1.ii Case Studies</i>	107
4.2 Theme Development	111
4.2.i Motivation	111
4.2.iii Support	112
4.2.iv Communication	112
4.2.v Openness	113
4.3 Motivation	113
<i>4.3.i Motivation in the Interviews</i>	113
4.3.i.a Effective organisation	117
<i>4.3.ii Motivation in the Case Studies</i>	118
4.3.ii.a Groundwork GM	119
4.3.ii.b FoBP	121
4.3.ii.c MUD	124
4.3.ii.d MM	126
<i>4.3.iii Applying Creativity to Motivation</i>	127
<i>4.3.iv Summary - Motivation</i>	128
4.4 Access	129
<i>4.4.i Accessibility in the Interviews</i>	129
<i>4.4.ii Accessibility in the Case Studies</i>	137

4.4.ii.a Groundwork GM	138
4.4.ii.b FoBP	140
4.4.ii.c MUD	141
4.4.ii.d MM	142
<i>4.4.iii Applying Creativity to Access</i>	143
<i>4.4.iv Summary - Access</i>	144
<b>4.5 Support</b>	<b>145</b>
<i>4.5.i Support in the Interviews</i>	145
<i>4.5.ii Support in the Case Studies</i>	156
4.5.ii.a Groundwork GM	156
4.5.ii.b FoBP	159
4.5.ii.c MUD	161
4.5.ii.d MM	162
<i>4.5.iii Applying Creativity to Support</i>	163
<i>4.5.iv Summary - Support</i>	164
<b>4.6 Communication</b>	<b>166</b>
<i>4.6.i Communication in the Interviews</i>	166
<i>4.6.ii Communication in the Case Studies</i>	174
4.6.ii.a Groundwork GM	174
4.6.ii.b FoBP	175
4.6.ii.c MUD	179
4.6.ii.d MM	179
<i>4.6.iii Applying Creativity to Communication</i>	180
<i>4.6.iv Summary - Communication</i>	182
<b>4.7 Openness</b>	<b>183</b>
<i>4.7.i Openness in the Interviews</i>	183
<i>4.7.ii Openness in the Case Studies</i>	185
4.7.ii.a Groundwork GM	186
4.7.ii.b FoBP	186
4.7.ii.c MUD	187
4.7.ii.d MM	188
<i>4.7.iii Applying Creativity to Openness</i>	188



4.7.iv Summary - Openness	190
4.8 Chapter Summary	191
CHAPTER 5: CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK	193
5.0 Introduction	193
5.1 Key Components and Beneficiaries	194
5.2 What is the CEF?	195
5.3 Framework Construction	197
<i>5.3.i Intended Use</i>	197
<i>5.3.ii Scope and Visualisation</i>	197
<i>5.3.iii Framework Creation</i>	200
<i>5.3.iv Preliminary Testing</i>	203
<i>5.3.v Testing with Participants</i>	205
5.4 Feedback	206
5.4.i Feedback: Groundwork Greater Manchester (GM)	206
5.4.ii Feedback: Friends of Birchfields Park (FoBP)	207
5.4.iii Feedback: Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD)	208
5.4.iv Feedback: Manchester Museum (MM)	209
5.5 Amendments	210
5.6 Amended Framework	212
5.7 Final feedback	216
5.8 Summary	218
CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH	220
6.0 Introduction	220
6.1 Overview of the aims and findings	220
<i>6.1.i Research findings</i>	221
OBJECTIVE 1 - To understand the current perceptions and practices of public engagement from multiple perspectives.	222
OBJECTIVE 2 - To understand the motivations behind people's involvement with public participation and engagement in UGS.	223
OBJECTIVE 3 - To examine whether creative engagement can encourage people to engage more with UGS.	224
OBJECTIVE 4 - To bridge the gap between decision-makers and those taking action, enabling a framework to increase creative engagement in UGS.	226

<i>6.1.iii Discussion</i>	227
6.2 Contribution to knowledge	227
<i>6.2.i Contribution to the field(s)</i>	227
<i>6.2.ii The Creative Engagement Framework (CEF)</i>	227
<i>6.2.iii Beneficiaries</i>	228
6.3 Limitations	230
<i>6.3.i Generalisability of research</i>	233
6.4 Further work	233
6.5 Concluding Remarks	234
Bibliography	236
Appendices	263
A.1: Interview guide	264
A.2: Consent Form	266
A.3: Participant Information Sheet	267
A.4: Ethical Protocol	271
A.5 Interview Codebook	278
A.6: Creative Engagement Framework	367

## Figures

Figure 1: Key research approaches and related inquiry .....	15
Figure 2: Chapter Guide.....	67
Figure 3 'The Spring' (Taylor, 2018:18).....	71
Figure 4: Overview of Primary Data Collection Research Methods .....	76
Figure 5: Detailed research and analysis process .....	77
Figure 6: Participant Observation Sketches (author's own, 2020) .....	93
Figure 7: Fields notes from participant observation (author's own, 2020). ...	93
Figure 8: Participant contributions with a focus group (authors own, 2021). 95	
Figure 9: Friends of Birchfields Park tree walk event (author's own, 2021). 101	
Figure 10: Initial notes taken during analysis .....	101
Figure 11: Graph to show key interests of environmental volunteers .....	120
Figure 12: Graph to show other volunteer responses to Question 10 .....	121
Figure 13: Extract from the FoBP focus group.....	122
Figure 14: Extract from the FoBP focus group.....	123
Figure 15: Graph showing how volunteers travel to different sites .....	139
Figure 16: Illustration of the People's Pop-Up Park (no author, 2019) .....	154
Figure 17: The Clean Air Day event in Stevenson Square - the People's Pop Up Park (Manchester Evening News, 2019).....	154
Figure 18: Image taken on the day (Dixon, 2019).....	154
Figure 19: An artist's impression of what a permanently pedestrianised Stevenson Square could look like (Image: GMCA) (Manchester Evening News, 2019) .....	154
Figure 20: Volunteer results from Q25.....	157
Figure 21: Organisation results from Q34 .....	158
Figure 22: Responses to what Birchfields Park could look like in the future 160	
Figure 23: Author's own photos from Crowcroft Park in Longsight, Manchester (2019). .....	170
Figure 24: Volunteer results from Q12.....	174
Figure 25: Naming areas in Birchfields Park – Focus group task .....	176
Figure 26: Extract from the FoBP park strategy shared with the council .....	176
Figure 27: Responses to how to improve engagement in Birchfields Park... 178	
Figure 28: Images illustrating different examples of environmental action . 195	
Figure 29: The key dependents of engagement .....	196
Figure 30: The engagement process including all considerations to achieve informed decision-making. ....	199
Figure 31: Framework process .....	200
Figure 32: Engagement Framework (version 1) extract showing example statements.....	202
Figure 33: Example statement indicating how a user would respond.....	205
Figure 34: The seven steps of the Engagement Framework process .....	213
Figure 35: Extract from the Engagement Framework - Step 4: Planning Activities .....	214

Figure 36: Extract from the Engagement Framework - Step 5 Reflecting on Activity Success.....	215
Figure 37: Extract from the Engagement Framework - Step 6 Develop Engagement Plans Further .....	215

## Tables

Table 1: Keywords searched in the systematic review .....	55
Table 2: Disciplines within systematic literature results.....	56
Table 3: Differences between hard and soft data (based upon Morse, 2018:1395) .....	74
<i>Table 4: Primary Data Collection Methods</i> .....	79
Table 5: Participant Criteria .....	80
Table 6: Types of interviews (adapted by Bryman, 2012:210-213) .....	82
Table 7: Details from the interview process .....	84
Table 8: Case Study Criteria .....	86
Table 9: Chosen Case Studies .....	88
Table 10: Overview of case study findings.....	90
Table 11: Survey details .....	91
Table 12: Procedures in qualitative data analysis (Evans, 2010:113 adapted from Creswell & Clark, 2007).....	98
Table 13: Phases of Thematic Coding Analysis (adapted from Robson and McCartan, 2016:469-477) .....	101
Table 14: Assessing the quality of qualitative data analysis (adapted from Robson and McCartan, 2016:479-480) .....	102
Table 15: Interview Participant information.....	105
Table 16: Case study details .....	107
Table 17: Key themes of data analysis.....	111
Table 18: Coded theme from the environmental volunteering survey .....	119
Table 19: Question 10 volunteer responses to how they found out about volunteering opportunities.....	120
Table 20: Volunteer results for Q15 .....	138
Table 21: Volunteer results from Q20 .....	158
Table 22: Engagement Framework beneficiaries (authors own, 2024).....	194
Table 23: Creative Engagement Framework Step 2 - identifying the level or quality of engagement.....	203
Table 24: Example profile from a user of the Engagement Framework indicating the quality of their engagement according to the themes. ....	203

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Overview

This thesis explores the complexity of public (dis)engagement in urban greenspaces (UGS) and the potential of integrating design thinking with urban planning to enhance engagement in UGS decision-making. It investigates how creative engagement strategies can deepen people's connection to UGS by examining the motivations behind environmental action and the role of local authority decisions. More specifically, it presents a co-produced Creative Engagement Framework for users who want to develop relationships and facilitate informed decision-making.

This chapter sets the stage by detailing the background and motivation, defining the research problem and focus, and outlining the thesis structure for ease of navigation.

### 1.1 Background to the research

There is growing recognition that within the human-dominant environment, there is a disconnect from nature (Brondizio *et al.*, 2016; Kellert, 2018; Beery *et al.*, 2023). Greenspaces, especially those in urban areas, are continually threatened by diminished interest, neglect, development, and destruction (Kruize *et al.*, 2019; Masood and Russo, 2023). Decisions made about urban development are often inequitable, not only because of factors such as gentrification (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Rigolon and Németh, 2019) and socio-environmental injustice (Sharifi *et al.*, 2021) but also in the sense that those most affected by these changes are commonly left out of the whole process (Perry *et al.*, 2019).

Applying design thinking to this research problem provides an opportunity to learn from those taking action and those working in decision-making to propose new ways of approaching UGS decision-making. Design thinking is an approach to solving problems that is focused on principles of human-centred design (Brown, 2008). The characteristics of a design thinker, as delineated by Brown, are those who can:

1. Build empathy with others.
2. Integrate thinking across different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives into problem-solving.
3. Remain optimistic throughout emerging challenges.
4. Be experimental with ideas, questions and prompts.
5. Work collaboratively to develop more inclusive outcomes.

To understand the complexity of UGS decision-making, it was considered essential to gather insight from multiple perspectives on current practices, the people involved and the issues at hand. Research through Design (RtD) was employed (further details about RtD are delineated in section 1.4). RtD becomes a mechanism of design thinking and is understood in this research as an iterative and contextual process that generates knowledge through design practice (Taylor, 2018).

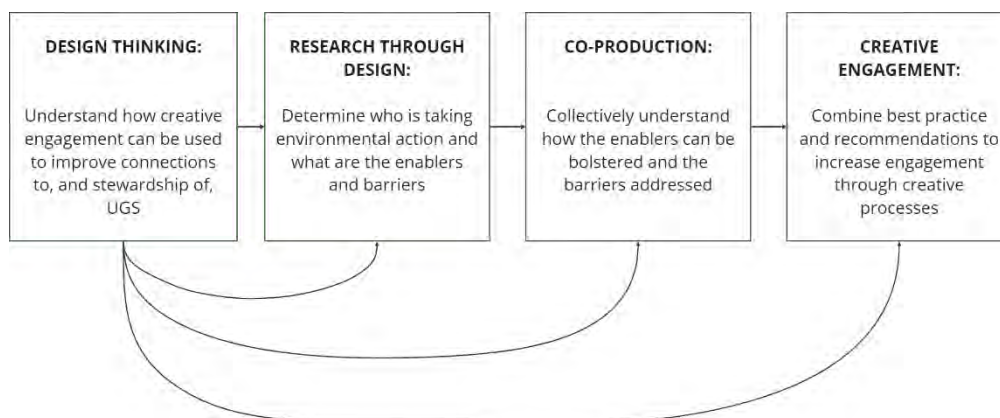
The application of design thinking in this research is also manifested by employing and testing creative approaches in decision-making. Common practices such as co-design (Sanders, 2006; Lee, 2008) and co-production (Parks et al., 1981) offer a means to address the complex issues related to urban planning, engagement and decision-making. Co-design is seen as a tool to redefine power relations and reconsider the notion of expertise (Huybrechts, Benesch and Geib, 2017). The latter authors explain that when bringing co-design or co-production into the realm of planning, it immediately becomes political, allowing for a reconfiguration of more inclusive decision-making processes.

This research focused on co-production as a tool that helps to derive new knowledge (Turnhout et al., 2020). This thesis recognises that co-production and co-design are related practices. However, the nuances of co-production; the collective act of gathering and examining knowledge to generate an understanding of complex issues, takes the onus away from being outcome-driven and is more focused on the processes through which change occurs in UGS. Co-production in this research, therefore, becomes an application of design thinking; a tool to test how creative practices enable knowledge production and gather insights into current instances of environmental action and creative engagement. As a designer, I employed design thinking throughout the engagement process and co-produced outcomes that addressed the aim.

This research has worked to define what creative engagement is within UGS planning and decision-making. Creative engagement is understood across many disciplines such as education, arts and design, with a general understanding of its application being to address complex or elusive problems in a more meaningful manner (Edmonds, Muller and Connell, 2006; Truman, 2011; Booth, 2013). In this research, creative engagement refers to the process of involving individuals or groups in activities such as decision-making processes with innovative, imaginative, and non-traditional methods. Here, emphasis is placed on the incorporation of the term 'creative', as collaboration does not inherently imply creativity (Ansell and Torfing, 2021). It moves beyond conventional approaches by incorporating elements of creativity, such as the arts, storytelling, and digital technologies, to foster deeper participation, collaboration, and interest. Focal to this research, creativity is also linked to

resourcefulness and adaption within everyday interactions with UGS and environmental action (Wakkary and Maestri, 2007). This approach aims to make engagement more accessible, enjoyable, and meaningful, encouraging diverse groups to contribute their perspectives and ideas. Creative engagement is particularly effective in capturing the attention of those who might not be reached through traditional methods, thereby enhancing inclusivity and diversity in collaborative processes. It leverages the power of creativity to break down barriers to participation, stimulate dialogue, and generate novel solutions to complex problems.

Figure 1 illustrates the approaches discussed thus far in the thesis and outlines how insight and evidence were approached. Design thinking intersects each approach, and the knowledge gained throughout is fed back into the inquiry process. In other words, design thinking was used to consider an appropriate way to test the usefulness of incorporating creativity into engagement. RtD and co-production offered a means to understand the current relationships and issues and begin to assess and recommend ways to use creative engagement. These approaches were influenced by the research aim and objectives, which are discussed in section 1.4.



*Figure 1: Key research approaches and related inquiry*

While it offers a collaborative approach, co-production is not without its contradictions and pitfalls. There is a concern that such interventions derived from collaborative projects for environmental improvement inadvertently promote gentrification, altering the very fabric of urban communities (Curran and Hamilton, 2012; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014). This form of environmental gentrification can cause displacement of the working classes, as reusing unwanted land may prompt new interest in real estate development, subsequently driving up housing prices (Curran and Hamilton, 2012). With awareness of this issue, this research seeks to develop an understanding of how daily human behaviours and their interactions with UGS can significantly enhance co-production outcomes and begin to address these concerns. Through a greater understanding of daily life, there is an opportunity for

creative engagement to develop urban spaces that resonate with a broader community's needs and aspirations.

## 1.2 Motivation of the research

The motivation for this research stems from three main drivers:

1. There is limited academic work that brings together creative engagement in urban planning. There is evidence that creative engagement is taking place across the third sector (including, and not limited to, the voluntary sector, charities, and not-for-profit and non-governmental organisations) in Manchester, but there is limited guidance or robust frameworks that integrate it to sustain environmental action.
2. A desire to conduct interdisciplinary research that has the potential to bridge academic research and rigour to everyday contexts within the state and third sector, strengthening their impact and providing insights that can act as guidance or support for community-based participation and decision-making.
3. As a designer, I wanted to apply design thinking and approaches to environmental issues put forward by Victor Papanek, an influential designer who focused on socio-environmentally responsible design. Consequently, my motivation stemmed from a need for designers to be conscious of what they produce and contribute to the world, developing a *moral responsibility* for designers to use their skills for the collective good (Papanek, 2019). My work resonates with Papanek's argument that:

*“design is basic to all human activities. The planning and patterning of any act toward a desired, foreseeable end constitutes the design process. Any attempt to separate design, to make it a thing-by-itself, works counter to the inherent value of design as the primary underlying matrix of life” (2019:322).*

This thesis embeds this type of design thinking into complex human-nature relationships by developing a framework for creative engagement to understand what motivates the individual and collective to become stewards of greenspaces, particularly those in urban areas, where they are intrinsic to the health and well-being of people and wildlife.

## 1.3 The Research problem

Decisions about public spaces are often undertaken without community input (Perry et al., 2019). Where input is sought, community engagement or public



participation is typically shaped and valued by the administrators (Eckerd and Heidelberg, 2020). During 2010-2019, significant cuts were introduced to local authorities, leading to difficulties in managing spaces across the country (Dempsey, Burton and Duncan, 2016). This 'austerity urbanism' led to a focus on UGS as income generators, in turn relying on community groups and volunteers to fill in the gaps of services cut (Smith, Whitten and Ernwein, 2023). Due to issues of austerity, community engagement is becoming less and less integrated within decision-making on a state level, exacerbating collective frustration and the disconnect between people and nature, especially in urban areas (Cole et al., 2021).

Despite all these challenges, results from this thesis demonstrate that environmental volunteering is becoming more popular, although in some cases, still not recognised or valued. This research considers the relationships and complexities of different actors (from individuals and groups to the state) who contribute to UGS stewardship and decision-making. The type of action under investigation is defined as environmental action. This action typically occurs when individuals or groups work with the spaces and places around them to enhance the environment and their quality of life simultaneously (Lubell, 2002; Dono, Webb and Richardson, 2010; Lange and Dewitte, 2019).

Public participation studies host a variety of issues, including social injustice and inequality, unbalanced power dynamics, and lengthy bureaucratic processes (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Rigolon and Németh, 2019; Sharifi et al., 2021). This complex blend of challenges frequently discourages people from becoming involved in decision-making processes. Therefore, this research helps provide practical solutions to guide individuals and groups to facilitate more inclusive and thoughtful engagement.

#### **1.4 Focus of the research**

This thesis aimed to investigate how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within urban greenspaces (UGS). Drawing upon concepts such as Marshall's *Living Life as Inquiry* (2016) and Taylor's *Unfolding Awareness* (2018), an investigation surrounding the intersection of design thinking, creative engagement, and urban planning took place. An RtD approach alongside co-production practices generated new knowledge based on interactions with those acting or working within these intersections.

RtD can be understood as an iterative and contextual process that generates knowledge through design practice. RtD has a multifaceted nature and is understood differently across multiple scholarly perspectives (Taylor, 2018). Simonsen et al. (2010) have described design research as a process that is iterative and self-reflexive. In contrast, Stappers and Giaccardi (2017) have investigated the narratives surrounding RtD, finding no single definition but

identifying commonalities, such as introducing prototypes to the world and reflecting on their effects. This thesis understands that design research is a knowledge-generating activity, emphasising the importance of practice-based approaches that raise questions and offer alternative visions of the future (Durrant et al., 2015). This approach to design research is not just about creating tangible products but also about fostering a dialogue that makes different perspectives accessible (Taylor, 2018).

It is crucial that the process of knowledge production in design moves beyond traditional methods and embraces experimentation and reflection (Frayling, 1994). A means to achieve this is through RtD. Frankel and Racine (2010) introduced a map of design research categories that illustrates a multi-directional flow of knowledge and experience between practice and research. This map delineates research approaches into three categories: “Basic (Research about Design), Clinical (Research for Design), and Applied (Research through Design)”, highlighting the diversity and depth of interpretations within RtD (Taylor, 2018:42). Consequently, this research intended to generate knowledge aimed at enhancing engagement, thereby supporting sustainable environmental action in a manner that is both transparent and accessible to a wide range of audiences.

Although the definition of RtD is debated, this research understands that “design research is a systematic search for and acquisition of knowledge, related to a general human ecology considered from a designerly way of thinking, i.e. a project-oriented perspective” (Findeli, 2010:294). Furthermore, RtD offers a means to focus on making narratives manifest as objects or knowledge, contributing to a broader picture or ‘pincushion’ of a million stories (Massey, 2013; Lambert and Speed, 2017:109). The same authors stated that the role of designer-researchers is to create spaces for collaboration to reshape the landscape of design. Similarly, RtD offers a context where this reimagination and rediscovery can take place.

This research focused on creating opportunities to reflect on engagement practices, environmental action, and decision-making in UGS. This included reimagining ways to improve engagement quality through co-production, developing a Creative Engagement Framework. Ultimately, this helped enhance connections and stewardship levels towards these spaces. Additionally, this approach supported Papanek’s assertion that ‘integrated design is comprehensive’ as it must consider all the differing factors and configurations needed to inform decision-making (2019:322).

#### 1.4.i Research Aim, Objectives, and Research Questions

This research aimed to investigate *how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within urban greenspaces (UGS)*. In doing so, I addressed the following research question: *How can creative engagement encourage communities to foster sustainable environmental action and stewardship within UGS?* This question was addressed through the following four objectives. With every objective, further questions are posed to help structure data collection and analysis. These are all shown below:

Obj 1	To understand the current practices of public engagement from multiple perspectives.
RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors facilitate empowerment and long-lasting public engagement?</li> <li>• How does environmental action influence decision-making?</li> </ul>

Obj 2	To understand the motivations behind people's involvement with public participation and engagement in UGS.
RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the current obstacles affecting motivation for public engagement?</li> <li>• Who and what are the catalysts for environmental action within UGS?</li> </ul>

Obj 3	To examine whether creative engagement can encourage people to engage more with UGS.
RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent can creative engagement approaches affect decision-making?</li> <li>• What role can co-production play in creative public participation?</li> </ul>

Obj 4	To bridge the gap between decision-makers and those taking action, enabling a framework to increase creative engagement in UGS.
RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can creative engagement in UGS encourage more action? If so, how?</li> <li>• How can relationships between people and policy be improved to achieve informed decision-making?</li> </ul>

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis contains six chapters. Details about each chapter are outlined below.

**Chapter 1 - Introduction:** This contextualises UGS and discusses the intersections of how design thinking, creative engagement, and environmental action can influence decision-making in Manchester's greenspaces. It introduces the key concepts and approaches that have helped shape the thesis and explains how these elements contribute to the rationale behind the research, guiding the aim and objectives.

**Chapter 2 - Literature Review:** This chapter defines key terminology and details discourse relating to UGS and creative engagement approaches. It explores the complex interpretations of UGS with regard to place, people, and planet. Engagement and creative approaches are critically reviewed to help determine the current state of public participation in UGS and the extent to which creative approaches have previously been used to address collaboration and shared decision-making. Additionally, findings from a systematic literature review are presented to establish an understanding of previous engagement frameworks and identify research gaps.

**Chapter 3 - Research Design:** This chapter includes in-depth discussions of the research approach within a theoretical context, the formulation of the research design, and the introduction and justification of the methods chosen to answer the research questions. It outlines the three phases of data collection, including interviews, case studies, and co-production. Additionally, it discusses how data was analysed and interpreted.

**Chapter 4 - Data Findings:** This presents the research findings, consolidating the research methods and responding to the research questions. This chapter combines the findings of 13 interviews and 4 case studies, including further interviews, focus groups and a survey. Reflecting on the findings in relation to the objectives and aim, emerging themes and insights that unfolded are highlighted. Thematic analysis of the findings formulates an evidence-base to support the production of a framework to increase creative engagement in UGS.

**Chapter 5 - Creative Engagement Framework:** This chapter identifies the framework's components, processes, and intended use, shaped by co-produced input. Finally, the results from testing, validation interviews, and amendments are outlined to discuss the framework's utility and effectiveness.

**Chapter 6 - Conclusions and Future Research:** This reflects on the main findings from the research and the benefits and limitations of the Creative Engagement Framework. It offers a contribution to knowledge and provides suggestions for

further research to be considered, along with final remarks to conclude the thesis.

### **1.6 Summary**

This chapter outlines the background and motivation for this investigation. It discusses the research problem and focus areas and presents the overall aim and consequent objectives. Chapter Two reviews the literature, providing a greater understanding of the key topics embedded throughout the thesis.

## CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Introduction

This research adopted an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together theories across design and human geography to look at how people collectively interact with urban greenspaces (UGS), taking environmental action to improve and care for nature in cities and whether this form of stewardship is innately creative or can be harnessed to motivate sustainable action. This review suggests the ways in which these disciplines overlap and intersect in a transparent and inclusive manner. By creating a foundation of underpinning theories and key definitions, this literature review aimed to critically examine previous work in these fields and highlight where knowledge was limited regarding how creative engagement approaches can help enhance connections and levels of stewardship towards UGS.

### 2.1 Key Definitions

The following section acts as an initial glossary of terminology used to create a conceptual framework. Further discussion surrounding these terms will be elaborated throughout this chapter:

#### 2.1.i Urban Greenspace(s) (UGS)

UGS within this research is considered as any publicly accessible space with a majority of ground or surfaces that are permeable, such as formal and informal parks and revegetated brownfield sites. Clusters of paved urban street trees were therefore not considered a greenspace under this definition. Greenspaces under 5m<sup>2</sup> were also not included as these spaces may hinder opportunities for creative intervention. The amount of space available (in a literal sense) was deemed an essential factor for moving and travelling around a site with a focus group. Building from my proposed criteria, this research determines UGS as areas which are characterised predominantly by vegetation of various kinds confined within urban spaces, including: "parks, gardens, lawns, forests, farmlands, brownfield sites, green roofs..." (Shams and Barker, 2019:67).

UGS are also sites with urban nature. This thesis takes its definition from Nature for All and refers to urban spaces supporting plant life and non-human wildlife. Urban nature encompasses designated recreational areas like public parks and informal green spaces, including green streetscapes, natural habitats, rooftop gardens, and community gardens (Nature for All, 2024).

### 2.1.ii Public Participation / Engagement

Within the context of this research, participation is defined as the active involvement of people in an event, activity, or problem in which the outcome directly affects those involved. Therefore, public participation can be understood as public engagement in decision-making, such as improving proposed new policies or developments for public events and activities (Barnes, Newman and Sullivan, 2007). Public participation, such as neighbourhood forums, citizen committees and community groups, either established through public bodies or independently by voluntary activities, can potentially improve the quality of life for communities<sup>1</sup> and facilitate more active citizenship (Mulgan in Involve, 2005). However, the extent to which public participation makes a difference varies from place to place, as power relations can dictate and manipulate the process (Barnes, Newman and Sullivan, 2007). Therefore, it cannot be seen as a cure-all solution in everyday governing (Michels and de Graaf, 2010). Although the terms are nuanced and used differently across different disciplines, engagement and participation are used synonymously for this research due to the similar use and discourse across design and human geography.

### 2.1.iii Creative Engagement

As defined within this research, creative engagement merges the concept of creativity—defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as the capacity to produce original ideas through imagination and skill (OED ‘creativity, n.’, 2023) - with design thinking principles. Creativity transcends novelty, encompassing the creation of ideas that are not only new but also useful and impactful for participants in the creative process (Ochse, 1990; Lubart, 1994; Sternberg, 1998; Sternberg and Lubart, 1998; Runco and Jaeger, 2012). It plays a crucial role at both individual and collective levels, facilitating problem-solving and fostering innovative ways of thinking and acting (Sternberg and Lubart, 1998).

Emerging from the concept of creative learning, creative engagement is aimed at fostering a "social and embodied experience of meaning-making" (Anderson, 2018:78), enabling individuals to construct personal worldviews while considering others' perspectives (Booth, 2013). It signifies applying creativity to engagement processes, enhancing the depth, accessibility, and impact of involvement in activities or decision-making. This method expands traditional collaboration by incorporating arts, storytelling, and interactive technologies, promoting a more inclusive and diverse participation (Ansell and Torfing, 2021). Creativity in this context is also associated with the ability to be

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<sup>1</sup> Community is understood throughout this research as an *ecology* (Fry, 2018). Communities, as Fry defines are vital parts of sustainability, they threaten the capitalistic framework of politics as they do not prescribe to value being solely exchangeable. They are therefore not easily disbanded and hold strong bonds inclusive to many socio-cultural differences e.g. gender, affluence, politics or ethnicity (Fry, 2018).

resourceful and adaptive in daily interactions with UGS and environmental initiatives (Wakkary and Maestri, 2007).

Introduced by Rowe in 1987, 'design thinking' is a problem-solving approach that acknowledges the complexities of real-life human experiences, now broadly applied across various sectors for its comprehensive toolkits and methodologies (Rowe, 1991; Dorst, 2011; Micheli *et al.*, 2019).

In essence, this thesis employs creative engagement as a facet of design thinking applied to decision-making in UGS engagement. It offers a comprehensive framework for understanding various perspectives, aiming to break down barriers to participation, stimulate meaningful dialogue, and generate creative solutions to complex issues. Through this approach, the research endeavours to foster a richer, more inclusive understanding of engagement in UGS, advocating for methodologies that enhance the quality and meaningfulness of stakeholder involvement.

#### **2.1.iv Environmental Action**

Environmental action can be defined as a diverse range of behaviours and collective efforts aimed at promoting and supporting environmental protection and sustainability (Dono, Webb and Richardson, 2010). This encompasses various activities, including, but not limited to (*ibid.*):

- active participation in environmental organisations,
- engaging in political advocacy for environmental causes,
- intentionally undertaking environmental practices,
- influencing policy decisions,
- contributing to the public good by rationalising personal costs and benefits.

Environmental activism is another form of collective action; whether it involves public policy or maintaining a clean environment, it has '*good public characteristics*' at its heart (Lubell, 2002). This can mean those beyond the main actors benefit from their action. This echoes Lange and Dewitte's (2019) definition of a sub-group of 'pro-environmental behaviour'. Environmental action in this research covers this variety of actions and refers to improving spaces for all.

Those typically taking environmental action include volunteers, environmental organisations, community groups, and environmentally focused initiatives facilitated by local authorities or private or public sector organisations/funders. This thesis adopted this definition and sought to further define it in more detail through investigation, specifically in terms of what motivates environmental action and how people get involved.



## 2.2 Context

Following the above definitions, the context for this research's scope is presented through two key topics: 1. Urban greenspace and 2. Creative approaches in engagement. Within these two key topics, the discussion highlights the benefits and challenges of UGS in cities and how people may engage with(in) them. Ultimately, these provide an account of how UGS affects the people using them and how decisions are made.

## 2.3 Key Topic 1: Urban Greenspace (UGS)

The UK government announced early in 2023 in their new *Ambitious roadmap for a cleaner greener country* that everyone should live within a 15-minute walk from greenspace or water (GOV.UK, 2023). The extent of this *ambitious* plan and its effect is somewhat unknown. However, it does suggest further investment in a crucial resource necessary for public health and the environment. UGS are instrumental in shaping the socio-environmental landscape of urban areas. These green pockets act as lungs for cities, providing clean air, supporting biodiversity, and offering recreational activities for residents. Daniels et al. (2018) suggest a general desire for additional greenspaces and that spaces should adopt transition zones (natural or artificial) to enhance the multifunctionality of space in urban areas. This is not a novel thought; previous research by Borgström et al. (2006) suggested implementing 'zoning' in UGS as a solution whereby different uses are highlighted and prioritised through planning that considers the social, environmental and economic aspects of space. The multifunctionality of UGS is, therefore, vital for their protection. If they include one or more functions, for example, commuting routes, family spots, exercise areas, playgrounds, dog walking pathways and wildlife protection habitats, they are more likely to attract engagement from communities or neighbourhoods (Barton, Grant and Guise, 2010).

Many types of UGS exist, including parks, greenbelts, brownfield sites, allotments or community gardens, green roofs, conservation reserves, and institutional grounds (such as universities). Some of these spaces are perceived as more accessible than others physically and socially, i.e. who can have access and who can afford to access them. For example, some allotments have lengthy waiting lists, and some community gardens are run by closed communities under locked premises (Biernacka and Kronenberg, 2019). This research investigates how these spaces are managed and looks to understand the networks of environmental action takers to encourage more engagement across different UGS in Manchester.

Parks or open spaces in urban areas can also induce negative associations, especially at night, making certain areas feel safer than others (Groff and McCord, 2012). It is therefore necessary to understand what motivates people

to visit these spaces, who could benefit from engaging, and how a stronger positive presence can be developed, e.g. with community groups and organisations. One aspect of this could be to improve the quality of life for people in areas that lack sustained investment, disadvantaged or more ethnically diverse communities (Snaith, 2015). Snaith speculates whether 'public' space is regulated by dominant ethnic groups, which, in turn, reflects their preferences and ideals (2015). This echoes literature from Massey (2005), who questions the dubious concept of 'open space', often socially regulated due to the lack of other explicit controls. Snaith's research highlights that the design of British parks often does not meet the needs of all ethnicities in Britain, and this also reflects findings from Byrne and Wolch (2009), who distinguish that the 'ethno racial' production of space influences who does and does not use the space. This also speaks to who can access these spaces, the inequity of UGS planning and displacement, and who takes action in these spaces (Rigolon and Németh, 2018; Fernandez, Harris and Rose, 2021). For these reasons, it is crucial for this thesis to research sites of formal parkland and to obtain detailed accounts of areas of more informal greenspace perhaps re-appropriated by groups or individuals. Other aspects of social exclusion within UGS are access to parks both psychologically and physically (Byrne, 2011; Zhou and Rana, 2012).

Over recent decades, a notable depletion in UGS provision has been observed, tied to shrinking local authority greenspace budgets (Dunnett, Swanwick and Woolley, 2002; Rodgers, 2020). This decline prompted Dunnett, Swanwick and Woolley to advocate for design-centric planning to tackle usage barriers and rejuvenate UGS (2002). Paramount among these barriers is public perception. Therefore, a cohesive design strategy should craft a 'successful place' – an amalgamation of open and greenspaces that foster accessibility and care for nature (CABE/DETR, 2000). With over 82% of UK residents living in urbanised areas (Woodland Trust, 2023), the pressure to balance funding cuts and escalating housing demands with greenspace provisions necessitates collaboration between local authorities, planners, and developers (House of Commons, 2006, 2023). Recent studies highlight a dichotomy: people's preference for controlled greenspaces versus ecologists' call for wilder regions (Bonnes *et al.*, 2007). Nevertheless, social and ecological advantages of UGS can coexist. The NHS's partnership with the Forestry Commission illustrates this, linking UGS initiatives to tangible health benefits, such as the 'green prescription' programme (Shackell and Walter, 2012).

Several organisations and charities are continually making it their priority to protect and manage greenspaces across the UK; for example, the National Trust have the Future Parks Accelerator (2024), Greater Manchester Combined Authority's Ignition: Nature-Based Solutions in Greater Manchester (2024) and Manchester Museum's *Wild* exhibition (2022). These are important projects to support case studies and understand organisational, institutional,

and voluntary relationships. Lastly, Azadi et al. (2011) have collated all academic literature with the keywords 'urban green space project', finding the pivotal roles of state governance and societal collaboration in optimising UGS outcomes. This suggests that collaboration between local authorities, community groups, and businesses is crucial to truly enhance the quality of UGS. When state and society harmoniously interplay, UGS functions better, fosters community belonging, and establishes robust communication frameworks.

Manchester's parks owe their inception to the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of the city during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The increasing pollution, overcrowded housing, and poor living conditions made it evident that greenspaces were required for the well-being of the city's inhabitants and factory workers. Following the wave of Victorian public park creation in the UK, Manchester saw three new parks: Queen's Park, Peel Park and Philips Park. The establishment of Philips Park in 1846 was recognised as one of the pioneering public parks in the UK. It marked a response to urbanisation and the need to provide greenspaces for the working classes (Kidd, 2006). Later, Alexandra Park was opened in 1870, combining traditional English garden elements with sports facilities to foster social cohesion and address social inequalities in the city (Piercey, 2020). This enriched understanding of UGS, both from a historical and functional perspective has helped to highlight the complexity of their design, social context and the myriad factors that influence their creation and use.

Manchester's UGS are deeply embedded in the city's rich history and socio-environmental dynamics and illustrate the broader principles and challenges associated with UGS governance. Take, for example, the lasting social and political impacts of events like the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester in 1819 which saw a peaceful gathering demanding parliamentary reforms being violently suppressed by magistrates (Wyke and Cocks, 2004). Following this, legislation such as the 'Six Acts' and notably the Seditious Meetings Act of 1819 (People's History Museum, 2019), served to legally limit public assemblies, fundamentally altering the approach to urban design and the structuring of public spaces. This legislative shift not only influenced the physical layout of cities but also highlighted the intrinsic link between urban planning and the facilitation—or restriction—of democratic expression (Hou and Knierbein, 2017). The subsequent mistrust between authorities and the public has historically shaped how open spaces in Manchester and other British cities have been perceived and designed (Benevolo, 1971).

Greenspaces play a crucial role in our environment, offering significant social, economic, and environmental advantages that enhance public health and quality of life (CABE Space, 2004; Fuller et al., 2007; Klemm, Lenzholzer and van den Brink, 2017; Twohig-Bennett and Jones, 2018). However, they face

threats from housing demands, new developments, and policy changes (Moore *et al.*, 2016). It is therefore important to consider how people perceive greenspaces in cities. These areas are significantly conducive to public health and physical activity (Bedimo-Rung, Mowen and Cohen, 2005; Richardson *et al.*, 2013; Jimenez *et al.*, 2021). When UGS are readily accessible, health is impacted positively although, it is worth noting that there can be other factors at play, such as social class and equity (Byrne and Wolch, 2009; Byrne, 2012; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Schell *et al.*, 2020). This research helped to uncover reasons why individuals may value or disregard these spaces. The subsequent section delves into the benefits and barriers of UGS and considers how UGS touches people, place, and the planet. In this sense, this research moves from granular to the abstract conceptualisation of UGS; from micro to macro. Although considered separately for ease of navigation, these benefits and barriers can co-exist, intersect, hinder and promote each of these different branches.

### 2.3.i People and Governance

It is well recognised that street trees and urban forestry provide a variety of benefits including improving air quality, increasing property value, positive effects on climate cooling and heating, a source of energy and, pertinently, creating more memorable and aesthetically pleasant spaces (Donovan and Butry, 2010; Nowak *et al.*, 2014; Galeniaks, 2017). It is also well-documented that greenspaces, including parks and gardens, positively affect people's health: Wolch, Byrne and Newell (2014) state that accessibility to greenspace further promotes physical activities and in turn can also uplift psychological health. Twohig-Bennett and Jones (2018) echo this with their findings that indicate that the creation, investment, and regeneration of accessible greenspaces are an integral component of multi-faceted strategies to enhance a wide range of health benefits. Townsend and Barton (2018) also argue that humans are neurologically wired to connect with nature, particularly tree canopies. Drawing on the '*perceptual fluency theory*' from Joye and van den Berg (2018), they argue that this connection arises because humans can visually interpret green landscapes more quickly than urban environments. However, rising urban populations and the strain on greenspaces may prevent people from fully realising their benefits (Fuller *et al.*, 2007; also see Bratman *et al.*, 2019), potentially widening the human-nature disconnect.

It is important to note what is meant by human-nature connection (HNC). This is succinctly put in Hayes Hursh *et al.*'s (2024) study where they delve into the intricacies of HNC within the context of urban park visitors and wildlife. Their research builds on the concept of HNC, which is understood as an emotional bond with nature formed through physical and contextual interactions.

However, the researchers emphasise that this bond, often beginning in childhood, is dynamic and shaped by individual life experiences and characteristics. A significant finding of their study is that in urban settings, the design of greenspaces influences people's perceptions of nature. They discuss how manicured areas with limited wildlife have become a 'new benchmark' for natural spaces, potentially skewing the younger generation's understanding of what constitutes a natural environment (2024). The study suggests increased access to more natural and biodiverse UGS can facilitate stronger HNC, countering the generational decline in nature appreciation.

Studies have shown that proximity to greenspaces can enhance quality of life and reduce cardiovascular mortality (Coutts, Horner and Chapin, 2010). However, the health benefits of greenspaces might be most pronounced for those living nearby (Nesbitt *et al.*, 2018). Greenspaces not only boost well-being but also foster a sense of social safety (Groenewegen *et al.*, 2006; Maas *et al.*, 2009). While these findings are vital, they are challenging to incorporate into governance in terms of decision-making and policy (Ansell and Torfing, 2021). The political complexities of problem-solving at policy level, combined with the restricted capacity of local authorities to identify and analyse evidence of effective strategies in various situations, often hinder the adoption of evidence-based policymaking (*ibid*).

Governance of UGS, in the first instance, goes back to their initial design and planning. Urban design is a complex term that refers to physical transformations of urban spaces (Cooper, Evans and Boyko, 2009). The physical principles of urban design can include ease of movement, public realm quality and diversity. Additionally, urban design considers how people interact with spaces and how those interactions can shape the design (CABE/DETR, 2000; Cooper, Evans and Boyko, 2009). Urban design and planning related to public UGS can be linked to *design governance*. As defined by Carmona (2021), Design governance refers to government involvement in the design practices and techniques that shape the built environment, intending to guide both the process and outcomes to meet public interests. He argues that there is a common practice of intervening in the design of built spaces, prompted by critiques that urban governance frequently overlooks the value of high-quality built environments in favour of short-term regulatory measures rather than long-term, visionary planning (*ibid*).

Public engagement therefore plays a vital role in how urban spaces are designed. Rather than focus on the physical transformation of space, this research focuses on understanding the process of decision-making in urban design. While this research may not have direct policy implications, it seeks to

understand the processes of change within UGS decision-making and how people (residents, community groups and other actors) do or do not interact with them. Considering the needs of people during these processes is necessary to improve the quality of UGS design and the associated implications on an environmental, social and economic level. Although quality is subjective and people's opinions can be varied or competing with each other, those designing or maintaining UGS need to create places that are "superbly worth living in" (Carmona, 2021:53).

Urban design can be seen as a discipline that intentionally attempts to link up processes and practices of different disciplines, and some see it as a subset of urban planning (see Camona, 2021 for further details). An argument can be developed in either case for adopting the term urban design over urban planning or vice versa, seeing as they are closely linked and, in some books, spoken about inclusively. Urban planning is therefore used in this thesis due to its common use across human geography and UGS governance. The role of landscape architecture is indeed pivotal in shaping the physical manifestation of public spaces, yet urban design extends beyond physical layout to encompass the strategic processes that govern urban planning, bridging the gap between design, functionality, and long-term stewardship of these spaces. In this sense, urban planning is an interdisciplinary process for managing changes in urban and natural environments (Cooper, Evans, and Boyko, 2009). It addresses the physical, social, legal, economic, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of urban development. This iterative process includes defining problems, analysing data, exploring design options, and evaluating these against objectives like sustainability and quality of life improvement (Adams, 1994).

Urban planning must recognise greenspaces as a necessity, not simply optional (Groenewegen et al., 2006). According to Lee and Maheswaran (2010), when considering 'urban health', it is difficult to produce unbiased results connecting UGS to the overall health of a society. They argue that it is difficult to demonstrate strong relationships between two variables when several other factors influence people's behaviour. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that urban environments can constrict or limit physical activity (Morris, 2003; Bedimo-Rung, Mowen and Cohen, 2005; Ohta *et al.*, 2007; Lee and Maheswaran, 2010; Sallis *et al.*, 2020).

The Woodland Trust's 2017 survey explored urban residents' interactions with greenspaces (Bond, 2017). Of the 2,400 respondents who live or work in pre-selected urban areas, 56% visited for leisure walking, 41% to relax, and 19% to observe nature. A significant 77% would miss local greenspaces if they did not

see it in their local area, with 50% desiring more. Despite potential biases of those more inclined to answer a Woodland Trust survey (e.g. existing members or those already interested in woodland/nature), this survey offers valuable insights into greenspace engagement.

The concept of "mosaic governance" aligns with this research's intention (Lawrence et al., 2013; Nesbit et al., 2018) and champions a site-specific approach that is not only adaptable and inclusive but also deeply rooted in promoting community engagement (Buijs *et al.*, 2016). This philosophy inherently fosters a more inclusive environment, thereby prompting community participation. Such an approach can enhance project longevity and citizen empowerment, though its full exploration is beyond this research's initial scope. In parallel, Kaplan and Kaplan (2011) investigated the psychological experiences that nature invokes in humans. Their findings echo the essence of UGS as an essential entity for mental well-being. Contact with nature is beneficial for children as it can play a formative role in a child's development. Chawla, (2015), and Ulrich et al. (1991) found that exposure to natural environments can aid in stress recovery when compared to urban environments (also see, Choe, Jorgensen and Sheffield, 2020; Yao, Zhang and Gong, 2021). Furthermore, Keniger et al. (2013) present a comprehensive discussion on the multifarious benefits of human-nature interaction. Overall, these insights form a compelling case for preserving and expanding greenspaces within urban landscapes, underpinning the argument for their critical role in enhancing urban life.

Overall, there is a significant and ever-growing amount of literature combining UGS and people, the majority of which links the benefits of their provision to multiple socio-environmental factors as well as economic value (Łaszkiwicz, Czembrowski and Kronenberg, 2019). The following section discusses the relationship between UGS and place.

### **2.3.ii Place**

Place is described here as a 'meaningful location' as supported by Creswell, who suggests that "places must have some relationship to humans and the human capacity to produce and consume meaning" (2014:23). Within this research, UGS are considered as places where meaning can be formed, incubated, and nurtured. The extent of meaning is therefore the key area of investigation. UGS offer ecosystem services like air purification, temperature regulation, and habitat provision, enhancing the quality of life for both residents and wildlife (Klemm et al., 2017; Mullaney, Lucke and Trueman, 2015; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014). These spaces and places, however, vary in size, vegetation, and accessibility (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014). While they

bring benefits, they also pose environmental justice issues, such as investments in parks triggering gentrification (ibid). In this context, Gentrification considered these authors' definition as "the displacement and/or exclusion of the very residents the green space was meant to benefit" (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014:235). This effect is also termed environmental gentrification. Environmental gentrification similarly causes the displacement of the working classes or lower-income residents by reusing unwanted land, which prompts new interest in developing real estate and, in turn, drives up house prices (Curran and Hamilton, 2012). Furthermore, research shows that the inclusion of racially marginalised communities advocating for more UGS can later be displaced due to environmental gentrification (Rigolon and Németh, 2018; Fernandez, Harris and Rose, 2021). This highlights some of the complex injustices in UGS provision that are crucial to consider when investigating this topic. Critical reflection of this research is therefore required to ensure results are considered and are as equitable as possible.

Andrejs Galenieks (2017) demonstrated in a Southern California study that UGS offers environmental benefits and yields significant economic returns. For every dollar invested in greenspace maintenance, communities can expect returns exceeding \$5. While specific to his study location, it underscores the economic viability of greenspace care, emphasising the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic benefits (Galenieks, 2017). He also champions policies that promote walkability around these spaces, as environments with trees enhance well-being and physical activity (Pretty et al., 2007; Galenieks, 2017). Encouraging walking can boost greenspace interaction and protection, enhancing connection to place. He suggested tools like Walkscore should be used in planning to urge decision-makers to prioritise pedestrian-friendly interventions (Galenieks, 2017). Moore (2010) critiques the conventional success metrics in urban planning, which often prioritise tangible outputs like housing numbers. She argues that intangible values, such as a sense of belonging and well-being, are equally vital, even if they are harder to quantify. The environmental quality of a place is closely tied to well-being (Moore, 2010). Using a Marxist political lens, Nesbitt et al. (2018) explore how economic dynamics influence urban vegetation and surrounding communities. They identify two main features of *urban green equity*: spatial distribution and decision-making participation. These features have informed the development of the creative engagement framework.

The concept of place emphasises people's physical and emotional connection with specific locations, especially in urban landscapes. Integrating green infrastructure within urban planning is pivotal in harmonising ecological networks with urban development to enhance sustainability and well-being (Lafortezza *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, UGS plays a critical role in binding communities, fostering interaction, and bridging landscapes (Benedict and



McMahon, 2012). Moreover, understanding cities as landscapes can lead to more effective design and planning strategies (Turner, 2014).

This interconnectedness between people, place, and nature can profoundly affect socio-environmental well-being. The act of incorporating greenspaces into urban planning requires a delicate balance. Maruani and Amit-Cohen (2007) extensively review open space planning models, emphasising different approaches and methodologies. Ahern (2011) shifts the paradigm from a fail-safe planning approach to a 'safe-to-fail' perspective, suggesting that resilience in planning is key to sustainability. This supports this thesis, as it again shifts the focus of research outcomes to be process-focused, not outcome-orientated. James et al. (2009) present an integrated understanding of greenspaces in the European context, shedding light on the importance of UGS in diverse urban configurations, whereas Niemelä et al.(2010) anchor their arguments in the ecosystem services approach, illustrating its potential for more holistic greenspace planning in urban settings. This balance is rooted in urban planning and how space and place decisions are made. This research therefore seeks to understand this relationship between those making decisions and those using or interacting regularly with UGS.

### **2.3.iii Planet**

This section discusses the overall view of human-nature relationships to determine what theoretical discourse can be drawn from to underpin and align the research. To contextualise this thesis, grasping how experts delineate the world's current processes and ecosystems is pivotal.

Human activities are accelerating environmental changes, forcing wildlife to adapt or perish (Ellis, 2024). Due to these urban challenges, there is a growing urgency to understand the behavioural shifts in animals (Dowding *et al.*, 2010; Legagneux and Ducatez, 2013; Wong and Candolin, 2015). Media outlets like Blue Planet spotlight the rapid biodiversity loss, and concerns about a sixth mass extinction are growing (Carrington, 2017; BBC, 2019). These often-stark reminders affect how people relate to place and nature. With an overwhelming amount of global coverage of ecological collapse, people can become apathetic towards decision-making and stewardship of UGS, contributing to demotivating factors of engagement in local areas (Weintrobe, 2012).

An unavoidable consideration when investigating the relationships between humans and nature is capitalism. Capitalism is described as a system that structures nature entirely, where human constructs such as classes, empires, and markets both shape and are shaped by the ongoing changes within the natural world (Moore et al., 2016). From this viewpoint, capitalism is intertwined within the global ecology in a way that touches upon capital accumulation, power dynamics, and the creation of 'natural spaces' (and in this context, urban areas) through various historical phases. Within the context of

capitalism, nature is considered 'cheap' in two related ways: first, by lowering the economic cost of natural resources, and second, by degrading nature's value from an ethical and political standpoint to justify its low price (Moore et al., 2016). Critiquing this capitalistic exploitation (referred to as the Capitalocene) of nature, these authors advocate for a reimagined human-nature relationship (Moore et al., 2016).

Kathryn Moore (2010) underscores nature's intrinsic value, contrasting it with capitalism's transactional approach. This type of transaction can be interpreted through Macaulay et al.'s (2022) work, where human-nature interactions and experiences can improve relationships and develop a restorative mindful practice, connecting more people to place through UGS.

The epochs or distinct ages where humans have existed within Earth's timeline offer insights into our impact on the planet and the growing human-nature disconnect. The Holocene is the only epoch known to support modern human societies (Steffen et al., 2015). However, a shift from the Holocene indicates a new, unstable paradigm, emphasising human activity's dystopic impact on the planet.

A frequent term used to describe the current era of humanity is the Anthropocene. The concept coined by Crutzen and Stoermer is characterised by humanity's central role in shaping nature, ecology, and geology (2000). This epoch's inception is traced to the late 18th century, supported by mounting evidence of human-driven environmental alterations (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000; Steffen et al., 2015; Waters et al., 2016). The term has evolved into a metaphor for global societal detachment from nature but faces criticism, as some see it as a simplistic portrayal of human impact (Haraway, 2016; Moore et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the Anthropocene highlights the need for sustainable practices, knowledge, and evidence-based research to address ongoing planetary transformations (Biermann et al., 2016), emphasising the imperative of responsible actions amid uncertainties about the future.

More in line with this research's belief is the concept of the Chthulucene. This is a concept championed by Donna Haraway (2016), which serves as a robust response to the constricting narratives of the Anthropocene. In contrast to human-centric epochs, the Chthulucene advocates a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate planetary systems at play. Haraway's motto for the Chthulucene, "*make kin not babies*" (2016:103), encourages collaboration and utilisation of existing resources over perpetual growth. This philosophy fosters a sense of community akin to compost, where stories incubate and pass down, nurturing deeper connections among all entities on Earth, acknowledging our transition into post-human and multi-species terrain. This approach promotes curiosity as a means to unearth a profound comprehension of the planet and humanity's role within it. It aligns with Haraway's belief in learning from what is dwindling and what is thriving while

safeguarding the visible and recognising the invisible elements. In Haraway's words, "we must somehow make the relay, inherit the trouble, and reinvent the conditions for multi-species flourishing" (2016:130).

This thesis acknowledges aspects of the Anthropocene but chooses to look beyond the bleak narratives, offering a more inclusive and hopeful outlook. As Haraway suggests, "the biologies, arts, and politics need each other; with involutory momentum, they entice each other to thinking/making in sympoiesis for more liveable worlds" (2016:98). This research takes onboard these theoretical challenges of planetary systems to guide the process through which data can be collected. This research developed a sympoietic, qualitative approach to understand how creative engagement can encourage collaborative problem-solving, sustainable environmental action and stewardship within UGS.

### **2.3.iv COVID-19**

This section provides a brief overview of the global impact COVID-19 has had on this research, overriding the initial data collection approach and, more generally, people's views on UGS. Effectively adding another layer to the significance of UGS, the global pandemic prompted a long list of writers to discuss how the crisis has affected and changed the human relationship with public space (Honey-Rosés *et al.*, 2021). Many revolved around the extent to which these relationships will change regarding UGS's design, use, perception, behaviour, and social inequalities. Venter *et al.* (2020) presented a compelling study from Oslo, Norway, detailing the spike in recreational use of greenspaces during the outbreak. Additionally, Ugolini *et al.* (2021) highlighted the changed perceptions and use of UGS across different international cities during the pandemic, reflecting its paramount importance during times of crisis. Their research highlighted that feelings of missing greenspaces varied and depended on the frequency of pre-pandemic visits. The ability to view such places helped to alleviate these issues slightly and, in turn, helped to understand the innate response to UGS and how impactful it can be to those who have established a human-nature relationship. As a prominent form of connection with the outdoor world in cities, UGS became a vital resource for mental health and physical fitness during the long lockdown periods (Slater, Christiana and Gustat, 2020).

The pandemic further highlighted the socio-environmental injustices facing cities (Cole *et al.*, 2021). Urban regeneration has been disproportionately distributed, leading to issues of gentrification in some areas, increased poverty, and environmental inequity, particularly amongst major cities within the Northern Hemisphere. This impacted the health and well-being of those remaining in densely populated urban areas, with those who were more affluent and able to flee the cities during the lockdowns (Cole *et al.*, 2021).

The creation of Mayfield Park in Manchester brought the first new park to the city centre in 100 years. The Guardian, reporting on this in 2020, declared that this government investment was a response to COVID-19 and the need for more outdoor space (Walker, 2020). Whether an intentional or coincidental response to the pandemic, the city welcoming a new park demonstrates that working collaboratively across councils and government bodies can be beneficial to develop spaces that are both for people and the environment (Sinnott, 2023). In discussions with the Environment Agency working alongside developers, the park was better suited for alleviating flood risks and mitigating other effects of climate change, e.g. improving air quality and urban surface temperatures whilst simultaneously providing a space for residents to benefit from the connection to nature. This is an example of new investment in greenspaces as a priority not only for the residents of Manchester but also to strengthen the city's resilience to the effects of climate change. This proves that greenspace design can mutually benefit people, place and the planet.

### 2.3.v Summary

This section discussed UGS from multiple perspectives. It focused on the characteristics of these spaces, the way they have developed and the associated benefits and barriers of UGS. An argument was developed that advocates for more thoughtful urban planning of these spaces to ensure optimal socio-environmental benefits. It is therefore vital to consider both user experiences and ecosystem services in UGS planning (Buchel and Frantzeskaki, 2015). Despite a growing awareness of the benefits of these spaces and an increasing human environmental footprint, many challenges are still evident, notably from housing demands and policy shifts (Moore, 2016). Therefore, this research sought to build on existing literature, proposing a creative engagement framework for increasing stewardship and sustainability of UGS.

Overall, this section has highlighted various benefits and issues relating to engagement in UGS that vary across several socio-environmental variations:

- UGS have various uses, such as commuting routes, family spots, exercise areas, playgrounds, dog-walking pathways, and wildlife protection habitats (Barton, Grant, and Guise, 2010).
- Not all UGS are publicly accessible or are periodically locked from visitation (Biernacka and Kronenberg, 2019).
- Some can bring about feelings of being unsafe or uneasiness (Groff and McCord, 2012), or conversely, if collectively cared for, they can help develop a sense of social safety (Groenewegen et al., 2006).
- There is evidence of inequity with UGS provision, displacing some and benefiting others (Snaith, 2015; Fernandez, Harris and Rose, 2021).
- UGS offer an appearance of nature; however, their often manicured form may not truly reflect natural states, leading to skewed public

perceptions of what constitutes "natural" in UGS design (Hayes Hursh, Perry and Drake, 2024).

- Nonetheless, UGS are stress-reducing and can help improve well-being (Ulrich et al., 1991; Yao, Zhang and Gong, 2021).
- There are a growing number of initiatives that support the improvement of urban areas in terms of stewardship and planting (Manchester Museum, 2022; Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2024), as well as more opportunities to receive green prescribing on the NHS (Shackell and Walter, 2012).
- Finally, incorporating nature-based solutions to address climate change issues can enhance urban resilience and improve well-being, achieving a balance that benefits people and places (Domaradzka et al., 2022; van der Jagt et al., 2023).

## 2.4 Key Topic 2: Creative approaches in engagement

Creative approaches in engagement are understood here as tools, methods or strategies to engage with people creatively. The extent to how creative each approach is subjective and can be personalised to the individual or group being engaged. This section discusses the challenges of participation in urban planning (in UGS), how design thinking can be used to take theory into practice and what creative engagement can look like.

### 2.4.i Participation Challenges

Participation is a crucial aspect of governance to enable effective responses that reflect citizens' needs (Ansell and Torfing, 2021; O'Hare, 2021). Approaching it as a democratic right for citizens to be involved with decision-making processes, O'Hare investigated the issues of participation, particularly surrounding the differences in rationale and expectations involved in the process. Issues tend to arise with the logistics of planning participation as an entire process.

The research surrounding participation is vast and covers disciplines of human geography, planning, politics, and sciences through to art and design with co-creation and co-design (see Arnstien, 1969; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Galvagno and Dalli, 2014; Huybrechts, Benesch and Geib, 2017; O'Hare, 2021). Several phrases are often used to describe participation depending on the context and angle of dissemination. For the purposes of this interdisciplinary research, I focused on applying design thinking into urban planning, looking at how it intersects and can influence each discipline.

Participation or engagement in this context is understood as individuals or groups involved in decision-making revolving around public UGS. However, a crucial part of decision-making processes with UGS is that participation can be

problematic and often frustrating for those involved. Arnstein suggested over 50 years ago that 'citizen participation is citizen power' (1969:216), arguing that planning or those with power serving people should be more intentional with their engagement. This lends itself to a redistribution of power so people who are usually left out of decisions can have their say (Arnstein, 1969). However, this idea of empowerment by being involved in decision-making is not always achievable and often only an ideal scenario. Many involved with these processes are often left feeling more frustrated and ignored (O'Hare, 2021).

The cost of participation is high in terms of both monetary and labour costs. Furthermore, participation in urban planning can struggle to gather interest from the public. Terms such as 'hard to reach' communities or the 'usual suspects' are often used to reflect participants as the issue in themselves, that people are either too difficult to get involved or are always there potentially dominating results (O'Hare, 2021). Achieving the 'right' type of engagement heavily depends on the person, group or organisation trying to organise participation, and it is often shaped and valued by the administrators (Eckerd and Heidelberg, 2020).

Challenges with engagement go beyond just participation in planning. The challenges identified above are applicable and reiterated in the realms of co-design and co-production and are addressed within this key topic section. 'Design Participation' was first adopted by designers in 1971 at the Design Research Society and was defined as a field for everyone (Lee, 2008; also see Banham, 1972). Involving people or users of end products has become an integral part of design research (Lee, 2008; Sanders, 2006). Co-design is seen as a means to redefine power relations and reconsider the notion of expertise (Lenskjold, Olander and Halse, 2015; Huybrechts, Benesch and Geib, 2017). These latter authors have suggested that when bringing co-design into the realm of planning, it immediately becomes political. They also outline that bringing community-based co-design or participatory design into urban planning is a political act which enables more democratised decision-making (Huybrechts, Benesch and Geib, 2017). However, with the focus of co-design being typically more suitable for smaller projects or used on a micro-scale, it has limited researchers' ability to understand the broader, often blurry context they are working within (ibid). With co-design typically associated with creating products or tangible outcomes, this research looked at other terminology similarly used but more focused on process development.

Co-creation as a method to foster innovative, inclusive, and practical policy responses offers a new perspective specific to the ongoing discussions on participation in urban planning and governance (Ansell and Torfing, 2021). By advocating for open dialogue, mutual respect, and shared responsibility, Ansell and Torfing provide a strategic framework that resonates with the ideals of co-

design and participatory design, where the redefinition of power relations and reconsideration of expertise are central themes (Lenskjold, Olander, and Halse, 2015; Huybrechts, Benesch, and Geib, 2017). Ansell and Torfing propose the term co-creation within public governance to address societal problems collectively (2021). This is closely linked to co-production; however, there are subtle differences in interpretation for this thesis. Co-production within this research is driven by collectively gathering and examining knowledge to generate an understanding of complex issues, taking the onus from being outcome-focused and examining the processes through which change occurs in UGS. Co-production in this research therefore becomes an application of design thinking for testing how creative practices to enable knowledge production can gather insight into current instances of environmental action and creative engagement. Although slightly nuanced, it is the intention that this research speaks to both terms in order to create cohesion and mutual learning across decision-making in UGS.

Participation has been a cornerstone of government policy and community development since the 1970s (Ward, 1985; Broome, 2005). However, Moore (2010) critiques participation in planning, suggesting that expertise is essential when contributing to a project. Issues surrounding participation and engagement have been addressed by numerous authors spanning both design and human geography disciplines. For example, Sanhoff (2005) underscores the significance of citizen involvement in design, while Gooch et al. (2018) discuss the challenges of scaling up participation to wider contexts. Within planning, Sanoff (2005) emphasises the role of community building in participation, while Swyngedouw (2005) points out the contradictions and tensions inherent in participation within decision-making. Furthermore, in Cooke and Kothari's (2001) book, "*Participation: The New Tyranny?*" they critique participation as being potentially manipulative, advocating for participatory rural appraisal. This method empowers participants to visualise their realities. This method can be influenced by cultural and institutional contexts, making it inherently ideological. They emphasise the importance of reflexivity in engagement projects. A more egalitarian approach that leverages collective ideas and resources, therefore enhances the quality of decision-making and fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among all stakeholders involved (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Ansell and Torfing, 2021).

For this research, participation and co-production are combined to address issues relating to decision-making in UGS. Consequently, design thinking principles intertwine with urban planning to understand what each theory and practice can offer, streamlining the effort for more collaborative, knowledge-informed decisions.

## 2.4.ii Applying Design Thinking to Collaborative Practices

Design Thinking (DT) in this thesis is described as a process of understanding the interplay and interconnectivity of *signs, things, actions* and *thoughts* of any given scenario (Buchanan, 1992:10). These concepts transcend the traditional boundaries of design, such as graphic, industrial and management to understand their interrelations as networks of innovation. In this network, designers explore and redefine problems and solutions, traversing different aspects of human experience (Buchanan, 1992). Buchanan emphasised that these areas should not be seen in isolation or in a hierarchical sequence but as a dynamic interplay of interaction. This interaction moves seamlessly between the abstract and the concrete, fostering a holistic design thinking process. This perspective showcases the adaptive nature of design and its influence on shaping modern culture and future trends (ibid). This application of design thinking in this thesis is discussed further in the research design of this thesis. This research investigates the concept of applying DT to engagement and, more specifically, the processes involved in planning engagement on multiple scales. This goes beyond the literal design of spaces and focuses on how decisions about spaces are made.

DT was an underpinning concept leading this research. The focus was placed on the transition between applying thinking into practice and actions to increase participation in UGS through creative engagement approaches. DT has a multifaceted impact on design practices. Firstly, it extends design from the studio to the outside world, highlighting the value of a creative approach in business contexts (Gheerawo, 2018). Secondly, it enriches design practices, incorporating people-centred, empathy-driven methods into mainstream design. Thirdly, it can reshape the perception of design and the designer's role, challenging traditional views focused solely on aesthetics (Ghajargar and Bardzell, 2019). Moreover, DT helps to democratise design, making inventive methods accessible to anyone and applicable across various sectors. It serves both internal and external purposes, aiding in project planning, management, and knowledge sharing. Additionally, it facilitates the collection of qualitative data, including opinions, behaviours, and attitudes, enriching the evidence base for social value. This approach emphasises the importance of deep data over big data in understanding user needs and experiences (Gheerawo, 2018).

Practices of DT often involve collective creative processes such as co-design and co-creation. Duchamp emphasised that both the artist and the spectator contribute to the creative act (Duchamp, Sanouillet and Peterson, 1975); in this sense, it is collaborative. Fischer (2004) views creativity in design as a social process enhanced by collaboration. Huybrechts et al. (2018) and Clarke (2016) advocate for design anthropology as a counter to top-down design approaches, emphasising the need to spend quality time understanding processes to develop a sense of agency amongst stakeholders (also see Mazé,



2016; Huybrechts et al., 2018). This research recognises a disconnect between people and policy in UGS decision-making and puts forward an argument for a co-created future (Hassan, Mean and Tims, 2007; Munthe-Kaas, 2015).

Design, as Brown (2019) suggests, connects with emotions and senses, bringing this practice into complex human-nature connections proposes an opportunity to deepen engagement with UGS. A way in which this can be applied and tested is through co-design or co-production. Co-design is a tool that can reshape urban spaces and the relationship between cities and their citizens (Munthe-Kaas, 2015). The shift from 'user as subject' to 'user as partner' has transformed design education and practice (Sanders and Stappers, 2008; Cook, 2013). Design thinking has been applied to socially 'wicked problems' (Coyne, 2005; Wahl and Baxter, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2016), where problems can be contradictory or complex. It is crucial to ensure co-creating or participation in design is intentional and well-planned (Manzini, 2016). Furthermore, co-design results must be evaluated efficiently to demonstrate their value (Mitchell et al., 2016).

Agid and Chin (2019) explore the concept of 'value' in participatory design<sup>2</sup> (another term used to describe engagement or participation in design), identifying five elements: relationships, materials, processes, contexts, and outcomes. They emphasise the importance of understanding for whom and to what end value is created. Their approach promotes presence, creation, and autonomy in the design process, even though values-led design can be challenging to manage (Agid and Chin, 2019). They further discuss how co-design can amplify voices marginalised by systemic powers (Gordon, 2017; Agid and Chin, 2019).

Co-design/co-production is not without challenges, as it can be conflicting and complex (Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2010). Munthe-Kaas (2015) emphasises the role of urban planners as both authorities and innovators. He suggests that urban spaces only become 'matters of concern' when people's voices are heard (Munthe-Kaas, 2015; Latour, 2007). Gooch et al. (2018) note that local authorities are still in the early stages of adopting design thinking, with financial constraints further hindering the adoption of citizen-led proposals in local governance (also see Deserti and Rizzo, 2014). The potential gentrifying effects of UGS on local communities also needs consideration. Factors like location, function, and size of UGS influence gentrification (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Gould and Lewis, 2016; Cole *et al.*, 2017; Immergluck and Balan, 2018; Rigolon and Németh, 2019). The 'just green enough' approach is suggested to mitigate these effects (Rigolon and Németh, 2019; Wolch,

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<sup>2</sup> Participatory Design, similar to co-design/co-production, integrates future users throughout the design process, emphasising its adaptability and versatility (Greenbaum and Kyng, 1991; Wang and Oygur, 2010; Bratteteig and Wagner, 2012; Simonsen and Robertson, 2013; Drain, Shekar and Grigg, 2018).

Byrne and Newell, 2014). However, not all greenspaces lead to gentrification. Thoughtful design, management, and engagement can ensure that greenspaces cater to local needs (Curran and Hamilton, 2012, 2017; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Rupprecht and Byrne, 2018; Rigolon and Németh, 2019). As greening programmes gain traction globally, researchers must address the inequalities arising from greenspace regeneration (Anguelovski *et al.*, 2018; Rigolon and Németh, 2019).

For Chapman and Gant (2007), co-design is about creating societal values that balance human happiness with ecological realities. Effective co-design manages a myriad of interactions (Farr, 2018). Similarly, co-production, as defined by Ostrom (1996), involves people actively creating services and goods that impact them. While co-production can foster innovation (Penny, Slay and Stephens, 2012), it can also be seen as an extension of neoliberal economics (Farr, 2018). Despite power dynamics, participant experiences with co-production are seen to be generally more positive (Donetto, Tsianakas and Robert, 2014; Clarke *et al.*, 2017; Farr, 2018).

Further to this, Perry *et al.* (2019) discuss the challenges of co-production, highlighting the pitfalls of seeking 'authenticity' and focusing solely on 'bottom-up' participation. They argue for a balanced approach that considers both grassroots mobilisation and top-down governance (Perry *et al.*, 2019; Richardson, Durose and Perry, 2019). This research accounted for these views and established a reflective approach to ensure the process and outcome was as robust and valid as possible.

The practice of 'co-production' is continually gaining further interest in literature to generate knowledge (Turnhout *et al.*, 2020). The authors use the term co-production, similar to co-design when collectively working with people to create solutions or produce new forms of knowledge. With a slight shift in intention from creating 'things' (co-design) to creating actionable knowledge (co-production), this research highlights the importance of collaboration in affecting change in society (Turnhout *et al.*, 2020). For this research, this distinction of co-production focusing on knowledge generating was adopted as it best suited how data was gathered, analysed and actioned. In this sense, it goes beyond outcome-focused projects and emphasises the process as similarly important (Drain, Shekar and Grigg, 2018).

This research sought to understand how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within urban greenspaces (UGS). In doing so, it questions whether co-production has the potential to define and solve the problem collectively. Plus, how can it influence engagement and establish an understanding of how people relate to UGS and want to interact with these spaces? Furthermore, this research seeks to understand to what extent this can be successful for both

insightful research and those involved in UGS decision-making (from individuals, groups and those governing spaces).

#### 2.4.iii Creative Engagement in Urban Greenspaces

Being creative is an approach that can derive from sustaining a '*sense of purpose, without loss of resolution or hope*' (Walker, 2019:223). Walker argues that the effort of creating or imagining is just as valuable and worthwhile as the outcome. Creative engagement in UGS aligns with discourse surrounding 'creative ecologies', where inter-relationships between those involved with an intervention are explored and work together to facilitate activities (Walker *et al.*, 2018). This type of ecology includes extrinsic factors defined by the authors as "connections and interactions among associated organisations, resources, cultures and activities including history, geography, economy, education" (Walker *et al.*, 2018:14). Here, creative ecologies considers the complex social relationships at play within UGS and the inherent wider ecological systems. Place becomes an important aspect of creative ecologies as it helps to contextualise the intervention. To understand how creative approaches can improve engagement in UGS, I first had to understand the place of inquiry in terms of location and local knowledge sources: understanding the meaning behind people's connections and inter-relationships with UGS.

Moore (2010) challenges conventional perceptions of nature (or more over what is perceived as natural) in urban spaces. She portrays 'nature' not as a passive backdrop but as a dynamic entity capable of influencing urban experiences in profound ways. Moore's insights into the multi-sensorial experience of nature and its intricate relationship with design are particularly compelling. She emphasises the importance of sensory qualities in creating spaces that resonate deeply with their inhabitants. Moore's perspective on participatory design is thought-provoking, suggesting that while stakeholder input is invaluable, expert synthesis remains pivotal in the design process (2010). This synthesis, she argues, is crucial for ensuring transparency and inclusivity in design decisions, as exemplified by the Jam and Justice project (Perry *et al.*, 2019). Fuad-Luke (2013) underscores the profound influence of design on our daily existence, emphasising that every intentional or unintentional design choice leaves an indelible mark on our lived experiences. In the face of global challenges like climate change, designers are compelled to re-envision their roles, especially within UGS, such as parks, play areas, and green corridors. Albert (2017) portrays cities as dynamic hubs of innovation, where sustainable design enhances the user experience while preserving ecological balance. This balance, as Chick and Micklethwaite (2011) suggest, is achieved when designers anticipate and understand behaviours. This suggests that future research should consider gathering insight from multiple perspectives. Thorpe (2007) reminds us of the fluidity of design, emphasising that adaptability is at its core. This adaptability is further enhanced when

sustainability is approached holistically, streamlining systems and policies for clarity (Chick & Micklethwaite, 2011). This multifaceted nature of design can be described as the design guise, a concept which highlights its transformative potential across disciplines. While diverse in interpretation, this universal language of design underscores a collective desire for innovation and change.

This research champions the pivotal role of design in shaping spaces, with Klemm, Lenzholzer and van den Brink (2017) introducing the innovative concept of participatory research through design. They emphasise the symbiotic relationship between research and practice, advocating for a more integrated approach to urban/landscape design, especially in the context of urban micro-climates. Their insights underscore the importance of conscious, thoughtful design in achieving sustainability. In relation to this, Taylor et al. (2014) offer a compelling case study from Manchester's Northern Quarter, exploring the potential of technology as a tool for community engagement in UGS design. Their findings highlight the dual role of technology as both an enabler and, at times, a barrier to citizen engagement. For instance, digital literacy is a challenge, especially since forums and surveys are more frequently used online nowadays (Helsper, 2021). Therefore, incorporating creative activities to enable improved engagement needs careful consideration from project to project. For instance, one strategy may work for an organisation but may not for others; therefore, reflective practice is needed to ensure projects are valuable. This thesis argues that DT and creative engagement can facilitate this.

Design activities, whether performed by individuals or groups, occur within various organisational settings, ranging from private and public companies to community or voluntary groups, each with distinct goals and structures, thereby incorporating elements of organisation and management into the design process (Cooper, Junginger and Lockwood, 2013). Design management combines design, innovation, and technology with business strategies and customer insights to improve economic, social, and environmental outcomes. It fosters collaboration between design and business to enhance design effectiveness (DMI, 2024). An argument could be made that this research contributes to a design management process in terms of designing engagement strategies, especially when using the creative engagement framework on an organisational and institutional scale. However, this approach typically focuses on implementing design thinking on a more professional and larger scale to improve systems and services. As this research wanted to consider volunteer or grassroots-level engagement strategies, a design management approach was not adopted. It was important to include less formal structures of engagement for those seeking to improve participation at a community-based level. Those in managerial roles within organisations or institutions focused on community engagement could take findings from the

creative engagement framework and apply them to a design management strategy but this is beyond the scope of this research.

Typically, the voluntary sector has more varied and informal strategies or processes of engagement that tend to be more values-driven (Baines, Cunningham and Fraser, 2010). Evidence shows that the voluntary sector has been increasingly relied upon to take over state services, signifying “governance-beyond-the-state”, where non-state actors are becoming more involved with decision-making processes (Swyngedouw, 2005; Rosol, 2012). Instead of empowering citizens, this often leads to outsourcing state functions to these groups, especially in areas like community gardening. Far from reducing government involvement, this shift increases voluntary organisations’ reliance on state funding and regulations, pushing them towards professionalisation and competition and away from cooperation (Rosol, 2012). A more strategic approach for improving engagement is necessary across levels of environmental action. However, it would risk further ‘managerial’ or bureaucratic work for volunteers, conflicting with the aim of making enhanced engagement recommendations accessible to those seeking sustainable environmental action. An approach to improving engagement across these multiple levels of environmental action is fundamental to this research. This research therefore helps to delineate guidance for implication to policy whilst recognising the complexity of environmental action across different sectors and actors.

#### **2.4.iv Summary**

This section underscores the transformative potential of creative engagement in UGS design and decision-making. The interplay between design, nature, and community engagement offers a rich tapestry of insights, emphasising the need for holistic, inclusive, and adaptive approaches in shaping urban spaces for the future. Moving from traditional engagement (such as public forums and consultation surveys) to incorporating elements of creativity (which may be infused into role-playing, community mapping activities or collaborative digital platforms) offers a means to break the consultation fatigue and frustration in urban planning and policy development. Co-production (or more broadly collaboration) advocates that people, participants or users are experts of their own experiences and locality (see Cottam and Leadbeater, 2004; Steen, Manschot and De Koning, 2011). However, the challenges remain apparent across all forms of engagement: knowledge, capacity and resource are key barriers. Therefore, managing, allocating and organising engagement is dependent on reaching a carefully executed balance.

Section 2.4 has helped outline how creative approaches can be important to the engagement process. Applying creativity is therefore deemed vital for several reasons:

- It can boost engagement: using creative approaches in UGS decision-making attracts broader participation, bringing diverse perspectives into the planning process. This inclusivity enriches UGS development by incorporating various ideas and needs (Ansell and Torfing, 2021).
- Collaboration can offer a means to mitigate frustration in participation by redistributing power (Arnstien, 1969; Huybrechts, Benesch and Geib, 2017).
- It helps to foster innovative solutions: Employing creative approaches such as co-design/production in UGS management leads to innovative and adaptive strategies for urban environmental challenges (Drain, Shekar and Grigg, 2018).
- Creative approaches develop relationships between people (sometimes referred to as creators and spectators), which can add value and help validate outcomes (Duchamp, Sanouillet and Peterson, 1975; Walker, 2019), in turn, strengthening and sustaining interest.
- Participatory practices can also offer a means of self-reflection on the process and decisions, which can influence future choices (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). This research argues that focusing on the process of engagement and being reflective within decision-making must incorporate a creative approach in order to increase sustainable environmental action.
- Finally, it enhances well-being: Creative outcomes through engagement in UGS can significantly improve urban residents' well-being by offering aesthetically pleasing, recreational, and biodiverse spaces. Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) highlight that environments promoting exploration and reflection positively impact mental health, making creativity a key factor in creating beneficial UGS.

These reasons underscore the importance of integrating creativity into UGS decision-making processes to ensure they meet the multifaceted needs of people and place. Further to these benefits, the following section discusses the Jam and Justice project from 2019 as an example of a co-production project. This example highlights good practice and provides further evidence of how creative engagement can improve participation in decision-making. With multiple researchers, disciplines, expertise and participation, this project showcases how co-produced governance can be achieved on a large project scale. The reason for presenting this example is to highlight how creative approaches to engagement can unfold and develop deeper connections to place and decision-making. This example therefore provides a basis for further investigation and development linked to this research's focus and aim.

## 2.5 Example of Creative Engagement: *Jam and Justice: Co-producing urban governance for social innovation (Perry et al., 2019).*

This section demonstrates an in-depth example of creative engagement achieved through co-production. The Jam and Justice project explored alternative governance in cities from January 2016 to July 2019. Collaborating with the Action Research Collective (ARC), they addressed ten urban issues, revealing themes of democracy, knowledge, and justice, with intersecting factors like engagement and inequalities (Perry et al., 2019). A final report on the project detailed the merits and challenges of co-production, emphasising the potential of devolution to democratise decision-making. Co-production, increasingly endorsed by local authorities, civil society, and public sectors, amalgamates diverse perspectives and expertise. Perry et al. (2019) view it as a conduit for innovative conversations, harnessing the collective strengths of all involved. It is not just a method but an approach to discern shared values and principles, fostering trust and transparency across societal segments (Durose and Richardson, 2015; Perry et al., 2019). Under the banner 'Coalitions for Change', the Jam and Justice project orchestrated workshops to share co-production experiences. The initiative aimed to discern effective co-production strategies, acknowledging the uniqueness of each context. Embracing a hybrid research approach, the project underscored the importance of reflexivity in co-produced research, a sentiment echoed by multiple scholars (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Farr, 2018; Perry et al., 2019). However, co-production's allure can sometimes eclipse its results. For impactful outcomes, Perry and co-workers stress the need to value participants' skills and experiences and ensure meaningful participation and equitable results. They outline seven guiding principles for effective co-production, which serve as a roadmap for future research crucial for my thesis (Perry et al., 2019). Here is a summary of the seven principles:

### ***Principle 1 - Designing for openness: Emphasising transparency and communication.***

Jam and Justice's research was semi-structured by design and, as a member of the ARC said, remained 'uncontaminated'. They argue that good research design creates opportunities for different types of public involvement, providing space for decisions to be made and influencing the outcome. Designing for openness can still be hard to achieve as deep-rooted assumptions and uncertainty can stifle the success of decisions, particularly for example, with conflicting interests in spatial planning. Due to deadlines and expectations, design can become constricted or "harden" (ibid.:17). Jam and Justice reiterate that planning everything before you start is unnecessary in remaining open within research. However, they remark that 'open not unstructured processes'

(ibid.:17) are desirable with the aim of transparency and communication through uncertainty.

***Principle 2 - Shaping participation dynamics: Choosing the right space for inclusivity.***

“Feed the body and feed the mind through caring and convivial spaces”  
(Perry et al., 2019:19).

Space for participation is vital and can influence how much people feel included and contribute to decision-making. Therefore, as Jam and Justice speculate, the right space needs to be found. This can be a familiar place on neutral ground for all participants or be somewhere that people do not feel as welcome for example, council offices or chambers. The latter can act as a “strong reminder of, and implicit challenge to, existing power imbalances” (ibid., 2019:18). The choice of space can therefore manipulate the dynamic. Making time for suitable planning for the right space and face-to-face meetings is fundamental to good co-production and building relationships.

***Principle 3 - Blending expertise: Valuing diverse skills and voices.***

Challenging what is meant by an ‘expert’ can also detect gaps in diverse voices or inclusion. However, it is important that inclusivity is not just for the sake of it. They determine that meaningful participation can be distinguished by people doing more than just turning up for meetings. The ability to blend and value different people’s skills, knowledge and voices can challenge and disrupt policy development and shed light on who is missing from decisions.

***Principle 4 - Humanising experiences: Recognising the emotional aspects of participation.***

Powerful encounters and meaningful participation are often time-consuming and can have an emotional toll on the researcher: it is a ‘human contact sport’. Co-producing processes that seek to understand emotion can provide a chance to be reflexive, adapt to change and be self-aware. In turn, this can help build trust and sustain relationships. Previous experiences and assumptions shape participation, therefore inter-group dynamics are just as important to include, establish and challenge.

***Principle 5 - Linking voice and values: Embracing differences without defaulting to usual decision-making.***

Although co-production is often sugar-coated as a more inclusive and neutral process, it is important to note that it is not always a better way to solve problems. The desire to reach a consensus is also limited. Jam and Justice specified that they did not seek agreement within their research, however, where there were differences, they sought external facilitation to overcome the challenges. Without this method, it is feared that hierarchical forces may



step in to reinforce the “default to business-as-usual decision-making” (ibid., 2019:25).

***Principle 6 - Connecting with formal policy: Bridging research and policy.***

Connecting research to policy can solve a recognised disconnect between people and the ‘system’. However, this does not mean that previous agendas, dynamics, and interests must prevail. Connecting people without power and resources to those who do is essential. Knowing the right people to contact can help change be realised and implemented. The focus of this research, therefore, is that I want to be able to connect with and influence policy without being led by it.

***Principle 7 - Holding the process: Guarding participants' values and mediating conflicts.***

This involves guarding participants' values and visions whilst mediating any arising conflicts. When done successfully, it can empower people to act and stay involved even through open and uncertain processes. It is important for people to locate themselves within the process and feel able to share stories and opinions without hesitation. Leadership within co-production is necessary but it is worth noting that it is seen differently by everyone. Establishing roles can therefore help take advantage of different skills and knowledge, linking people to responsibilities and accountability (Perry et al., 2019).

**2.5.i How can co-production be successful?**

Measuring the success of co-production can be difficult and often unclear. One potential way to measure success is to understand social innovation and its subsequent value. This is described by Perry et al. as the process of addressing social needs through idea generation. In order to prompt or facilitate social innovation, the ARC put forward the following ideation strategies: “remembering, borrowing, translating, deepening, synthesising, validating and questioning” (ibid., 2019:35). These strategies can all be used to understand current issues better and in turn reframe, reimagine and rejuvenate policy, decision making and power dynamics across cities. Evidence of Jam and Justice’s impact can be seen in the reframing of procurement policies and budget decisions within Greater Manchester, which emphasise the importance of social value (Perry et al., 2019). Other successes were the co-production of the Green Summit which enabled changes to its design and even influenced the content of Greater Manchester’s environment plan.

Out of the ten projects within Jam and Justice’s publication, ‘Space in Common’ aligns the most with this PhD research. Working in parallel with the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), it facilitated more inclusive conversations about spatial planning: how we use and could improve shared space. The first draft of GMSF was not well received: people were especially

frustrated by plans to redevelop greenbelt space. Therefore, a ‘radically’ revised draft was produced in response to people’s concerns. Between September 2018 and February 2019, the ARC ran four workshops within the ‘Space in Common’ project. These workshops aimed to provide a space for a wide variety of stakeholders, including academics, charities, developers, farmers and agency workers, to have ‘better’ conversations about spatial development. Jam and Justice note that the major barriers to these types of conversations are difficulty understanding terminology and that it is often felt too late to act on decisions already made for communities. These workshops sought to understand the system and allow for shared experience, inspiration and ideas for collaboration to emerge. One of the outcomes of this project was ‘Just Space’, an alliance between 80 different community groups who collectively tackle shared issues with louder voices. They achieved this through what they call a horizontal (as opposed to a ‘bottom-up’) approach. Another noteworthy project conducted by the ARC was ‘Everyday Makers’ (2019), which is described as the commonly unrecognised everyday people who live within the city. Participants used the method of photovoice where a person takes a photo to represent ‘everyday politics’, or in other words a commonly faced issue or inequality. This method is a valuable tool to enact social change (Budig *et al.*, 2018). Their work exemplifies an energetic approach to participatory politics aimed at building relationships and, as they stated in their pamphlet *Everyday Politics*, empowering people to incite collective change (Perry *et al.*, 2019; also see Yates, 2022).

### **2.5.ii Co-production Example Summary**

Within this project (£1m investment, four institutions, 237 organised activities and engagement from over 700 people), Jam and Justice aimed to empower those involved to continue questioning what is perceived as possible within urban governance. Although Perry *et al.* state that the impacts of projects and connections may take time to be fully realised and appreciated, it was a worthwhile task to establish networks and relationships that enable cross-institutional and local knowledge exchange (2019).

Building an awareness of what people do and value day-to-day can enhance the success of co-production. This is not to say that it is the only answer or indeed the best solution, as it certainly cannot make existing power dynamics disappear or offer a fix to all social problems. However, it can work well if pre-existing issues arise, such as uncertainty over the problem, no consensus or initial approaches have failed (Perry *et al.*, 2019). The UK is not yet hugely seduced by co-production despite an increased understanding that decision-making needs reform. Local authorities, councillors and other decision-makers are expected to play multiple roles for which they are not necessarily prepared. These roles include being an advocate, a buffer, a catalyst, an entrepreneur, an orchestrator, a sense maker and a steward of place (Perry *et al.*, 2019). They

are responsible for making realistic decisions for the community they represent, even in the face of budget cuts. Therefore, it is seen by Jam and Justice and its ten projects that a solution could be more time and space for open communication. However, this still conjures up a plethora of issues, particularly in terms of targets and budgets.

Conclusions from this detailed example have allowed me to summarise, reflect upon, and help to develop my research approach. By understanding what works on a multitude of, albeit mostly higher levels, I can best approach my own research and data collection more efficiently. Although there is limited recognition of how smaller projects can be equally as successful, applying insights from Jam and Justice on a smaller scale would be beneficial. Not all projects within decision-making can warrant or budget for large amounts of time and space to be put into them: it could be said that, without radical reform, these solutions are unrealistic. Nevertheless, there is no denying that the impact and enthusiasm for such projects are gaining interest within local governance due to devolution.

## 2.6 Discussion

Despite the acknowledged disconnect from nature (Fuller et al., 2007; Brondizio et al., 2016; Kellert, 2018), there is evidence that humans are naturally affiliated with nature (Wilson, 1984) and can visually process natural elements quicker than post-industrial environments (Joye and van den Berg, 2018). It has also been argued that humans and nature cannot be separated (Geertz, 1973), although this relationship has become increasingly a transactional experience (Macaulay *et al.*, 2022). This literature review has attempted to understand engagement in UGS within different contexts and through multiple perspectives. It has uncovered the limitations of regeneration and inequity in planning strategies. I hypothesise that there is value in inclusion and equality towards accessible information concerning decision-making and the role of local authority up to government level to be representational towards the public it serves. Measuring the success or value of an intervention is difficult in the first instance therefore it is important, for this research, to take on board the factors for 'good' practice in co-production as established in the Jam and Justice co-production example (see previous section).

Reviewing the literature through the interdisciplinary lenses of design and geography allowed an argument to be built around the proposition that creative approaches can enhance connections to and engagement within UGS. By integrating design thinking, there is an opportunity to foster well-being and sustainability in UGS, as highlighted by Wolch, Byrne and Newell (2014). However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced complexities, as restrictions and changing public behaviours affected access to and engagement with UGS, emphasising the need for adaptable and resilient urban

planning strategies. A detailed overview of the methods adopted due to the effects of COVID-19 is presented in Chapter 3 - 'Research Design'.

The challenges of co-production also emerged as a pivotal theme. Co-production is chosen to drive the outcome of this research as it centres more on knowledge production than creating products/services. While this offers a collaborative approach, it is not without its contradictions and potential pitfalls (Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2010). To truly harness the potential of co-production, it is essential to understand participation across a spectrum of disciplines. Such an understanding can pave the way for enhancing co-production practices in UGS decision-making, ensuring that the approach is both holistic and effective. Another area of focus is the potential risks associated with UGS interventions. There is a genuine concern that such interventions, if not thoughtfully executed, could inadvertently promote gentrification, altering the very fabric of urban communities (Curran and Hamilton, 2012; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014). Alternatively, an understanding of daily human behaviours and their interactions with UGS can significantly enhance co-production outcomes. Through a greater understanding of daily life, there is an opportunity to create urban spaces that resonate with the community's needs and aspirations. Co-production, while a valuable tool, is not a panacea. Especially when navigating the murky waters of uncertainties, it is essential to view co-production as a tool in the toolkit, not the solution to all challenges (Perry et al., 2019). Lastly, the role of the researcher is paramount. Self-awareness and reflexivity are crucial in fostering genuine relationships and minimising bias. By being acutely aware of one's position within the research, there is an opportunity to build long-lasting, meaningful relationships that can drive the research forward.

Finally, this review is not without its limitations. Gaps in understanding concepts like the political economy (Castree and Braun, 2001) and Natural Capital (Costanza *et al.*, 1997) indicate areas for further exploration. Nevertheless, the overarching message is clear: there is a pressing need to include creativity and inclusive approaches in UGS decision-making. Moving forward, this research deals with questions centred on the role of creative engagement approaches in fostering sustainable environmental action in UGS. Integrating a 'research through design' approach with contextual theories aims to develop a creative engagement framework that enhances public engagement in UGS. This research, by bridging the gap between voluntary public engagement and professional sectors, seeks to produce inclusive and transparent outcomes, benefiting both the public and decision-makers and championing the importance of self-sustaining stewardship in the development of UGS.

Key topics highlighted in this literature review to consider throughout the research were:

- Access to UGS and specifically the inequality of UGS provision across cities that benefit some over others (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Rigolon and Németh, 2019). Additionally, the consequential effects of this inequality on access to health benefits or UGS (Klemm, Lenzholzer and van den Brink, 2017).
- In turn, UGS as motivational spaces to encourage physical, mental health and social health was also highlighted as an important topic to investigate further (Groenewegen et al., 2006; Maas et al., 2009; Coutts, Horner and Chapin, 2010).
- While it would not be a cure-all approach, incorporating co-production into decision-making provides opportunities to be reflective and plan more meaningful engagement (Perry et al., 2019).

These points were considered throughout the development of research and helped to contextualise and identify the areas of focus, influencing the trajectory of inquiry. The following section presents findings from a systematic literature review of frameworks used to increase engagement within decision-making processes. This was completed following the data analysis, where patterns and barriers highlighted a need for a cohesive approach to develop sustainable environmental action.

## 2.7 Systematic review of engagement frameworks

Adopting an unfolding and iterative research approach led to the development of a Creative Engagement Framework (CEF) as a key outcome. The CEF was co-produced with insight from participants to develop ways to increase engagement in environmental action. Before designing and testing the framework, assessing previous framework applications within literature was important. The CEF emerged from insights gained through data collection, where patterns of best practice and barriers were identified. A systematic literature review was conducted that complemented the development of the framework. This dual methodology ensured that the framework was not only effective and grounded in both empirical data and scholarly literature but also novel in its approach. This section therefore presents the findings from the systematic review conducted during the framework development process.

Reviewing the literature concerning people's involvement in UGS has allowed for an understanding of where gaps may appear in the proposed creative engagement framework and correct potential (Paré et al., 2015; Xiao and Watson, 2019; 2015). To develop a valid and valuable framework to increase engagement in UGS through creative practices, a study of what was currently available was needed to assess their scope, objectives and operations. This ensured the development of a more innovative approach grounded in current discourse.

A review was conducted on Google Scholar and Web of Science databases. These sites were included to ensure a broad coverage of engagement frameworks was considered. Google Scholar was used to search for literature across a wide range of sources, including articles published by organisations beyond traditional academic publishers, sometimes referred to as grey literature (Haddaway et al., 2015). This deliberate choice was made to include literature from non-traditional sources, enriching the review with diverse perspectives on consolidating findings from previous frameworks. For instance, it became clear that councils have experimented with several frameworks with mixed success. To exclude such contributions when this framework aims to offer benefits to them would be inappropriate. A complementary search through WoS helped to bolster results from peer-reviewed articles.

A set of inclusion criteria for the systematic review included the following search terms: "urban green space" + "engagement" + "framework", "community engagement framework", "participation engagement framework", "action framework" + "environmental", "engagement framework" + "environmental", "public engagement framework", "public participation framework", "creative framework". These terms were entered and up to 35 relevant papers per results were gathered based on their title. In some cases, under 35 results were retrieved; in others, the first five web pages (containing ten papers each) of results were scanned (i.e. 50 papers). Table 1

shows the number of papers gathered for each term on Web of Science (WoS) and Google Scholar (GS).

Keywords	WoS search results	GS search results
“urban green space” + “engagement” + “framework”	8	8630 [35 selected]
“community engagement framework”	26	1580 [26 selected]
“participation engagement framework”	7	2
“action framework” + “environmental”	51 [35 selected]	15300 [18 selected]
“engagement framework” + “environmental”	14	4910 [29 selected]
“public engagement framework”	6	234 [19 selected]
“public participation framework”	9	662 [15 selected]
“creative framework”	34	2250 [13 selected]
<b>TOTAL to be reviewed:</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>155</b>

*Table 1: Keywords searched in the systematic review*

In total, 294 sources were selected and exported into a spreadsheet for initial review. Once inputted into the database, an examination of their titles helped to determine their relevance to the area of focus. The results were streamlined, and unrelated or irrelevant papers were discarded. Furthermore, this review focused on sources within the last 20 years due to the increased focus on community engagement and sustainability issues and to ensure insight was attained from the most recent frameworks. Therefore, sources written before 2003 were discarded across both the WoS and GS searches.

After reviewing the WoS results (n=139), 53 were selected based on their titles. A further seven were discarded as there were duplicates across search terms, meaning 46 sources were selected. After scanning the abstracts, 26 were reviewed. Out of the GS results (n=155), 102 were selected based on their titles and then 94 in total after deleting duplicates. After scanning, 32 were to be reviewed further. These were then cross-referenced to check for duplicates across the search engines.

Overall, 57 sources were selected. A final review considered their relevance and usefulness to the development of the framework. Through examining the key terms, field studies, abstracts, and introductions, 17 papers were selected that gave a detailed account of the theory and implementation of engagement frameworks across multiple sectors. However, it is possible that some relevant articles not explicitly labelled as 'frameworks' were inadvertently omitted from

this research. The following section discusses the results of the systematic literature review on current research-based engagement frameworks.

### 2.7.i Findings

The literature review provided insights into how engagement frameworks are used across many different sectors, as shown in Table 2:

Main Discipline	No. of sources
Environmental Studies	8
Public Health	4
Social Sciences	2
Policy	1
Co-production	2

Table 2: Disciplines within systematic literature results

Much of the literature revolved around various frameworks aiming to understand and improve different aspects of human interactions, engagement, and decision-making within diverse contexts. These contexts ranged from environmental experiences and urban planning to climate change communication, nonprofit governance, and design-thinking. Despite the variety of topics, they all aim to enhance engagement, collaboration, and socially positive outcomes through structured frameworks.

In recent years, a growing body of literature has been dedicated to exploring frameworks that offer new insights into the complex relationships between humans and their environment, shaping how we interact with nature, urban spaces, and even the challenges of climate change (Zhou and Rana, 2012; Zhang, Tan and Diehl, 2017; Everett, Adekola and Lamond, 2021).

Macaulay et al. (2022) present a paradigm shift in understanding human-nature relationships as a transactional experience. They challenged conventional models by highlighting environmental and personal factors as integral to nature's experiences while discussing the restorative effects of nature (also see Hartig, 1993). Their proposed framework delves into engagement patterns, contending that personal connections and environmental aspects contribute to outcomes like relaxation and well-being. The study underscores individual engagement's role in shaping nature experience outcomes, citing research on sensory engagement, mindfulness, and mind wandering. They use Kaplan and Kaplan's (1989) *Attention Restoration Theory* concepts, emphasising environments' psychological restorative mechanisms. The authors assert that engagement is a key component of nature experience and emphasise the dynamic interaction between personal and environmental factors in shaping engagement and outcomes. This paper was useful to consider when approaching my framework.



Although interaction with nature may not always be considered a transactional interaction, awareness of this approach can help to understand what may motivate people to interact with UGS.

Wolff et al. (2022) proposed a comprehensive conceptual framework highlighting the combined and interactive impacts of barriers, forming a pivotal foundation for understanding their significance in greenspace utilisation and its broader implications for environmental justice and planning. The authors acknowledge three barrier dimensions: physical, personal, and institutional, interconnected with environment, knowledge, and engagement, which serve as mediums to enhance access. The study emphasises that barrier effects result from the interplay of these dimensions that “*intersect in a somehow blurry manner*” (2022:9) and have the potential to unlock motivation. The complexity of barriers and enablers necessitates a deeper comprehension and highlights the challenges in sharing frameworks. The authors stress that barriers beyond physical aspects impact accessibility and well-being by affecting people's perceptions, personal situations, and institutional frameworks. Despite their significant role, they argue that barriers have often been overlooked in urban greenspace accessibility studies. The paper advocates for a shift in this perspective, exemplified by Andersson et al.'s (2019) contextual approach, revealing the multifaceted process of attaining UGS benefits influenced by infrastructure, institutions, and residents' capacities and perceptions. Acknowledging the accessibility barriers of UGS is an important aspect to consider when designing the framework and was something highlighted numerous times within the data. This reiterates the importance of considering access as a key theme for the framework.

Based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals 3 (good health and wellbeing) and 11 (sustainable cities and communities), Domaradzka et al. (2022) present a framework that works toward enabling the 'right to a healthy city' through reconceptualising cities as *commons* where resources can be collectively managed. In doing so, they highlight the essential role of civil participation in facilitating the equitable and socially sustainable greening of cities. Central to this transformation is the pentahelix approach in urban governance, emphasising collaboration among five key stakeholder groups: “public authorities, industry and business sector, academia, civil society organizations, and individual citizens (homeowners, residents, commuters)” (2022:2). The authors advocate for a rights-based paradigm in envisioning the city's future, aligning with a more human-centred approach to planning. Drawing on (Lefebvre, 1968), they define the ‘right to the city’ as “both the individual liberty to access urban resources (including space, nature, services, and infrastructure) and the ability to exercise collective power to reshape the urbanization processes” (2022:6). This perspective encompasses the aspirations of various social groups, highlighting the changing dynamics of urban environments. The paper emphasises the need for holistic, theory-

driven projects that prioritise value-driven implementation, centralising the role of citizens and societal structures in reshaping urban development processes through collaborative efforts. This theory-based framework retrospectively applies the right to the city perspective onto projects however, there is a need to further integrate this lens into future research on sustainable green cities. Therefore, there is an opportunity to develop a more tangible framework that people can use to develop their projects efficiently. This is what I hope to achieve with my framework.

Zhou and Rana (2012) also highlight UGS's multifaceted advantages, including ecological, social, and economic benefits. Their study focuses on understanding the monetary value from providers' perspectives and accessibility from consumers' perspectives. They construct a conceptual framework to quantify these benefits for providers and consumers. The authors delve into the complexities of assessing the monetary worth of greenspace proximity and willingness to pay for nature experiences. However, this in some ways can further exacerbate social inequality. They advocate for a multifaceted valuation approach to capture the intricate dimensions of greenspace benefits. Therefore, the monetary value of greenspace is complex, and it cannot be valued in all aspects of greenspace's benefits. Notably, their findings underscore the positive correlation between greenspace accessibility and its perceived value. However, the authors acknowledge that while their framework assigns value to UGS benefits, it falls short of capturing the depth of people's engagement, suggesting the potential for citizen-driven approaches to enhance greenspace decision-making processes.

In their study, Lennon, Douglas and Scott (2017) address the contemporary demands of urban planning decision-makers, who require evidence to justify allocating limited urban land for public open spaces and a clear design framework for their provision. They emphasise the positive effects of UGS proximity on physical activity, health behaviours, and overall health outcomes, citing similar studies (such as Giles-Corti and Donovan, 2003; Gascon et al., 2016). Moving beyond conventional environmental justice approaches, the authors propose a dynamic framework that combines "quality and 'use-ability'" (2017:780), conceiving greenspaces as versatile, "multidimensional places with a broad array of potential uses" (2017:780). Although they delve into the theory of affordance (see Chemero, 2003), they argue that planning greenspaces without considering diversity limits their potential health and well-being benefits. Their framework ultimately seeks to enhance the quality of greenspaces for the promotion of health and well-being.

Zhang, Tan and Diehl (2017) highlight the growing disconnection between humans and nature, which results in altered interactions and less positive attitudes toward the environment. They emphasise that this '*extinction of experience*' (Zhang et al., 2017:1; Pyle, 1993; Miller, 2005), coupled with

sedentary lifestyles and stressful urban environments, leads to a variety of health-related issues. Their study introduces a 'dose-response' framework, likening nature exposure to medication dosage. It suggests that higher doses of UGS exposure yield greater health benefits and considers factors like UGS provision, perception, environment, and the impact on health. Acknowledging previous 'supply-demand' frameworks (Hegetschweiler *et al.*, 2017), they stress that UGS benefits depend on qualitative attributes and user perceptions and behaviours. Their framework guides future studies in understanding and explaining the UGS-health relationship.

A framework template for understanding Blue-Green Infrastructure community engagement (BGI-CE) was developed by Everett, Adekola and Lamondin (2021). They emphasise three critical BGI-CE dimensions: “direction of communication, level of acceptance, and level of influence” (2021:16). These dimensions are interesting considerations for framework integration when working across multiple stakeholders. Initially, this framework leans toward top-down communication initiated by practitioners. However, they acknowledge that persistent adversity (see Krätke, 2004; Rosol, 2010) can lead to multi-directional communication with reduced practitioner or facilitator involvement. Top-down approaches can also lead to further issues due to the demand on organisational capacity (Parkinson, Tayler and Mark, 2007; Everett, Adekola and Lamond, 2021). They stress that successful Blue-Green Infrastructure should focus on both outcomes and the process leading to them. They highlight the importance of process goals, such as “power relations and engagement techniques” (2021:19), in achieving inclusivity and community input. Their framework categorises engagements into four types (low influence and low involvement to high influence and high involvement (2021:23) urging practitioners to aim for high involvement and influence, emphasising the need for more attention to the engagement process. This provides an evidence base to shift the focus of community engagement outcomes and explores the intricacies of engagement processes to develop more successful projects.

Van der Jagt *et al.* (2023) propose Nature-Based Thinking (NBT) as a comprehensive approach that links “culturally diverse communities, institutional governance, and thriving [Nature-Based Solutions] NBS” (2023:54). They stress NBT's role in recognising human interconnectedness with nature, particularly in urban areas, fostering collaborative stewardship across different levels: personal, collective, and institutional. They emphasise the need to politicise assessment, challenging power dynamics that influence whose knowledge prevails in decision-making, and advocate for NBT-informed participatory assessment. Their framework integrates localised knowledge and empowers stakeholders while highlighting the importance of deprioritising scientific knowledge, exposing vulnerability and resource disparities, and engaging with relevant political processes in the participation process (also see, (Turnhout *et al.*, 2020). The framework outlines key stages for participatory

monitoring and assessment to enhance the ‘mainstreaming of urban NBS for sustainable and just cities’ (Van der Jagt et al., 2023:62).

Developing the Knowledge to Action (KTA) Framework created by Graham et al. (2006) to address the complexity of translating knowledge into action, Field et al. (2014) present a framework that consists of two components: *Knowledge Creation* and the *Action Cycle*, with overlapping and iterative phases. The Action Cycle outlines the process for applying knowledge in practice, involving adaptation to local contexts, explicit assessment of barriers and facilitators, stakeholder involvement, and tailoring knowledge to end-users needs (Field et al., 2014). While widely cited in healthcare, the KTA Framework has limited application beyond this field. This concept resonates with design thinking addressed in this thesis. Aspects of co-production were considered in the development of the Creative Engagement Framework (CEF), working with people to identify the areas of focus and creating and incubating knowledge to begin constructing recommendations for action. It is therefore useful to understand how other disciplines have done similarly.

Similarly, Nguyen, Young and Cooke (2017) present a framework designed to facilitate the transformation of knowledge into actionable insights, particularly in the context of “identifying, synthesising, and comparing context-specific research related to knowledge movement and implementation” (2017:2). The framework consolidates scientific knowledge with decision-making processes, acknowledging that such knowledge often has limited influence compared to tacit, experiential, and informational knowledge (Nguyen, Young and Cooke, 2017). It operates by transferring knowledgeable (co)production into action and developing a network that encourages absorption and feedback into the knowledge cycle.

Liñán et al. (2022) present a framework designed to increase engagement in marine citizen science. They amalgamate two behaviour change models, the Fogg Behaviour Model (FBM) (Fogg, 2009) and the Eyal Hook model (Eyal, 2014), and layer them with the social experience model from the Yamakami framework (2013) to create a theoretical engagement framework. The FBM emphasises that community participation hinges on motivation, triggers, and ability, with motivation and triggers being primary drivers of engagement. This is similar to findings from the case studies and interviews. Ability revolves around the notion that the simpler the requirements, the more individuals can participate. The Eyal Hook model focuses on habit formation and action-reward loops. Their framework identifies and maps engagement roles, highlighting “the importance of some stakeholders acting as enablers to overcome the participation barriers” (Liñán et al., 2022:10). All the roles and components of the framework impact the engagement’s success or failure. Their framework integrates engagement activities at short and long-term temporal scales, addressing both initial volunteer expectations and the long-

term sense of community belonging. This is a worthwhile consideration when designing my framework. By co-producing the CEF and testing with potential users, I was able to reflect their needs and uncover opportunities to encourage more meaningful engagement with those facilitating and taking environmental action.

In response to the challenges faced by many nonprofit organisations and their communities, it has become evident that traditional governance models often fall short (Freiwirth, 2013). Freiwirth discusses that recognition has no single governance formula or framework that suits all nonprofits and attempts to impose such models can prove ineffective and unproductive. A key challenge is the power dynamic within nonprofit boards, where the dominance of "professionals" or "experts" can lead to disconnection from the communities they serve, deepening class and power divides (Freiwirth, 2013). To address these challenges, the Community-engagement governance (CEG) framework was introduced, designed to share governance responsibility among various stakeholders, including staff and communities. The CEG framework prioritises shared decision-making, power-sharing, and partnerships, emphasising principles rather than a rigid structure to allow adaptability and customisation to suit diverse organisations. However, advancing nonprofit governance through research can be challenging, as these insights often do not reach the audiences that could benefit most, in turn limiting new connections and networks for progress (Freiwirth, 2013). This framework was developed for USA governance and highlights similar issues that are also apparent in UK governance.

Another challenge for non-profit organisations was identified by Swanson (2013), who highlights that organisations are skilled at managing budgets but often face challenges in managing their social capital. They emphasise the crucial role of citizen participation and engagement, echoing Rossteutscher's (2008) assertion that no democracy can be sustainable without these components. Swanson's framework for effective engagement in non-profits calls for making engagement a core value, developing a strategic plan with clear objectives, and creating a diverse portfolio of activities. This portfolio should consider gaps, institutional influence, and the benefits derived from each activity and its stakeholders. To manage this engagement portfolio effectively, a rating system can be devised based on each activity's perceived influence and benefits, aligning them with organisational objectives. This is insightful evidence that supports the development of the framework and includes factors that have been identified as key considerations throughout this research.

Bergeron and Lévesque (2014) present an action framework to foster active communities in the context of health, particularly in Ontario, Canada. This framework is the result of collaborative efforts between planning and public

health professionals and outlines priority areas and corresponding actions. The priorities encompass various facets, including “Planning & Evaluation; Involvement & Mobilization; Education, Training & Engagement; Champions & Stakeholder Collaboration; Advocacy; and Action Plans” (2014:1044). These priorities serve as focal points for fostering active communities. Notably, the framework categorises coordinated actions into proximal (important and feasible actions for both professions) and distal (important but less feasible actions for both professions). These are essential aspects to consider when producing a framework, as it can be adaptable and scalable depending on the organisation’s capacity. However, this framework could benefit from an assessment of the effectiveness of its implementation.

Collaborative networks are intrinsic to facilitate integrated and coordinated approaches to environmental sustainability in cities (Hawkins *et al.*, 2018). These authors emphasise that local officials often face uncertainties in securing the necessary resources for their missions. They suggest collaborative strategies can help reduce this uncertainty by coordinating with other organisations (*ibid*). Efforts to engage in climate protection on a regional level are argued to increase the adoption of localised mitigation policies (Pitt, 2010; Hawkins *et al.*, 2018). Administrative capacity, institutional governance, and community support are identified as factors influencing collaboration among government and non-government organisations across various policy areas. Increased administrative capacity is linked to improved network development and collaboration, enabling cities to address complex problems that traditional policy tools struggle to manage effectively, especially those spanning administrative boundaries and involving multiple ecological functions. Greater administrative capacity also enhances a city's attractiveness as a partner for collaboration in achieving sustainability objectives. However, this remains challenging for many organisations, especially ones researched in this thesis: capacity and time, which are key limitations to progress in engagement, are often overlooked.

Schweizer, Davis and Thompson (2013) present a place-based climate change engagement framework. Their research showed that messages about climate change are most effective when they align with the cultural beliefs and values of the audience and are intertwined with the experiential significance of local places. Their framework is intended for communicators and stewards of places. It aims to illustrate the impacts of climate change on an immediate local context, connecting them to human behaviours through *systems-based explanations* and providing actionable suggestions to enhance communication about climate change (Schweizer, Davis and Thompson, 2013). This approach emphasises the importance of storytelling and engagement tools that resonate with participants by linking climate change to their emotional and social connections with specific places, ultimately fostering more impactful conversations about climate change. Echoing points raised within this thesis,

this study reflects that an important factor for engagement is the phrase, 'seeing is believing,' where people either experience a trigger that motivates action or can easily see the impact of their involvement.

### **2.7.ii Systematic Literature Review Summary**

The reviewed literature offers valuable insights into the utilisation of engagement frameworks across diverse sectors such as health, policy, and co-production. These frameworks aim to enhance human interactions, engagement, and decision-making in various contexts, ranging from environmental experiences to climate change communication and nonprofit governance. One prevailing theme in this literature is the shift from viewing human-nature relationships as mere interactions to understanding them as transactional experiences (Macaulay *et al.*, 2022a). This concept understands an experience of nature as a holistic, unfolding phenomenon that encompasses both personal and environmental dimensions. The significance of nature experiences is further enhanced by the realisation that they contribute to psychological restorative effects (Macaulay *et al.*, 2022b). Environmental factors like greenspace accessibility and design, combined with personal factors such as individual needs and nature connection, can amplify the positive outcomes of these experiences (Wolff *et al.*, 2022).

From this systematic review, there is demonstrable evidence that frameworks not only offer insights into personal experiences but also extend to the realm of urban planning and governance. For instance, the challenge of equitable access to greenspaces requires a comprehensive framework that transcends traditional approaches. Beyond the physical aspects, barriers to accessibility encompass perceptions, personal conditions, and institutional structures (Wolff *et al.*, 2022; Lennon, Douglas and Scott, 2017). Recognising this complexity is crucial in planning for environmental justice and fostering inclusive urban environments.

Within the realm of design thinking, frameworks help bridge the gap between creativity and practical application. They empower both designers and non-designers to engage with problems, develop innovative solutions, and effectively communicate their ideas. This democratisation of design expands its impact across sectors and communities while emphasising the importance of empathy-driven approaches in problem-solving (Gheerawo, 2018).

Frameworks that challenge traditional governance models are considered valuable and more effective in decision-making in UGS (Freiwirth, 2013; Domaradzka *et al.*, 2022). Collaborative engagement models recognise that effective decision-making goes beyond hierarchical structures. Instead, they promote shared power, community impact, and transparency among stakeholders, resulting in more adaptable and responsive organisations that truly serve their communities (Freiwirth, 2013).

Frameworks play a pivotal role in climate change communication. By grounding messages in local contexts, cultural values, and place-based education, the challenge of conveying the complexity of climate change becomes more relatable and actionable (Schweizer, Davis, and Thompson, 2013). Place-based engagement fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility, ultimately driving public understanding and action.

These frameworks serve as tools that help users understand, navigate, and improve experiences and decision-making processes (Field *et al.*, 2014; Nguyen, Young and Cooke, 2017). However, it is worth noting that it is difficult to ascertain to what extent these frameworks successfully impact creative engagement. The term 'framework' holds varied meanings across different contexts; however, in this research, emphasis was placed on developing an understanding of practical frameworks, drawing on expert recommendations and perspectives from those involved in environmental action.

Notably, this literature review deliberately included grey literature, with contributions from private and public sector reports, encompassing both academic and non-academic sources on the application of previous frameworks. Including such literature underlines the practical experimentation with various frameworks, acknowledging the mixed success of these endeavours. Typically, these frameworks are theoretical, with little to no creative methods or activities included in the framework structures. There are exceptions to this, such as Gheerawo (2018), who emphasises design thinking as a creative framework to improve design processes. This indicates that taking actionable steps towards enabling these frameworks across multiple scales is difficult. For example, how feasible is it for social enterprises or volunteers to adopt these principles? This review aimed to enhance the development of a framework based on literary and empirical data that provides practical solutions to increase engagement for multiple users.

The literature on frameworks highlights the power of structured approaches in addressing complex challenges across various sectors. These frameworks provide a roadmap for meaningful engagement, effective decision-making, and positive impact. As societies grapple with the intricate interplay between humans, nature, governance, and design, the insights gleaned from these frameworks become indispensable tools in shaping a more interconnected and sustainable future.

Insights from both the systematic literature review and extensive data collection significantly informed the development of the creative engagement framework. The literature review shed light on the efficacy of past strategies and the operational dynamics of existing frameworks, offering a foundational understanding of what has been effective. Simultaneously, the data provided critical details necessary for enhancing the quality of engagement, thus ensuring the framework is both innovative and responsive to the needs



identified through this research process. Together, these elements have contributed to a robust framework designed to elevate the quality of creative engagement practices.

## 2.8 Summary

This chapter has helped to further define key terms, such as environmental action and creative engagement, which are used throughout this thesis. Environmental action is understood as collective action towards improving places to benefit the public and the environment. Creative engagement focuses on using creativity to deepen and broaden participation in activities or decision-making, facilitating a shared and immersive process of understanding and shaping personal and collective perspectives. It considers incorporating creative approaches such as co-production to break the consultation fatigue and frustration in urban planning and policy development. This therefore champions the concept that local people are experts of their own experiences. Those engaging with their local UGS have context-specific knowledge and connections to place that ought to be understood and included prior to decisions being made within UGS. Having considered the current literature surrounding UGS and creative approaches in engagement, this research focuses on environmental action taking place in Manchester and how such approaches can foster sustainable engagement. This chapter has also contextualised the processes of frameworks to streamline processes of research into UGS, engagement and decision-making. This helped to ground the development of a creative engagement framework as an innovative outcome of this research. This is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Key areas of focus developed throughout the literature review process are as follows:

- Motivation was discussed in terms of the health benefits of interacting with UGS (as previously mentioned) as well as evidence suggesting ways to improve engagement lie within understanding motivation. The frameworks reviewed showed that understanding motivation can help unlock the increased use of UGS (Wolff et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Fogg Behaviours Model discusses that participation hinges on motivation along with triggers and ability (Fogg, 2009). Understanding motivations for UGS engagement was therefore deemed a critical line of inquiry.
- Access to UGS increases citizens' health and well-being, and the inequity of UGS provisions in certain city areas over others brings about issues of inequality and social justice. For example, improvements to UGS can cause the displacement of working classes and increased house prices (Curran and Hamilton, 2012; Rigolon and

Németh, 2018). It is therefore crucial to be critically aware of these issues moving forward.

- Communication within the processes of engagement was also considered an important factor for improving involvement (Schweizer, Davis and Thompson, 2013; Everett, Adekola and Lamond, 2021). Furthermore, designing flexible processes was deemed essential to the planning of engagement (Perry et al., 2019).

This research focuses on the process of including creative engagement within UGS decision-making and how people interact with previously designed spaces. In turn, findings from this research could influence the future design of new UGS. The following chapter details this research's aims and objectives based on the results of the above in-depth literature review. It outlines the research design of the thesis and the methods adopted to answer the research aim and questions.

## CHAPTER 3- RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.0 Introduction

The overarching aim of this research was to investigate *how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within urban greenspaces (UGS)*. This chapter's structure is illustrated in the graphic below (Figure 2). It includes an in-depth discussion of the research approach and the formulation of the research design, as well as an introduction and justification of the methods chosen. It also discusses how data was analysed and interpreted.

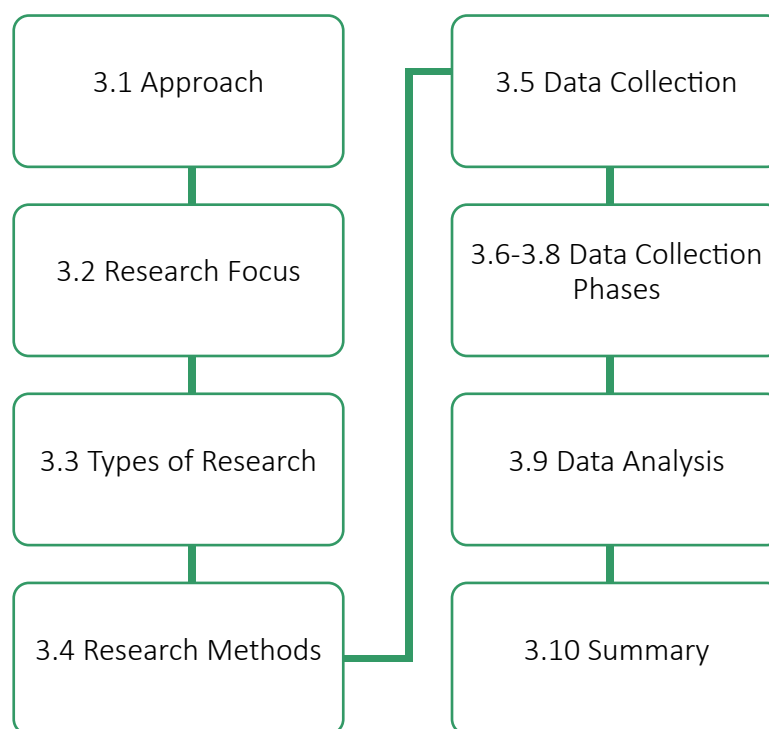


Figure 2: Chapter Guide

This investigation adopted a Research through Design (RtD) approach which facilitated an immersive, inductive, and evolving methodology (Findeli et al., 2008; Durrant et al., 2015). This approach enabled the adaptation and evolution of methods in response to emerging insights and discoveries, building from a foundation of semi-structured interviews and case studies. Data was collected through three phases. The first phase comprised of interviews to establish the current understanding and implementation of public engagement with:

- Authoritative agents or influencers of action, such as city planning or through organisation and deployment of stewardship, e.g. council workers, environmental sector workers and activists.

- The facilitators of creative participation within UGS, e.g. artists, designers and community workers.

The second phase developed case studies to collect insights into how different societal groups foster environmental action in UGS, e.g. how a volunteer group or organisation differs from a social enterprise or institution and vice versa and whether creativity was included or could be beneficial within these processes. The final phase took insights and reflections from previous phases to put forward a co-produced creative engagement framework (CEF) for improving connections and engagement in UGS.

### 3.1 Approach

The methodological approach of this thesis blends Research through Design (RtD) principles with Marshall's (2016) concept of *Living Life as Inquiry* (LLaI), positioning RtD as an iterative process that fosters knowledge generation through design practice, and promotes stakeholder ownership of knowledge (Lenzholzer, Duchhart and Koh, 2013; Klemm, Lenzholzer and van den Brink, 2017). LLaI encourages acting “with integrity, context-sensitivity and agency in an ever-unfolding, complex and always largely unknowable world” (Marshall, 2016:1). This approach encourages designers to continually question their principles, integrating research with practice through reflection (Bousbaci, 2008; Klemm, Lenzholzer and van den Brink, 2017).

Unlike traditional social science research, which often relies on quantitative methods to generate generalisable findings, Research through Design (RtD) is inherently qualitative and exploratory, making it particularly suited to addressing the nuanced challenges of sustainable urban design (Lenzholzer, Duchhart, and Koh, 2013). RtD facilitates a deeper engagement with the physical and social contexts of design interventions, allowing for a more holistic understanding of their impacts (Klemm, Lenzholzer, and van den Brink, 2017). This approach is not merely about solving known problems but discovering new opportunities and innovative solutions through the act of design itself. By embedding research within the design process, RtD enables a direct translation of insights into tangible outcomes, which can be iteratively tested and refined in real-world settings (Bousbaci, 2008; Klemm, Lenzholzer, and van den Brink, 2017).

Within this research, design is seen as an ongoing practice focused on process rather than outcomes, impacting society in intentional and emergent ways (Simonsen et al., 2010; Simonsen and Robertson, 2013). The design process involves defining problems and creating solutions, advocating for a reflective and iterative approach to addressing challenges (Schon, 1984; Buchanan, 1992). This thesis argues for situating technical problem-solving within a broader context of reflective thinking, suggesting that reflective practice can

combine rigorous research methodology with practical application (Dewey, 1938; Schon, 1984). This fusion aims to bridge the gap between theoretical rigour and practical relevance by demonstrating that reflection-in-action can navigate uncertainty with the same rigour as traditional scientific methodologies.

Design is a 'liberal art' that determines design as a discipline of thinking shared between all people in everyday life (Buchanan, 1992). Buchanan establishes the *Four Orders of Design* as a means to understand how design thinking affects all aspects of everyday life, these are:

- Signs:** the various forms of communication through visuals and symbols, most commonly used within graphic design practices.
- Things:** material or physical objects concerning form, function and aesthetic within the principles of product-based design of everyday objects to engineering machinery.
- Actions:** organised activities, services and processes referring to the management of goal-driven sequences. This has developed further into matters concerning decision-making, planning and experience design.
- Thoughts:** "systems or environments for living, working, playing, and learning" with regard to practices of urban planning, engineering and architecture. Interestingly for this thesis, this Order prioritises "more consciousness of the central idea, thought, or value that expresses the unity of any balanced and functioning whole" (Buchanan, 1992:9-10).

These Orders help to understand design's omnipresence within the everyday context. For this research, emphasis was placed on the intersections of Actions and Thoughts due to their strong connection with the research aim of exploring intangible aspects of decision-making, such as people's beliefs and relationships to UGS. Building from these two orders, the thesis sought to comprehend the processes and activities (action) undertaken within these spaces and how they operate within a broader context or system (thoughts), conceptualised as 'places of invention' (Buchanan, 1992).

While Buchanan's design orders (2019) offer a framework for applying theory to practice, they are not universally applicable solutions. Buchanan (2019) highlights the limitations of these orders in fully addressing the diverse needs and values of facilitators and participants in real scenarios. When design principles conflict with people's values, a re-evaluation through design thinking (DT) is necessary, encouraging a shift towards new design paradigms that can rejuvenate culture through novel communications and interactions (McKeon, 1998; Buchanan, 2019).

In this research, design thinking was utilised throughout the data collection process, serving as a critical tool to navigate and make sense of the dense data collected from various stakeholders. As the principal investigator, I employed design thinking to iteratively analyse and synthesise information, which facilitated the identification of key insights and patterns. This approach was crucial not only in understanding the data but also in translating these insights into practical outcomes. The culmination of this process was the design of the Creative Engagement Framework, where design thinking played a central role in developing recommendations and innovative practices that are directly informed by the data. This methodology ensured that the framework was both reflective of the stakeholders' needs and a practical tool tailored to enhance engagement in UGS.

It is imperative to acknowledge the intrinsic positionality of the designer and researcher within the Research through Design (RtD) framework. The individual's background, experiences, and personal biases inevitably influence the interpretation of data and the conceptualisation of design solutions. This subjectivity should not be viewed solely as a potential source of bias; rather, it serves as a valuable lens that introduces unique insights and creative solutions into the research (Manzini, 2016). An ongoing commitment to reflective practice was maintained throughout the research process, with continual questioning of assumptions and consideration of how personal perspectives might shape the research outcomes. For example, once a draft framework was developed, testing confirmed that the themes were applicable and that the outcome could be useful for multiple audiences. This reflective approach is integral to RtD, as it recognises the designer's role not merely as an observer but as an active participant whose personal context significantly influences the research trajectory and outputs.

Design's role in shaping human experiences necessitates interventions that are useful and value-driven across various contexts (Buchanan, 1992; 2019). DT therefore aligns with systems thinking, which adapts to uncertainty and complexity, validating flexible and emergent research approaches (Schön, 1938; Cross, 2001; Ohta et al., 2007; Taylor, 2018). RtD embodies DT's flexible, learning-oriented approach, recognised as a 'knowledge-generating activity' that integrates with DT in research practices (Durrant et al., 2015:9; Taylor, 2018). RtD facilitates experimental reflection on the research process, focusing on inclusion within UGS decision-making (Frankel and Racine, 2010; Taylor, 2018).

Despite its developmental stage and epistemological debates, RtD expands design research's scope, promoting an in-depth examination of its academic value (Michel, 2007; Findeli, 2010; Taylor, 2018). This research adopts a design-centric, project-based approach to explore human ecology, offering both descriptive and diagnostic insights into design and human geography. It

emphasises the importance of reflection and the need to navigate uncertainties in aligning with, or challenging, existing literature and beliefs.

To visualise this approach, Taylor (2018:18) used 'The Spring' (Figure 3) to represent her methodology and frame her RtD project. The Spring demonstrates a notion of research that intentionally plans for and welcomes reflection throughout the process. For example, exploring key themes, curiosities or problems until they are more defined and refined before progressing. It also helps to illustrate the iterative and recursive nature of design research, where the line of inquiry is flexible and requires exploration to test hypotheses or collaborative outcomes. Another example use would be to test outcomes (such as the CEF) to ensure their usefulness and validity:

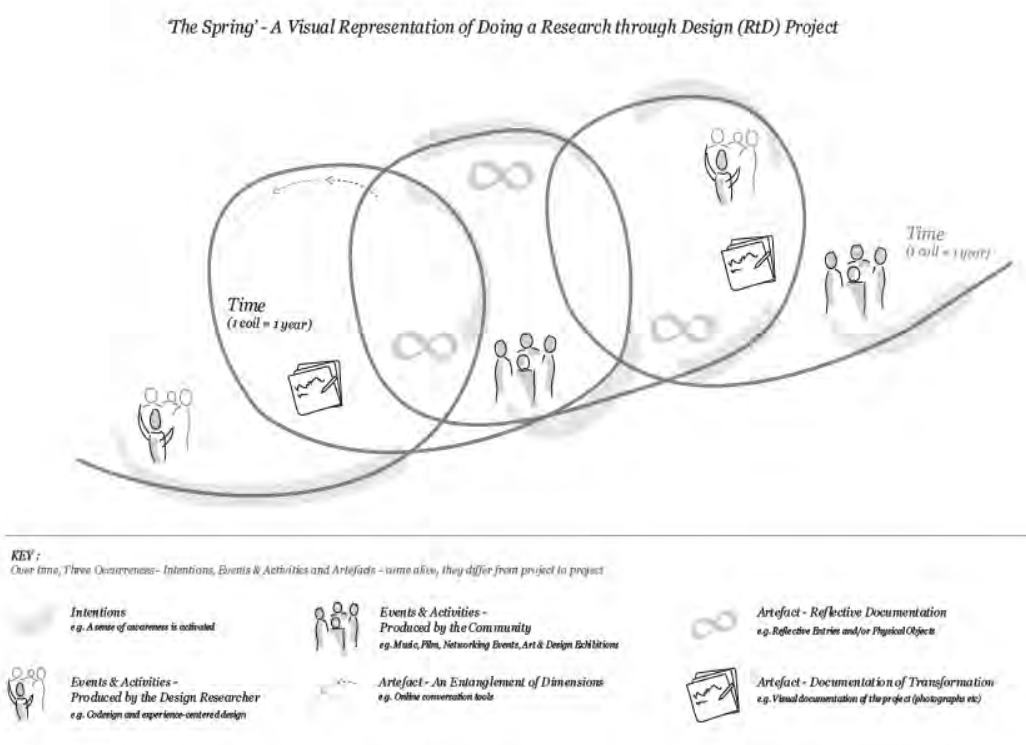


Figure 3 'The Spring' (Taylor, 2018:18)

The Spring “relies on the designer researcher to activate ‘an unfolding awareness’” which underscores the importance of “correspondence with the past” whilst also looking toward the future (Taylor, 2018:173). Following on from Taylor’s (2018) thesis, this research took on an open-ended, flexible and fluid approach, allowing themes to emerge and insights to drive data collection and analysis. Using the Spring as a methodological framework, data collected during this research informed subsequent decisions such as the research questions and what, where, and how to approach the next steps in a flexible manner. Taylor summarises the RtD process as ‘inquiry and design, which coalesce to make-no-sense and some sense. The messiness is also progressing, developing, evolving over time; it formulates and shapes its visibility as a ‘project’” (Taylor, 2018:175).

Using RtD throughout the engagement trajectory helped to embrace the cyclical notion that “progress is participated in, participation shapes its progress, and it is in the experiencing of this double hermeneutic that provides a compelling methodological reframing of ‘RtD’; as it is shaped, it is shaping” (Taylor, 2018:175). This means that during the process, the focus shifted and changed due to new insights and developments from one method to another. Previous choices and the knock-on effect of collective thinking and learning therefore influenced the consequent actions. As a result, this type of research approach improves the ‘ownership of knowledge’ (Klemm, Lenzholzer and van den Brink, 2017:61).

A definition of environmental action and creative engagement emerged through the research methods of interviews and case studies. Hence, by addressing current issues, it was possible to collectively improve the relationships between all stakeholders – notably, the existing action groups, local authorities, and the surrounding communities. Following this methodological foundation, this chapter discusses the process by which the research was identified, conducted and analysed.

### **3.2 Research Focus**

The research explored UGS as interconnected realms of economic, political, social, and environmental interest and injustice. It investigated the complexity of public (dis)engagement in UGS and the potential of integrating design thinking with urban planning to enhance engagement in UGS decision-making. More specifically, it aimed to understand how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within urban greenspaces (UGS). It achieved this by uncovering people's connection to UGS and the motivations behind environmental action and the role of local authority decisions. By highlighting the motivations for involvement and engagement in these spaces, the research identified ways to increase community engagement and strengthen people's connections to UGS.

### **3.3 Types of Research**

Interpretation and treatment of empirical research are conducive to a researcher's worldview. Therefore, the consequent research paradigm is intrinsic to guiding and framing research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Although it remains contentious to certify the best method of practice for adopting a paradigm in research, there are frequently established variants that range from constructivism to positivism (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Isaeva et al., 2015).

This research took place at the intersection of interpretivism and transformative paradigms. It aimed to encourage sustainable environmental



action and enhance informed decision-making within UGS by developing a CEF. As the actions and motivations of participants can be driven by social justice, there was an element of transformative research that puts forward different ways of thinking to creative engagement. This research was values-based; therefore, the subjectivity of participants was an important aspect that influenced change. Interpretivism acknowledges that while reality is socially constructive and subjective, it is also susceptible to change. This understanding is nuanced by Denzin and Lincoln:

*The processes that define the practices of interpretation and representation are always ongoing, emergent, unpredictable, and unfinished. They are always embedded in an ongoing historical and political context (2018:1307).*

### **3.3.i Interpretive Research**

This research looks to uncover and create meaning (Leavy, 2017), describing subjective phenomena and confirming these through stakeholder engagement (Morse, 2018). For this reason, it can be emotive and meaningful, specifically for those involved with the research. Thus, factual information may not be significant to the project's overall outcome, with personal expressions or interpretations potentially being more useful. As Morse suggests, 'it is the wisdom of the investigator to determine the difference' (2018:1388). This research used this paradigm to understand and establish relationships with participants and gain an overview of what environmental action looks like in Manchester's UGS.

### **3.3.ii Interpretive and Descriptive Data**

Typical of inductive research designs, this research collected descriptive and meaningful data (Leavy, 2017). Morse (2018) distinguishes between 'Hard' data - quantitative facts like dates and numbers - and 'Soft' data, which includes qualitative narratives and experiences. Data collection, therefore, involved methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The table below (Table 3) expands on Morse's (2018) example of Descriptive (hard) and Interpreted (soft) data, providing context for this research:

Topic	Interview Data from the influencers		Interview Data from the everyday user's perspective
	Descriptive HARD data	Interpretive SOFT data	
UGS governance	Number of sites, sizes and names	How decision-makers feel about each of the sites	What is fair and unfair about the way it is governed?
UGS maintenance	Costs, frequency of care or maintenance tasks (also seasonal)	Organisation of people to get the job done	How does the public perceive the care/maintenance of the space?
UGS Stewardship	Number of friends groups or environmentally focused community groups	The practices and actions taking place within the space	What are the perceptions of their practices?

*Table 3: Differences between hard and soft data (based upon Morse, 2018:1395)*

Both data types were collected to ensure a fuller understanding of the research's focus.

### 3.3.iii Qualitative and Quantitative

This thesis utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the research questions. Qualitative research helped to form a comprehensive understanding of participant's perspectives on social issues (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Conversely, quantitative research tests hypotheses through measurable variables and statistical analysis to validate theories (ibid).

Overall, the research predominantly relied on qualitative analysis to explore worldviews and language, using an inductive strategy to allow observations to inform theoretical understanding (Bryman, 2012). It adopted a constructivist ontological stance, acknowledging the fluid nature of social phenomena as continually shaped by social interactions (ibid:33).

Recognising the importance of capturing the experiences of individuals connected to Manchester's greenspaces, qualitative methods were deemed most suitable for this research. Nonetheless, it acknowledges that no single method is 'universally appropriate' for all research scenarios (Taylor, 2018; Hakim, 2000).

### 3.4 Research Design

Research design should naturally develop from research question(s) (Silverman, 2013). The consequent research design consisting of the methods and research strategy must therefore be appropriate to help answer the questions (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

In this sense, research design acts as a guide to help researchers find and collect the relevant data needed to address respective intentions (Yin, 2018). The following section discusses the research methods, their suitability, validity and consequent reliability.

#### 3.4.i Research Methods

Social research designs are categorised into two types: *flexible* and *fixed* (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Fixed designs are pre-planned before data collection begins, whereas flexible designs allow the research focus to shift as the study progresses (ibid, 2016). Flexible designs are preferred for 'real world studies' like ethnographies and case studies, while fixed designs suit structured surveys and testing. This research utilised a flexible approach, designed to be adaptable while maintaining a clear purpose.

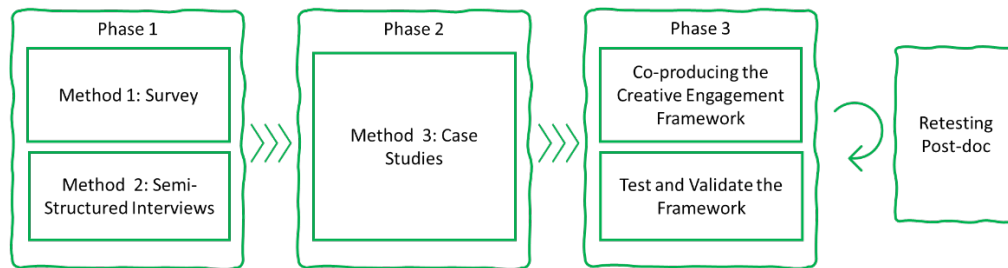
Key features of a flexible design include an evolving framework, recognition of multiple realities, the researcher as an instrument of data collection, and emphasis on participants' views (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Understanding established research traditions was crucial, aiming to present a clear, engaging narrative that reflects the complexities of life. Only by understanding the motivations behind care, involvement, and engagement in UGS can a suitable, sustainable solution be put forward, considering multiple perspectives.

Building rapport and trust was essential, as was acknowledging the researcher's biases and striving for transparency and inclusivity with participants. Following Robson and McCartan, the research prioritised curiosity, adaptability, and openness to minimise bias (2016). Consideration was therefore placed on being "fluid and flexible... yet deliberate and methodical" (O'Leary, 2021:350).

This thesis aimed to foster openness and agency among participants, allowing them to share their experiences and insights on UGS engagement, thereby identifying potential issues and solutions. With my research design established, the following section provides an overview of the chosen methods, detailing their role in answering my aims and objectives and why they were deemed appropriate for this thesis.

### 3.5 Data Collection

A narrative of what environmental action looks like on multiple levels was developed to gather a detailed account of environmental action, engagement levels, and associated creativity across Manchester. This research involved three phases of data collection. The graphic below (Figure 4) outlines the primary data collection methods included in each phase.



*Figure 4: Overview of Primary Data Collection Research Methods*

The data collection, analysis, and outcome development processes are illustrated in Figure 5 (overleaf), which shows how the thesis was developed. This chapter discusses these processes in further detail.

Both primary and secondary data were collected to address the aims of the thesis. Before phase one began, a literature review of design and human geography studies was undertaken. Key themes were determined, which helped to organise a search strategy whereby focus was placed on the benefits, barriers and equity of: 1. Urban greenspaces (UGS), 2. Participation in UGS and 3. Creative approaches to engagement.

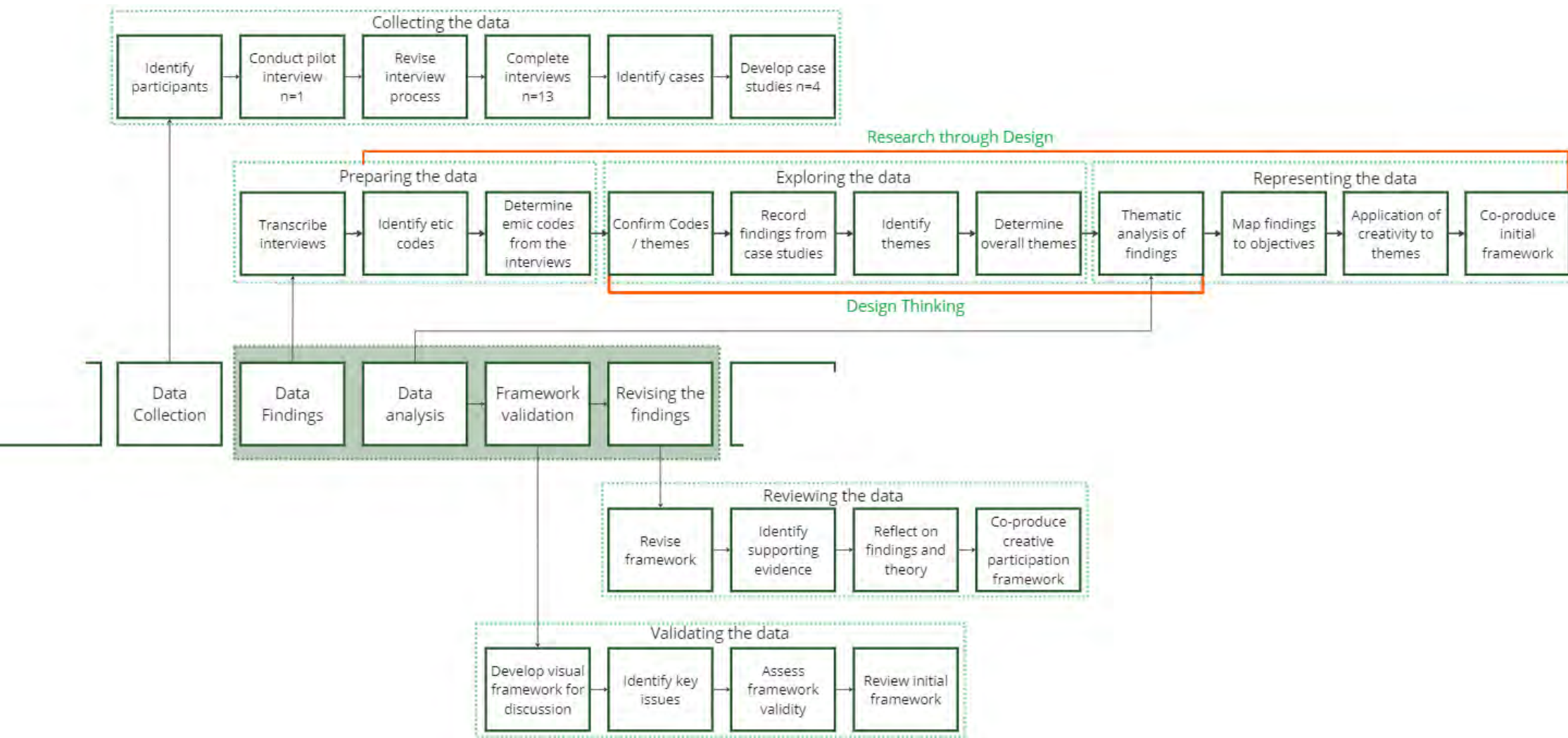


Figure 5: Detailed research and analysis process

Table 4 provides a brief explanation of the data gathered, the rationale highlighting the relationship between methods and objectives, how the data was used, and the acknowledged limitations.

Method	Obj	Detail
1. Semi-structured Interviews	1-2	<p><b>What data was collected?</b> The perceptions and practices of public participation and creative engagement from different perspectives.</p> <p><b>How will it be used?</b> To gather detailed accounts, stories, and views of those interested in or who have experience working within the main themes of this research. The data included insights into what it means to work within these specific environments and how creativity is currently used.</p> <p><b>Limitations</b> Managing voluminous amounts of data, including time-consuming transcription and consequent analyses (Silverman, 2013).</p>
2. Case Studies:	1-4	<p><b>What data was collected?</b> Detailed accounts of environmental action and how creative practices can influence engagement.</p> <p><b>How will it be used?</b> To best understand how and why a phenomenon exists, case studies were used to represent what features, aspects, or trends occur within selected UGS over time. This data provided evidence to support recommendations.</p> <p><b>Limitations</b> Cases are often specific to an area or point in time, so they cannot be entirely conclusive to a wider context, but they can highlight themes common to other potential sites (Yin, 2018).</p>
- Online Survey <b>Within the case studies</b>	1	<p><b>What data was collected?</b> Baseline data for potential contacts and network of action across Greater Manchester.</p> <p><b>How will it be used?</b> To establish an informed overview of the type of action groups are undertaking and their interconnectivity to others, this method identified contacts for further research more specific to the individual objectives.</p> <p><b>Limitations</b> Online bias and digital literacy: Although online methods provided a lot of data in a relatively short time, the results cannot be fully representative of the entire population (Neuman, 2014).</p>
- Participant Action	2	<p><b>What data was collected?</b> Contextualising documentary evidence of the key issues and perceptions from my perspective.</p>

Research (PAR) <b>Within the case studies</b>		<p><b>How will it be used?</b> To further understand what activities are taking place and what work is necessary to care for the spaces. It also helped to develop meaningful relationships with participants.</p> <p><b>Limitations</b> Certain short-term projects/sessions are time-limited and might not address the longevity of sustainable action. It could also be laboursome to get involved with each case (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998).</p>
- Focus Groups (FG) <b>Within the case studies</b>	3-4	<p><b>What data was collected?</b> Collective knowledge and insights into how to improve engagement activities and (dis)prove whether creative practices affect (inter)action.</p> <p><b>How will it be used?</b> These sessions established the main themes, motivations and issues related to UGS and co-creative practices.</p> <p><b>Limitations</b> Limited representation of the wider community with a risk of power dynamics affecting the outcomes between the researcher and participants as well as within the group itself (Leavy, 2017).</p>
3. Co-production of the Creative Engagement Framework	3-4	<p><b>What data was collected?</b> Co-produced solutions and recommendations to address the established issues determined by the previous methods. These were then tested with a selection of participants to determine suitability.</p> <p><b>How will it be used?</b> On reflection and through the process of the previous methods, participants collectively highlighted issues and potential solutions as a reflective/iterative process whereby ideas were discussed and implemented into the framework.</p> <p><b>Limitations</b> Power dynamics within the group may have affected the outcome, but a mutual benefits approach was critical. Furthermore, reaching a consensus may overrule other concerns that affect the few (Leavy, 2017).</p>

Table 4: Primary Data Collection Methods

The following section presents the criteria for selecting participants and cases, along with ethical considerations for best practices. The chapter then delves into each chosen method from sections 3.6 to 3.8, discussing their justifications and advantages and disadvantages. It introduces the methods detailing the *who*, *what*, *where*, *how*, and *when*, to justify their appropriateness. Consequently, it narrates the story of the research methods for data collection. It was crucial to recognise that, despite separate discussions, multiple methods were applied simultaneously during the research. Some methods overlapped, varied in duration, and were more dogmatic.

### 3.5.i Participants and Ethical Considerations

This research adopted a valid and reliable sampling strategy. A non-probability sampling strategy was used, whereby a set number of participants is not necessarily determined; rather, cases and participants are gathered gradually until data saturation occurs (Neuman, 2014). The two sampling strategies suitable for this research were *purposive* (gathering participants that meet the criteria) and *snowballing* (gathering referrals from participants and their referrals and so on) (Neuman, 2014).

Participant selection focused on individuals engaged in Manchester's public and environmental sectors, such as artists and decision-makers, to gain insights into UGS. This selective sampling provided valuable insights into UGS, engagement, and creative practices, yielding an informed perspective on the subject, although not necessarily fully representative of the entire population. Participant selection was based on their relevance and availability, using snowball sampling to uncover networks within environmental action (Neuman, 2014). The criteria for choosing participants, detailed in Table 5, were developed from existing literature and connections, ensuring they met ethical standards.

<b>Participants must be:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the age of 18 years</li> <li>• Capable of giving informed consent</li> </ul>
<b>Participants must be either:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers of local authority (Manchester City Council) or members associated with public-facing projects related to UGS</li> <li>• Knowledgeable within one or more of the three interrelated topics: UGS, engagement, and creative practices (e.g. academics or researchers within universities, public bodies or private companies)</li> <li>• Members of related organisations, charities and neighbourhood planning groups</li> <li>• Members of voluntary groups focused on environmental action</li> </ul>

Table 5: Participant Criteria

Ethical considerations were paramount in this qualitative research, especially as frequent interaction with participants was necessary during data collection. Therefore, it was vital to abide by an ethical protocol to protect participants' rights and assess and mitigate risks (Connelly, 2014). The research



methodology's appropriateness was verified through a pilot interview to ensure effective data collection in response to research questions. Initially planned for onsite data collection at various UGS, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift to digital platforms for all data gathering.

Ethical approval was obtained from the university's Research Ethics and Governance Committee (ref no: 5896), which involved creating and submitting a consent form, participant information sheet and an ethical protocol (See Appendices 2, 3 and 4). Participants received detailed study information, including involvement details and withdrawal rights, with informed consent acquired through email, offering options for anonymity or identification. Data storage was secure under password-protected platforms or devices, ensuring confidentiality and adherence to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The study concluded after collecting all interview and focus group data, maintaining strict ethical standards throughout.

## **3.6 Phase One**

### **3.6.i Interviews**

Interviews were chosen to gather insights and answers to two objectives as follows:

1. To understand the current perceptions and practices of public engagement from multiple perspectives.
2. To understand the motivations behind people's involvement with public participation and engagement in UGS.

Within phase one, interviews were conducted with participants involved with organising events, consultations, research, commissions, or exhibitions about or within UGS that engage the surrounding communities and the wider public. For instance, I targeted members of the local authority, environmentally focused organisations, and researchers using creative practices within space, including artists whose work focuses on co-design, co-production and collaboration. The interview guide is available in Appendix 1.

Commonly used within qualitative research, interviews can yield in-depth and meaningful research. They are typically conversational in approach and aim to gather personal experiences with the opportunity to elaborate where necessary, ultimately providing the research with richer data (Dunn, 2000; King et al., 2019). Additionally, these authors explained that interviews are useful for examining a variety of complex human emotions, behaviours and motivations.

Typically, there are three main types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured, as shown below in Table 6:

Structured	Semi-structured	Unstructured
A formal approach with pre-selected and specific questions asked of every participant	A middle-ground approach whereby there is a set of predetermined questions, but there is room for natural deviation	An informal and conversational approach with very few pre-selected themes to cover

Table 6: Types of interviews (adapted by Bryman, 2012:210-213)

Structured interviews are best suited for comparative responses from standardised questions, whereas unstructured interviews involve more open-ended questions to understand interviewee perceptions (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews can enable a higher potentiality of knowledge-producing research through more open and malleable dialogue, thus attaining information about the interviewee's life (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018). A semi-structured approach was chosen in this research to allow for flexibility and discussion between the interviewer and interviewee (King et al., 2019).

All forms of interview or conversation(s) with participants were designed to allow all individuals to contribute to a conversation and express their opinions or thoughts about UGS, engagement and creative practices.

Although initially desired to take place in situ, the interviews were primarily conducted online (bar the pilot interview) due to COVID restrictions. Bryman (2012) discusses the ever-increasing use of online ethnography by researchers and that the digital realm has become a *space* in and of itself: "our concepts of place and space that are constitutive of the way in which we operate in the real world are grafted onto the Internet and its use" (2012:659).

Discussing people's experiences and actions within an online context provided a challenge that participants embraced, given the circumstances. In most instances, selected participants were fully integrated within the digital realm for reasons such as outreach, connection, and communication. Therefore, it was deemed a necessary way to continue the research; moreover, it was the only way to keep going.

Other disadvantages associated with interviewing are that it is time and resource-intensive in both the preparation and analysis stages (Neuman, 2014). When interviewing, the role of the interviewer is to "obtain co-operation and build rapport, yet remain neutral and objective" (Neuman,

2014:217). It was important to remain non-biased and let the interviewees lead the conversation, hence another reason to have semi-structured interviews.

Participants were selected initially through existing contacts and thereafter relied on a “logic of sequential replication” (Douglas, 2018:201) and through snowballing referrals (Yin, 2018). Data saturation, in terms of the interviews, was assumed once an emerging narrative and similar themes were identified and reoccurred.

### 3.6.ii Designing the Questions

Within the interviews, I developed a set of pre-determined questions designed specifically to address the research aims and objectives (see Appendix 1). Although the words altered slightly from participant to participant, the crucial factor was that the questioning remained flexible to ensure comprehension of the participant's worldviews (Bryman, 2012). The essential components needed when preparing for an interview are outlined by Bryman (2012):

- Develop an order of key themes to ensure the conversation flows smoothly whilst attaining a tolerance of flexibility.
- Ensure the questions relate to the initial research aims.
- Use comprehensible and universal language that is relevant to participants.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Ensure a record of each participant, e.g., information about their role or organisation, is kept to help contextualise their responses.

The pilot interview was conducted with people I had previously met to ensure the questions were suitable. This alleviated the initial pressure, and I gained confidence in the interviewing process. Some of the key outcomes from the pilot interview were to halve the initial number of questions (n=20) to a more manageable number (approx. 10) and simplify the language within certain questions (e.g. using ‘creative practices/activities and public participation’ instead of ‘creative participatory practices’).

Three key topics were investigated during the interview process: UGS, Creativity and Engagement with associated guiding questions (see Appendix 1). The emphasis was to ensure that key terms were not simply introduced into conversations to influence their responses but that the discussed themes would help them express their thoughts regarding their relationship with space, place and the environment. The findings were organised into three topics before identifying key themes discussed by the participants, along with themes identified through literature.

Prospective interviewees were identified (as outlined in Section 3.6.i) and then contacted via email with an outline of the research intentions. Overall, I

conducted 13 interviews with participants from a variety of backgrounds. Table 7 illustrates the demographic, the aim of the interviews and how I engaged with participants:

<b>Demographic of engagement</b>	I spoke with academics (n=3), council members (n=2), organisation/charity staff (n=5), artists and designers (n=2), and a youth worker (n=1), all interested and working to strengthen engagement and understand people's relationships to place.
<b>Aim</b>	To understand the current perceptions and practices of public engagement from multiple perspectives and to gauge whether creative approaches to engagement can encourage people to engage more with UGS.
<b>How I engaged</b>	I conducted all the interviews (after the pilot) virtually through Zoom (or Teams). I identified potential participants and reached out to them via email. The interviews, with the participant's consent, were recorded and transcribed.

*Table 7: Details from the interview process*

Interview data was transcribed and coded to pull out quotes and insights (further details of the coding process are in section 3.9). Although transcription was an important analytical process within this research, it has shortcomings, such as the idiosyncrasies of an individual's personality can be lost. For example, expressions or implied sarcasm do not always translate (Morse, 2018). Interpretation and the associated rigour of such subjective data can therefore be criticised as "juggling meaning and accuracy is one of the great conundrums of good research" (Morse, 2018:1389). Consequently, although the interviews provided crucial information, other methods such as participant action research and case studies were combined for analysis to ensure the validity of this evidence-based research.

### 3.7 Phase two

The second phase focused on developing four case studies demonstrating environmental action within Manchester, focussing on where and how creativity intersects action. Initial methods included taking field notes, sketching scenes, and noticing how and why people use or care for UGS. Something was deemed notable if it linked to a person or group taking action or interacting with any greenspace directly. Furthermore, I actively got involved with events or environmental action taking place, whether it was with established action groups, community groups, or state or organisational events. In some cases, this occurred as Participant Action Research (PAR) to understand first-hand what it means to get involved and participate in environmental action.

Prospective participants were asked whether they would be willing to take part in the research project. The methods used were a survey, interviews and focus groups. From this phase, a framework for increasing creative engagement in environmental action was developed.

It was important to self-reflect my position within these methods to ensure data was not skewed toward what I wanted to see over what actually took place. Therefore, participation is discussed within the context of PAR (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998) in this chapter and was fundamental to the progress of the research, from addressing the aims to the success of the overall thesis outcome. Through PAR, I developed contacts and built relationships with participants.

### 3.7.i Case Studies

Case studies produce detailed and extensive knowledge that may involve a single case or multiple but related cases. The research design of such a method tends to emerge through the data collection and analysis phase (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Bryman explains that “with a case study, the case is an object of interest in its own right, and the researcher aims to provide an in-depth elucidation of it” (2012:69). In this sense, research in any area in its simplest form can be argued to be a case study if it focuses on a specific time and place.

Case studies are therefore associated with an idiographic approach as opposed to a cross-sectional nomothetic approach (that can be applicable and stand true regardless of time and place (Bryman, 2012)). Although this research aimed to give a cross-sectional interpretation of environmental action in Manchester, it can only represent the time and place in which it is situated. All research eventually becomes outdated. Therefore, it is the role of researchers to incubate the curiosity for continual inquiry. An ongoing critique of case studies focuses on the “external validity or generalizability” of the method (Bryman, 2012:69). In the context of this research, it was important to understand, from multiple perspectives, what the implications and issues are concerning UGS engagement, how decision-making affects everyday people and in turn how people respond to change.

The type of case study most appropriate for this research was identified by Yin (2018) as the *common* case, akin to Bryman's (2012) *exemplifying* case. Despite being a single-case study, Yin acknowledges that both single and multiple-case designs share a methodological framework, aiming to depict the nuances of everyday contexts. While multiple-case studies offer more robust findings than single cases, they require more time and resources (Herriott and Firestone, 1983). Replication in multiple case studies can yield more generalisable and meaningful outcomes (Yin, 2018). While not entirely representative of Manchester's UGS, this research aimed for its findings and methodology to inform environmental and social policymaking. Yin discusses the careful

selection of case studies as essential, either to anticipate similar outcomes (literal replication) or contrasting ones for predictable reasons (theoretical replication). Theoretical underpinnings from literature reviews and initial interviews guided how cases were selected, ensuring a logical basis for further inquiry. Each case was treated as a complete study, adhering to this systematic approach (Yin, 2018).

The case studies aimed to provide insights and solutions to Objective 3: *to examine whether creative engagement can encourage people to engage more with UGS*. Case selections were in accordance with the criteria outlined in the section below.

### ***3.7.i.i Case Selection***

A key aspect to consider when selecting a case study is to ensure there are comparable variables for quality analysis. In this sense, it is crucial to create specific criteria to ensure compatibility for replication. This can involve some “prior knowledge of the outcomes” to understand how they are similar and comparable (Yin, 2018:106). Due to the nature of different UGS across Manchester, it was difficult to ensure that each case would be entirely comparable. Case study criteria were developed to mitigate this. This ensured that the cases had baseline considerations to aid the analysis.

Table 8 identifies carefully considered criteria for selecting cases within this research:

<b>Prospective case studies must:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be associated with a publicly accessible greenspace with a majority of permeable ground.</li> <li>• Have a level of environmentally focused action taking place (e.g. action groups, authority).</li> <li>• Have a level of connectivity across Manchester to local authorities, organisations or owners of greenspace who oversee action within the UGS.</li> <li>• Have a level of impact or influence over a UGS.</li> </ul>

*Table 8: Case Study Criteria*

Pre-pandemic case study selection heavily considered site accessibility. However, the shift to online data collection following COVID-19 allowed for remote engagement, broadening the research's geographic scope and providing insights into changing relationships with physical spaces. Case study selection inherently involves bias and may prioritise collective over individual issues; this was mitigated using a snowballing strategy similar to interview methods (Rose, 2015; Yin, 2018). This approach facilitated connections with

active environmental groups but risked limiting diversity in participant interactions.

Originally, case selections were based on a 2.5km accessibility radius. Social distancing, however, necessitated a pivot to virtual and distanced methods, expanding the research's reach, enabling participation in diverse projects and enhancing the understanding of environmental action. The case studies aimed to explore the 'how' and 'why' behind current UGS engagements. The four comparative studies were exploratory and descriptive and focused on user experiences and a sense of belonging and place (Yin, 2018).

Employing a PAR approach, the projects varied slightly due to the research's flexible design. Thematic analysis and cross-case comparison highlighted commonalities and differences, informing the creative engagement framework. This recursive research allowed methods and creative practices to adapt to different dynamics, enriching the thesis' findings.

Table 9 outlines the chosen case studies and how they align with my case selection criteria:

Case	Scale of impact	Publicly Accessible space	Environmental action	Connectivity	Influence / Impact
Groundwork Greater Manchester (GM)	Organisation	Yes	Community-focused work across Greater Manchester with a focus on environmental improvement and climate change	They work directly with friends groups, community groups, local authority and other organisations	Their work feeds into policy, and they deliver engagement through funding bids (such as council and organisational funds)
Friends of Birchfields Park (FoBP)	Community volunteer group	Yes	Activity in the park includes tree planting, wildlife area development and community engagement activities (such as bee walks and permaculture sessions)	They liaise with the local council, their contractors and some third-sector organisations	They influence the general management plans of the park and what areas/habitats they can develop
Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD)	Social Enterprise	Yes	MUD have developed an unused bowling green into a community garden where they host workshops, have community plots and share skills and cultural knowledge to all	They are connected to the council and work alongside organisations and charities to deliver workshops and share resources. They also have a large volunteer base	They provide an influential and exemplary example of rejuvenating greenspace into a community food-focused area. Their work is often praised and encouraged by funders seeking social value
Manchester Museum (MM)	Institutional affiliation	Yes	The museum has environmental and social action at the heart of its mission. They have since developed a facilitating space to explore climate issues	They are institutionally linked and have worked with the council, other community groups and museums to deliver community-focused work	They are collaborative by nature; therefore, they have a significant impact profile and influence over prospective funding/ projects

Table 9: Chosen Case Studies



The four case studies for this research involved collaboration with those focused on enhancing environmental action networks in Manchester. The cases revolved around projects that were taking place during my PhD. They were opportunities to gather insights into how Manchester is addressing environmental action to explore ways to improve engagement and connections to UGS through creative approaches.

The first case study partnered with Groundwork GM and the Environment Agency to create a survey to understand the support needs of volunteers and organisations. Groundwork aimed to enhance volunteer training, recruitment, and retention, and I was able to map out the action network across Manchester for further research.

In a case study of Birchfields Park, I engaged in observations, sketches, and conversations and joined the Friends of Birchfields Park (FoBP), conducting focus groups to delve into their goals and challenges. This participation offered insights into grassroots environmental efforts and the dynamics of community engagement.

Another case involved collaborating with Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD) through a UK Research and Innovation Economic and Social Research Council initiative, evaluating MUD's community garden projects to assess their environmental, social, and economic impact. This provided a close look at how social enterprises contribute to environmental action.

The final case study was with the Manchester Museum (MM), aiming to map environmental action networks in central Manchester, especially around Ardwick and Hulme. Through interviews and mapping on a Zumu webpage, this study explored how the museum could support local environmental groups, contributing to a broader understanding of action sustainability and the role of institutions in supporting community efforts.

Acknowledging my positionality was crucial throughout the research, ensuring my perspective did not bias the findings but remained open to uncovering genuine motivations and actions. These case studies collectively enhanced understanding of environmental action networks, challenges, and opportunities for engagement across Manchester, offering insights into the effectiveness of collaboration between academia, community groups, and institutions.

Table 10 provides an overview of the aforementioned case studies:

Case Study	Groundwork GM	Friends of Birchfield Park	Manchester Urban Diggers	Manchester Museum
Group type	ORGANISATION	VOLUNTEERS	SOCIAL ENTERPRISE	INSTITUTION
What does the group do?	Groundwork GM is a federation of charities enabling community action concerning poverty and the environment	FoBP meet and works to improve their local park, host events and liaise with decision-makers	MUD are a not-for-profit social enterprise dedicated to changing the broken food system	MM is developing more sustainable and collaborative futures that take onboard issues of climate, social justice and cultures
Demographic of whom I engaged with	Communities team, volunteer groups from across GM – those I made contact with were mostly volunteers who were retired and dedicated a lot of their time to their local greenspaces	Volunteers, mostly retired or towards retirement age, bar a handful – Age range: ~27-70 – interested in improving the park and making connections to local people	The three MUD directors (<40). Their restaurant partner (<40) and six volunteers working on Platt Fields Market Garden (4 <40 and 2 (+50), interested in sustainable food growing	Two museum staff and then groups doing ecological action across Manchester – this could be through well-being, activism, arts and eco-activities
How many people engaged	3 Groundwork staff, plus 148 responses from individuals from either voluntary groups or orgs	Ten volunteers over two workshops (1 <sup>st</sup> with six and 2 <sup>nd</sup> with 4)	Ten people in total	17 people were interviewed, and 101 groups were mapped within the network (desk-based)
Where I engaged?	Mostly digital engagement with discussions with GW staff conducted on their office site – Ecology Park	In the park, at their meeting rooms at the Birch Community Centre and online workshops	All virtually (due to COVID-19)	Mostly virtually (due to Covid), although I met up with a small number of participants/ research partners face-to-face
How I engaged?	I spoke to volunteers via phone or online via their social media platform or email	Attended group meetings, park events and virtual workshop	Online meetings - interviews with participants and a focus group with MUD's members	Online meetings or phone calls with museum staff and participant interviews

Table 10: Overview of case study findings

These case studies allowed me to understand what environmental action looks like across multiple scales and whether creativity is intentionally or unintentionally used to encourage or sustain engagement and interaction with UGS.

### 3.7.ii Surveys

Surveys, useful in both quantitative and qualitative research, offer a broad perspective on opinions and behaviours but require careful development to avoid misleading results (Neuman, 2014; Leavy, 2017). This research involved creating a survey with Groundwork GM to explore environmental action in Greater Manchester (GM), collecting both data types for a comprehensive view. Attention was paid to question clarity, avoiding jargon and leading questions to ensure easy comprehension and logical progression (Fowler Jr, 2013; Ruel, Wagner III and Gillespie, 2015; Leavy, 2017).

This was a research project initiated by Groundwork GM, but with limited internal capacity, I volunteered to conduct the research with them on the basis that I could present the key findings within my thesis. We shared overall objectives regarding what data they wanted and what I wanted and discussed how we could collaborate. Ultimately, they took findings from my research to provide evidence for their successive funding bids, and I was able to gain insights which shaped the structure of my thesis. Details about the survey are shown in Table 11.

Survey details	
Survey type	Online, shared via email and social media
When it was active	25th July 2019 to 30th August 2019
Targeted demographic	Friends groups, environmentally focused groups and supporting organisations
Responses	148 (94 volunteers and 54 organisation staff)

*Table 11: Survey details*

The survey aimed to understand the demographic and network of volunteers in UGS through responses from various environmental volunteers and organisations. Online methods were chosen for efficiency despite acknowledging limitations like digital literacy and access (Neuman, 2014). This collaboration broadened the understanding of environmental action. It provided foundational data for more detailed research, overcoming the inherent limitations of surveys by highlighting the discrepancy between reported actions and actual behaviour (Neuman, 2014).

Initially, two surveys were planned, but it was decided that one focused on environmental action would better serve the research goals. Conducted over the summer of 2019, a period chosen for its likely high activity in environmental volunteering, the survey aimed to delve into the participation in green spaces

within GM, addressing the 'what', 'how', and 'why' of involvement. This approach allowed for the collection of baseline data, informing case studies and supporting Groundwork GM's funding efforts while also shaping the thesis structure.

### **3.7.iii Participant Observation**

The research initially planned to use observational studies and Participatory Action Research (PAR) to explore UGS from various perspectives. This proved difficult during the lockdowns as activity was paused for all cases. Nevertheless, some observations at seven sites within the 2.5km radius of where I was based were conducted. This radius was considered for ease of access and was facilitated by cycling, aligning with Douglas's view on maintaining human-scale perspectives (2018). These observations focused on UGS users and activities rather than identified individuals and aimed to generate grounded theories through a "logic of discovery" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Agar, 1986; Jorgensen, 1989).

Reflecting on positionality, "the researcher is living for an extended period in the community [they are] studying, [their] personal life is inextricably mixed within [their] research" (Whyte, 1993:279). After observing the processes and relationships taking place over an extended period of time, I often became an active 'typical' participant involved in peoples' everyday lives such that I was granted access to their social worlds (Jorgensen, 1989). In this sense, I was able to, as Jorgenson explains, "generate practical and theoretical truths about human life grounded in the realities of daily existence" (1989:14). This immersive approach helped develop case studies with Groundwork GM, FoBP, MUD, and MM, covering various action levels. Below are some sketches taken on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020 during participant observation (Figure 6) and some field notes 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 (Figure 7).



Figure 6: Participant Observation Sketches (author's own, 2020)

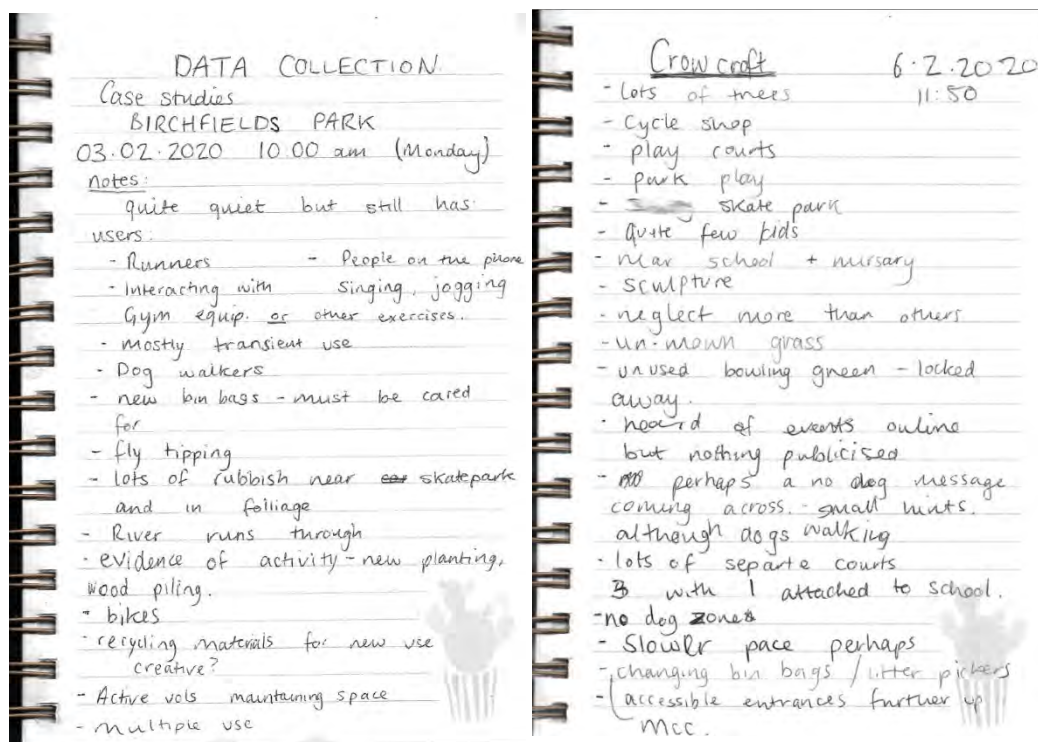


Figure 7: Fields notes from participant observation (author's own, 2020).

Observations provided insights into UGS usage, engagement, and demographics, supporting case study site selection. Despite its insights, the subjective nature of observations necessitated additional methods for a comprehensive view and reduced bias. PAR, synonymous with community-based research, was chosen for its capacity to foster stakeholder relationships and instigate change, emphasising its social, participatory, and emancipatory

qualities (Leavy, 2017; Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998; Robson and McCartan, 2016).

From the observational studies, I delved into active participation within the case studies, aiming to address local issues and leverage knowledge for improvements. Despite lockdown challenges, I engaged in various activities, including volunteering with FoBP and Groundwork, eventually leading to a job opportunity. My involvement with FoBP developed as I became the community engagement officer, enhancing my understanding of group dynamics while maintaining transparency about my dual research and personal interests. This role facilitated direct engagement and recruitment for focus group participation.

Despite the pandemic's restrictions, I followed PAR principles, focusing on a reflective cycle of planning, acting, observing, and re-planning (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998). I integrated observational and action research to embrace the recursive nature of awareness expansion, as described by Taylor (2018) and Marshall (1999, 2016). This "Living Life as Inquiry" method emphasised ongoing, context-aware exploration and necessitated a close, flexible collaboration with participants despite potential long-term challenges related to research timelines.

### **3.7.iv Focus Groups**

Focus groups are used to gather diverse perspectives by discussing specific topics and capturing individual views whilst recognising the reflexive threat of researcher bias (Yin, 2018; Krueger and Casey, 2015). To ensure a broad spectrum of insights was collected, participants ranged from typical to 'extreme users' of spaces, with focus groups conducted last to minimise bias (Kelley and Littman, 2005; Brown, 2009; Evans, 2010). These discussions contributed to developing a creative engagement framework for UGS, primarily focusing on the 'before' stage of decision-making to gather an in-depth understanding of the issues from participants' perspectives (Krueger and Casey, 2015).

Focus groups were useful for gathering insight into motivation and engagement within UGS. Critiques of focus groups include potential power dynamics skewing results towards dominant voices, the possibility of non-representative views due to conformity pressure, and challenges in generating reliable, replicable outcomes (Yin, 2018; Krueger and Casey, 2015). Participants might also modify their responses to align with desired self-perceptions. To counteract these limitations, this research employed multiple methods and strategies.

For FoBP, the focus groups were conducted online (the first one had 6 participants, and the second had 4), with MIRO boards facilitating collaborative, real-time engagement. The online focus groups allowed for more

FoBP members to join without the need to meet in-person which is often challenging to organise. For example, some members are not always in Manchester, with some living part-time in London or Argentina. Notably, online focus groups risk losing the nuanced communication cues and the depth of interaction found in face-to-face settings, potentially affecting the richness of the collected data (Morgan, 2019).

They allowed participants to contribute through various mediums, such as photos or written comments, ensuring inclusivity and mitigating direct speech pressure. This approach aimed at maximising participation diversity and minimising the influence of dominant voices or individual self-censorship. An example of participant contribution during an initial activity is shown in Figure 8.

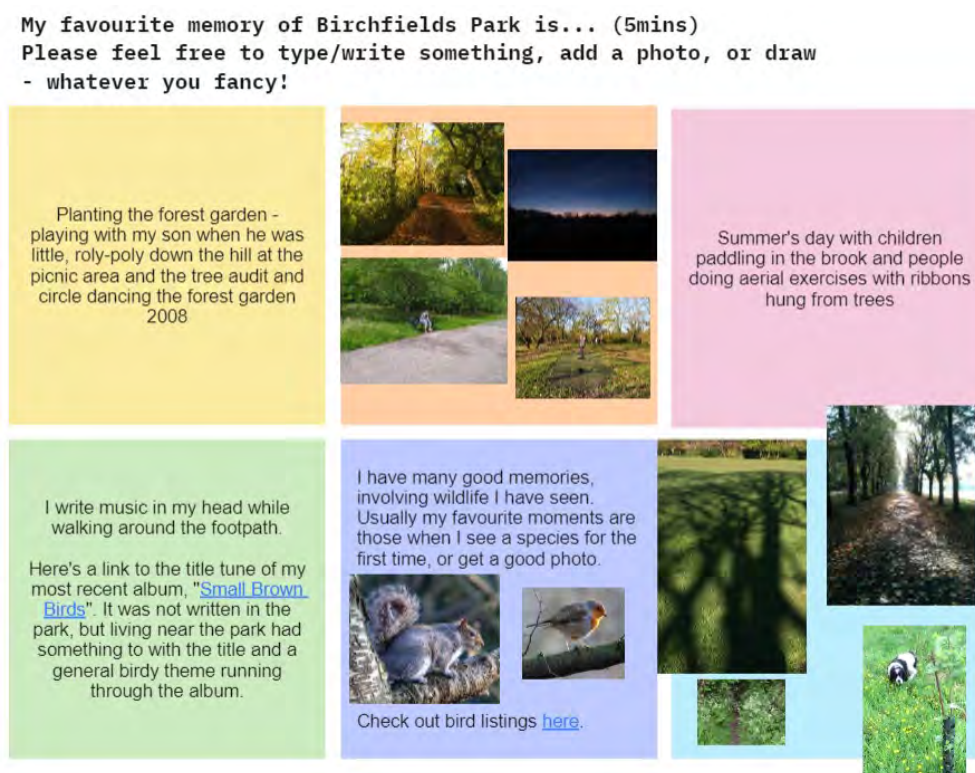


Figure 8: Participant contributions with a focus group (authors own, 2021)

In the focus groups, discussions paralleled the semi-structured interviews, complemented by a community mapping exercise with FoBP to elucidate their connections with UGS decision-makers. This exercise aligned with Lydon's (2003) concept that community mapping should be conducted by the community to reflect its values, assets, and visions. This definition resonates with the design expression previously mentioned of designing *with* people and not *for* them. Initial conversations with environmental action leaders or facilitators, including the chair FoBP and MUD's directors, provided insights into stakeholder relationships and volunteer demographics. These steps were crucial for understanding interrelations among participants and enhancing

collective awareness for mutual benefits, setting a foundation for effective focus group dynamics.

### 3.8 Phase Three

The final phase of research involved co-producing the creative engagement framework (CEF) with participants to assess its impact and applicability. Participant suggestions were crucial in enhancing connections and the stewardship of UGS, embodying a key principle of co-production by ensuring outcomes are evaluated and refined through feedback (Durose and Richardson, 2016). The framework integrated insights across all research methods, offering actionable recommendations to foster engagement at various UGS decision-making levels. Further research is needed to test the co-produced recommendations' effectiveness over time, testing their implementation with both past and future participants.

#### 3.8.i Co-producing the framework

This research developed a co-produced framework to enhance engagement and stewardship in UGS through creative activities, aligning with the aim to forge stronger connections between people, places, and decision-makers. This outcome, supporting Objective 4 (*To bridge the gap between decision-makers and those taking action, enabling a framework to increase creative engagement in UGS*), emerged from a flexible research design that adapted to findings and validated the framework's relevance. A thorough literature review, integrated into Chapter 2, section 2.6, ensured the framework's innovation and helped to define its function.

Role-playing was identified during interviews as a valuable tool for improving decision-making processes, echoing Young and Rosenberg (1949) and Kumar (2012) in their ability to foster empathy and innovation. Although the pandemic limited its direct application within this research, role-playing was recommended within the framework to enhance UGS engagement and decision-making.

The co-production process underscored creativity as a collaborative act, as highlighted by Duchamp's theory of the 'creative act,' which proposes that creation involves both the artist and the observer in a meaningful exchange (Duchamp, Sanouillet and Peterson, 1975). This underscores the spectator's role in interpreting and giving life to creative outputs, emphasising the importance of collaborative interaction in the creative process and its significance in bridging gaps between outcomes and audiences.

In this study, 'creative acts' within focus groups facilitated unique insights into environmental action beyond traditional questioning. Techniques like sharing photographs or songs allowed participants to express opinions in diverse ways (see activity in Figure 8). The CEF emerged from these interactions, with my



role as the 'creator' and participants enhancing the framework by aligning it with their experiences, echoing Duchamp's concept of the creative act involving both creator and observer (Duchamp, Sanouillet, and Peterson, 1975). This approach also mirrored Sanders and Stappers' (2008) co-design principles, advocating for collaborative design processes.

The research utilised validation interviews and findings from data collection to innovate and tailor the framework to different needs. It aimed to create a universally beneficial framework, validated by participants from various influence levels, from volunteer groups to institutions, aligning with broader co-production/co-creative practices (Munthe-Kaas, 2015; Ansell and Torfing, 2021). The ultimate goal would be to enhance future policy and public engagement in environmental and social spaces through further validation.

Sections 3.5 to 3.8 have detailed the primary data collection methods, their rationale, execution, and alignment with research aims. The following section outlines the data analysis process, from preparation to validation and review of findings, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research's methodological approach.

### 3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis enables the use of empirical evidence to make broad observations about society (Neuman, 2014). He also indicates that although qualitative analysis does not rely on the same statistical methods as quantitative analysis, it remains equally logical and efficient, albeit through different processes. Typically, analysis is built upon four main features (ibid):

- Inferring or using reasoning to interpret the data into some conclusion.
- Making the data public and accessible.
- Comparing the data and seeking patterns, trends, similarities and differences.
- Avoiding error and striving for validity and truth within the data.

What makes qualitative analysis different to quantitative analysis is that it is less standardised, as the researcher begins to look for patterns in the research process through iteration (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research can be guided by the formation of early identified patterns, be more flexible when interpreting findings and experiment with new concepts and theories (Neuman, 2014). In turn,

Qualitative explanations tend to be rich in detail, sensitive to context, and capable of showing the complex processes or sequences of social life... The goal is to develop an

explanation that organizes specific details into a coherent picture (Neuman, 2014:343).

Data analysis involves transformation, turning extensive data into a coherent narrative through interpretation, a process that is both imaginative and speculative (Denzin, 2001; Gibbs, 2018). Evans developed a framework outlining the standard procedures of qualitative data analysis, as shown in Table 12:

<b>General procedures in data analysis</b>	<b>Qualitative procedures</b>
Preparing the data for analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organising documents and visualising data</li> <li>▪ Transcribing text</li> <li>▪ Preparing the data for analysis</li> </ul>
Exploring the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reading through the data</li> <li>▪ Writing memos</li> <li>▪ Developing qualitative codebook</li> </ul>
Analysing the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coding the data</li> <li>▪ Assigning labels to codes</li> <li>▪ Grouping codes into themes (or categories)</li> <li>▪ Interrelating themes (or categories) or abstracting to smaller set of themes</li> </ul>
Representing the data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Representing findings in discussion of themes or categories</li> <li>▪ Presenting visual models, figures, tables</li> </ul>
Validating the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Using researcher, participant, and reviewer standards</li> <li>▪ Employing validation strategies (e.g. member checking, triangulation, peer review)</li> </ul>

Table 12: Procedures in qualitative data analysis (Evans, 2010:113 adapted from Creswell & Clark, 2007)

These procedures provided a clear trajectory for analysis and helped to guide this research's approach. Although research can be explained in a linear path, it is often a matter of sorting through vast amounts of data, which can initially be confusing to interpret. Only after analysing it all or 'living with the data' does a sense of logic or patterns start to emerge (Whyte, 1973:279). Table 12's procedures structure the following sections, detailing the research's analytical process.

### 3.9.i Preparing the data

Data collection encompassed a range of formats, including survey statistics and quotes, audio recordings and selective transcriptions from semi-structured interviews and focus groups, photographs and field notes. Detailed notes and summaries after each data collection method were compiled to facilitate the analysis, streamlining the process by contextualising findings (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

The analysis involved identifying recurring themes from the interview and focus group transcripts, focusing on text that resonated with the research aim. Bryman (2012) notes the inefficiency of full transcriptions when portions may

not be relevant. This approach helps to speed up the analysis process. However, caution is needed with partial transcriptions as the meaningful context of the data could be omitted (Gibbs, 2018). This transcription choice therefore becomes a decision for each researcher as to whether to include speech verbatim, mannerisms, or opt for a more polished rendition (Leavy, 2017). In this thesis, initial transcriptions included all mannerisms, but irrelevant utterances were later omitted to maintain narrative focus. Additionally, visual materials and field notes (e.g. the MIRO board data) were analysed and summarised, ensuring all data contributed cohesively to the research.

### **3.9.ii Exploring the data**

The analysis of text-based data, including semi-structured interviews, involved identifying themes and tracking specific terms or phrase frequency using notes, memos, and a codebook developed in Excel for organisation (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Primary codes were derived from literature, empirical studies, and initial observations. Secondary codes were then added later and categorised into etic (driven by literature) and emic (driven by participant discussions) to balance literature and participant-derived insights (Gibbs, 2018; Robson and McCartan, 2016).

The codebook in Appendix 5 details specific discussions with participants linked to the derived themes. Steps were taken to preserve anonymity, with personal details redacted and replaced by black boxes. The codebook, tested against interview recordings, allowed for flexibility in incorporating new codes. Annotations during playback highlighted relevant themes, with a 'findings' column added to note patterns, contrasts, and initial insights. Critical reflection on the themes included asking questions such as: Who is mentioning these themes? What do these themes mean to the individual (including myself)? And 'so what'? The latter question aims to generate new insights (Evans, 2010; Gibbs, 2018).

For the other methods, I chose to part-transcribe discussions and quotes were pulled out and presented in the thesis. The themes from interviews were then explored in case studies, with additional themes considered after all data collection. Thematic analysis was used across all methods to provide an overarching narrative about environmental action in Manchester and creativity's role in promoting engagement in UGS.

### **3.9.iii Analysing the data**

The extensive data collection in this study was organised through coding, a method that structured unorganised data by categorising text into themes relevant to the research questions and concepts from participants to create a narrative framework (Silverman, 2013; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Coding

facilitated both structuring data and examining code relationships, allowing for the identification and exploration of emergent themes and their interconnections (Gibbs, 2018).

Grounded theory informed the coding process, using open, constant comparison and line-by-line techniques to minimise bias (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Gibbs, 2018). The coding process was meticulously conducted through open, axial, and selective coding stages, as described by Corbin and Strauss (2015) and Gibbs (2018).

- Open coding – where codes emerge through reading reflectively.
- Axial coding – once categorised, the codes are refined and linked together.
- Selective coding – after a central theme is identified and ties codes and theory together, a narrative begins to emerge.

This structured approach helped to filter key themes from 13 interview transcripts and case study quotes, linking them to literature and focusing the analysis to avoid redundancy (Michlewski, 2008; Evans, 2010). The meticulous coding strategy ensured effective navigation of the large dataset, directly addressing the research aims while cautiously reflecting on my own and participants' preconceptions (Gibbs, 2018).

#### **3.9.iv Representing the data**

Data analysis involved mapping interrelated themes to understand connections and variances across concepts and methodologies, emphasising the importance of localised knowledge in UGS development through thematic coding (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). This method documents participant experiences and examines societal influences on perceptions (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

The analysis covered UGS Stewardship, Engagement, and Creative Practices, identifying five emergent main themes: Motivation, Access, Communication, Support, and Openness (MASCO). This thematic approach, particularly suitable for participatory research, helps to communicate findings to various stakeholders despite potential challenges in synthesising broad data sets. Robson and McCartan (2016) outlined five phases of thematic coding analysis (shown in Table 13) that facilitated this research's coding process and enabled effective organisation and interpretation of the data.

Phases	Analysis procedures
1. <i>Familiarising yourself with your data</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Take time to immerse fully in the data</li> <li>- Actively (re)listen and review the data to identify patterns</li> <li>- Take notes and make memos</li> </ul>

2. <i>Generating initial codes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify the patterns and themes that repeatedly occur</li> <li>- Contextualise themes - Note why they are interesting and why they may be important</li> <li>- If in doubt, include themes</li> <li>- Codes can be descriptive (e.g. behaviours, events, activities, relationships) or theoretically oriented</li> </ul>
3. <i>Identifying themes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sort through and cluster the codes</li> <li>- Refine themes</li> <li>- Create sub-themes where possible</li> <li>- Try to connect themes– visual representation can be useful – attempt a thematic map</li> </ul>
4. <i>Constructing thematic networks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formalise the themes and their interconnectivity</li> <li>- Ensure the themes reflect the collected data and that the data support the themes</li> </ul>
5. <i>Integration and interpretation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Networks are a tool in analysis, not the analysis itself</i></li> <li>- Take notice of patterns - ensure the patterns are plausible</li> <li>- Look for similarities and differences across the themes</li> <li>- Build a <i>logical chain of evidence</i></li> </ul>

Table 13: Phases of Thematic Coding Analysis (adapted from Robson and McCartan, 2016:469-477)

Audio recordings were securely stored in password-protected university-approved systems, with transcriptions made for thematic analysis and saved similarly. The themes identified were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet, while photographs and notes helped to enrich the narrative, illustrated in Figures 9 and 10. The researcher's task was therefore to present the data's story compellingly and ensure its analyses were trustworthy (Robson and McCartan, 2016).



Figure 9: Friends of Birchfields Park tree walk event (author's own, 2021)

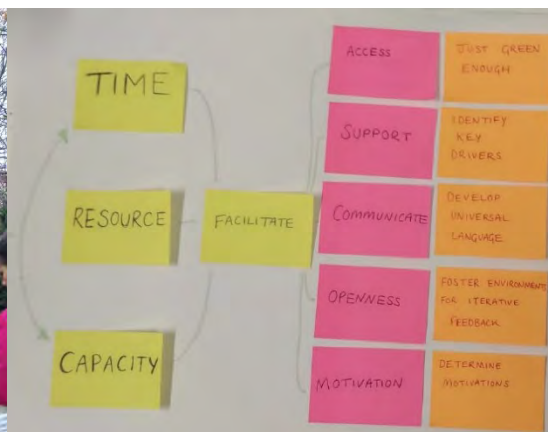


Figure 10: Initial notes taken during analysis

Results were displayed using tables, visual mappings, or mind maps to clarify connections within environmental or social actions, aiding in pattern recognition and theme comprehension, as seen in Figure 10. Visual aids, reading, and note-taking helped organise themes into tables describing their attributes and roles in participatory research. This process identified five key

themes (MASCO) that contributed to developing the CEF, which seeks to enhance UGS engagement through creative practices.

Direct quotes and examples of action were contextualised within the literature and helped to forge a comprehensive knowledge base (Evans, 2010; Gibbs, 2018). A critical and iterative approach integrated varied perspectives, leading to a reflective framework (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). This analysis method relied on visualisation techniques to pinpoint themes and derive insights, engaging in concept clustering, comparisons, and the formulation of an evidence-backed narrative (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Evans, 2010).

### 3.9.v Validating the data

Reflecting on the validity of data collected and the resultant findings is vital to all research. This is achieved by demonstrating the quality of data analysis (Robson and McCartan, 2016). These authors present a comprehensive list of tips for assessing the validity of research findings (Table 14):

<b>Assessing data quality</b>	<b>Representativeness:</b> Achieved through random sampling, triangulation, data display matrices, and enhancing weakly sampled cases. The key is to avoid personal biases to prevent misrepresentation.
	<b>Researcher Effects:</b> Acknowledging and mitigating the researcher's influence on the case and vice versa.
	<b>Triangulation:</b> Employing multiple methods and sources to contextualise and verify findings with diverse evidence.
	<b>Weighting the Evidence:</b> Prioritising firsthand or directly observed data, acknowledging that some data are more robust than others.
<b>Testing patterns</b>	<b>Outliers:</b> It is important to consider outliers as they may highlight exceptions or extremes, offering valuable insights.
	<b>Extreme Cases:</b> Atypical situations or individuals that provide unique data perspectives.
	<b>Surprises:</b> Exploring opportunities to potentially revise theories.
	<b>Negative Evidence:</b> Actively seeking information that contradicts current beliefs to ensure the novelty and reliability of findings.
<b>Testing explanations</b>	<b>If-Then Tests:</b> Exploring potential relationships to understand the dynamics within the data.
	<b>False Relationships:</b> Identifying and ruling out third factors that may explain apparent relationships.
	<b>Replicating Findings:</b> Demonstrating dependability through repetition in different contexts or data sets - another form of triangulation.
	<b>Rival Explanations:</b> Considering alternative explanations to avoid premature conclusions.
	<b>Feedback from Informants:</b> Validating findings through 'member checking' and confirming insights with participants, ensuring research findings are communicable so those involved can evaluate the research.

*Table 14: Assessing the quality of qualitative data analysis (adapted from Robson and McCartan, 2016:479-480)*

Table 14 provides an overview of how research can be validated. It highlights the use of certain quality assurance measures; some used more than others in this research. Efforts to ensure replicability, self-reflection on researcher

positionality, and attention to outliers were crucial for understanding diverse perspectives and challenging initial assumptions. The iterative research process allowed for adaptation to new findings and maintained an open dialogue for participant feedback, enhancing validity and exploring alternative explanations.

Validity was assessed through participant interviews to ensure that findings accurately reflected the research's focus areas (Robson and McCartan, 2016). The 'member checking' process was used within this research to assess the framework's validity with prospective users. Four interviews were conducted with repeat participants across all the case studies (n=8), including two members of Groundwork GM, three members of FoBP, one member of MUD and two staff at MM to comment on the validity of:

- The framework's key areas of focus
- The conceptual model of the framework – taking it from theory to practice.

Validation interviews, part-transcribed and analysed as previously described, used semi-structured formats and visual aids to facilitate discussion on the framework. This process identified both supporting and contradictory evidence, confirming the analysis's accuracy and embracing a comprehensive view of real-world perspectives (Evans, 2010; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the research design, data analysis and validation process. Through Research through Design (RtD), this inductive research validated recommendations for improved creative engagement and stewardship within UGS and helped to contextualise existing theories (see Lenzholzer, Duchhart and Koh, 2013; Klemm, Lenzholzer and van den Brink, 2017). The emerging and overlapping themes throughout this research contributed to enhancing connections to, and stewardship of, UGS by developing a Creative Engagement Framework (CEF) for decision-making. This was achieved by identifying the obstacles to public engagement in UGS and uncovering the potential of increasing public engagement through creative activities.

## CHAPTER 4- DATA FINDINGS

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research findings, analysing significant data from two primary methods: interviews with 13 professionals and experts specialising in participation/engagement (conducted in 2020) and four case studies on urban greenspace (UGS) and environmental action (developed from 2021 to 2023). These methods align with the *Living Life as Inquiry* methodology (Marshall, 1999, 2016) outlined in the research design chapter. The analysis integrates interview insights and case study examples to explore environmental action within selected UGS in Manchester, presenting an ecology of action across diverse organisations with varying levels of influence, including volunteer groups, social enterprises, environmental organisations, and museums.

Interviews revealed key insights into UGS engagement and creative facilitation, serving as a foundation to explore environmental action's nuances. Case studies provided practical examples, allowing for an examination of the themes identified in interviews. The research identifies five main themes—Motivation, Access, Support, Communication, and Openness—directly responding to the aim of investigating how creative engagement encourages sustainable environmental action within UGS.

The chapter begins by summarising the data collection methods, followed by an analysis organised around the identified themes, offering a narrative on environmental action and creative engagement in Manchester. This organisation facilitates a discussion that not only reflects on the research's aims and objectives but also highlights the importance of the five themes in developing creative engagement initiatives. In turn, it provides a comprehensive view of the findings and their implications for sustainable environmental action.

### 4.1 A Brief Overview of Findings

This section provides an overview of the two main research methods, followed by a summary of the key findings. From Section 4.3 onwards, detailed analyses based on these findings are presented, utilising the analytical framework structured around the identified themes.

#### *4.1.i Interviews*

This research gathered opinions about UGS and creative engagement from multiple perspectives. Table 15 demonstrates the variety of interviewees included in this research along with their profession. Notably, P4 was not



included in the 13 interviews as the interview never came to fruition. However, their participant number was already allocated, and consent was attained.

Participant No.	Profession
P1	Environmental Organisation worker – Communities
P2	Environmental Organisation worker – Communities
P3	Designer/Researcher
P4	[Interview not completed]
P5	Community Organiser
P6	Environmental Charity Worker – Communities
P7	Youth Worker
P8	Human Geography Academic
P9	Artist/Poet
P10	Artist/Environmental Activist
P11	Artist/Creative Consultant
P12	Manchester City Council Worker – Neighbourhoods
P13	Manchester City Council Landscape Architect
P14	Artist/Curator/Academic

Table 15: Interview Participant information

The findings of the interviews demonstrated the potential of creative approaches to explore the complexities of participation. This research has found that it is crucial to challenge conventional forms of engagement, such as surveys and town hall consultations, as they can lead to exhaustion and complacency among participants (P1, 2, and 3). Furthermore, it is important that creativity should not be employed for its own sake. Instead, it should be considered a thoughtful evaluation to determine the most effective approach for each project.

Overall, the interviews indicated that collaboration and collective action must strike a balance and develop people's skills, ensuring freedom of knowledge and opportunities to contribute. This facilitates broader and more impactful outcomes. Given the significant disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need for universities and cultural organisations to actively learn how to engage people effectively, as the landscape of engagement has already undergone substantial changes (Ugolini et al., 2020).

Through collecting the experiences of interviewees across multiple sectors, I was able to understand the makeup of decision-making, facilitation and engagement from numerous perspectives in Manchester. Their insights provided me with a 'how-to guide for creative engagement', a way to streamline these findings into a practical and tangible tool for others to follow suit. In turn, the inclusion of more creative approaches to engagement can help to facilitate the exploration of the 'fuzzy grey areas' of participation.

The research revealed the intricacies of orchestrating successful engagement or participatory projects across sectors. Many facilitators interviewed indicated

that achieving success should not necessarily be so complex, provided one can effectively reach the intended audience. However, this endeavour is not without its intricacies. Researching the potential audience and establishing trust are time-consuming tasks that need to be carefully practised. Moreover, engagement often gets entangled in numerous bureaucratic processes, which inhibit creativity and strain the available capacity for those organising participation efforts. The challenge is compounded by limited funding and austerity measures, making it increasingly arduous to maintain sustainable communication channels and secure funding to support the initiatives. Balancing knowledge, capacity and resource emerges as crucial dependent factors influencing the feasibility and effectiveness of participation initiatives.

The investigation focused on the perceptions and practices of public engagement across various perspectives, specifically in the context of UGS. This was centred around conducting interviews with diverse participants, including academics, council members, organisation staff, artists, designers, youth workers, and activists. The aim was to comprehensively understand the motivations, challenges, and creative approaches related to engaging communities in environmental and participatory initiatives. To achieve this, guiding questions were developed for the interviews, prioritising open conversations without imposing predetermined themes.

13 interviews were conducted to answer Objective 1: *to understand the current perceptions and practices of public engagement from multiple perspectives*. The research aimed to identify how creative approaches can foster sustainable environmental action in UGS. The analysis of the interviews involved creating a codebook (see Appendix 5) to identify themes and codes in the transcribed interview data. Hence, primary and secondary codes were established. The findings were organised into five overarching themes that emerged from coding the interviews and case studies: Motivation, Access, Support, Communication, and Openness (MASCO). These themes were closely related and overlapped with the broader research topics, providing a means to understand the complexities of engagement in UGS. These themes helped to understand the motivations behind people's involvement with public participation and engagement in UGS (answering Objective 2: *to understand the motivations behind people's involvement with public participation and engagement in UGS*). They also provided a framework for determining whether creative approaches could influence engagement when considering these themes in sustainable environmental action (addressing Objective 3: *to examine whether creative engagement can encourage people to engage more with UGS*).

#### 4.1.ii Case Studies

During the process of this research, picking up on a variety of coincidences of conversations, activities and projects surrounding my area of interest, I began uncovering insights into actions taking place across Manchester. I completed 4 case studies as part of this inquiry. Table 16 shows an overview of the case details and the related research questions they sought to answer:

Case Study 1	Case Study 2
<p><b>Working with:</b> Groundwork Greater Manchester - <i>Organisation</i></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Environmental Volunteering Survey - identifying support needs and barriers</p> <p><b>Related research question(s):</b> What factors facilitate empowerment and long-lasting public engagement?</p>	<p><b>Working with:</b> Friends of Birchfields Park - <i>Voluntary Group</i></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Community Engagement - action research</p> <p><b>Related research question(s):</b> What are the current obstacles affecting motivation for public engagement?  What role can co-production play in creative public participation?</p>
Case Study 3	Case Study 4
<p><b>Working with:</b> Manchester Urban Diggers - <i>Social Enterprise</i></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Dig for Victory - valuing community gardens</p> <p><b>Related research question(s):</b> To what extent can creative engagement approaches affect decision-making?  Can creative engagement in UGS encourage more action? If so, how?</p>	<p><b>Working with:</b> Manchester Museum - <i>Institution</i></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Building Ecological Action - mapping action and networks</p> <p><b>Related research question(s):</b> How can relationships between people and policy be improved to achieve informed decision-making?  Who and what are the catalysts for environmental action within UGS?</p>

Table 16: Case study details

Details of the case studies are presented as individual projects, each providing context relevant to my research aim and objectives. These include both collaborative projects with multiple partners and my own data collection, highlighting the synergy between independent environmental action and this research. Specifically, they showcase real-life examples of environmental action in Manchester and emphasise the role of creative engagement. This

approach made the research more representative and realistic of the types of environmental action occurring and not a constructed or prescriptive study. I thematically analysed these case studies to address my research questions and contribute to the broader field of study. This approach enriched the narrative of environmental action and ensured that the research was grounded in collaborative and practical examples.

Overall, these case studies allowed me to understand the broad context through which environmental action is taking place across Manchester. In turn, providing me with an evidence base that addresses the gap between decision-makers and those taking environmental action – enabling a framework to increase creative engagement in UGS (Objective 4: *To bridge the gap between decision-makers and those taking action, enabling a framework to increase creative engagement in UGS*). The following sections provide an overview of the key findings from each case:

### ***Groundwork GM (Greater Manchester)***

Groundwork GM is an environmental charity based in Trafford that supports green initiatives and delivers climate-focused projects across Greater Manchester. This case has provided insight into understanding the motivations (Objective 2) of those who participate or engage with their local greenspaces. A survey was conducted in 2019 which invited responses from environmental volunteers and organisations supporting volunteers. Overall, the survey gathered 148 responses with ages ranging from 15-82; 94 respondents were volunteers, and 54 were members of organisations. The results from this survey were presented to the Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO) in 2020 as part of the Research Networking meeting (Walker, 2020).

Understanding the motivations of those currently engaged was useful to see if there is the possibility of replicating certain aspects to motivate others. For example, in this case, supporting people ‘on the ground’ to host their own events by promoting them. Plus, it can help to reproduce the most common way others began volunteering – seeing others doing something and then sparking a conversation or interaction. This may not always be successful but there is an increased likelihood of interest if an activity is present in the space. This also relates to Objective 3 as the findings alluded to a need for a more streamlined and cohesive system to engage more people. Creating such a system would include some level of creativity in web design and co-design, so one could argue that creativity can be used to engage more people with UGS.

*Key findings:* Groundwork GM have gathered support needs for environmental volunteers across GM. Collaboratively, it was established that there is a need for a cohesive communication and support system through which people can easily access information about opportunities and find out who to talk to.

Improving recognition for voluntary work is seen as a fundamental factor for sustaining long-lasting engagement and environmental action.

### *Friends of Birchfields Park (FoBP)*

FoBP are a voluntary group working in Birchfields Park, Manchester, to care for the park and help with decision-making and the park management process. This was the longest case study I completed as part of this thesis. I began by visiting greenspaces around central Manchester in 2018. Due to its location and ease of access, I was curious about my local park and began observing Birchfields Park on a daily/weekly basis. In this case, I aimed to conduct action research to primarily address Objective 2 of understanding people's motivations for environmental action. I took a sketchbook and illustrated some observations about the space: what it has, who uses it, maintains it, and how people interact. I found out about FoBP through signage around the park. I then joined the group and went along to their meetings. These meetings gave me insight into who cares for Birchfields, how the group developed and their relationships with the state, residents and other users. It was important to develop a relationship with the friends to uncover the motivations for their stewardship toward their local park. Furthermore, what are the challenges they face with their volunteering?

*Key findings:* The friends want to develop their networks and encourage more engagement within the park. To achieve this, they want to have more transparency, support, and communication from those linked to the council and neighbouring groups and communities. FoBP want to ensure that key members and influencers of the park attend and contribute to its development. These findings help to identify the current obstacles and (de)motivational factors of engagement. Additionally, it begins to highlight a gap between those making decisions and those taking action. The sustainability of action was also a key concern of the friends as there is limited succession planning in place. Therefore, efforts made by several members over the past 20 years or more may not be sustainable moving forward.

### *Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD)*

MUD are a Community Interest Company (CIC) that creates gardening spaces where people from different backgrounds can connect, interact with nature and grow food. Dig for Victory was a research project completed as part of the Collaboration Labs programme at the University of Manchester and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (Ling, Oncini and Walker, 2021). This project intended to explore and provide evidence of the social, environmental and economic benefits of MUD's work across Manchester. Within the team, I collated evidence from their volunteers, further partners, and metrics regarding the impact of their work on climate resilience. MUD has become a prime example of how cities should work together to address localised and

more sustainable food production. This case study was therefore an opportunity to address Objective 2 by exploring the work of MUD through understanding motivations for:

1. Running an environmentally focused social enterprise in Manchester;
2. Volunteering in their gardens across the city;
3. What approaches they have taken to develop relationships and partnerships;
4. How they manage the political and economic factors of their site-specific environmental action.

It also provided evidence for how to use creative approaches to communicate their work and benefits to multiple audiences, aligning with Objective 3.

*Key findings:* MUD are keen to demonstrate the value of their work to enable more sustainable practices and access further support with funding and financial sustainability. There is a need to collect continual measurable data to contribute to an evidence base when applying for funding. Furthermore, they seek improved communication channels with power entities to ensure projects are carried out and there is capacity to continue their models sustainably.

#### ***Manchester Museum (MM)***

MM is an institutionally affiliated museum that champions the relationships between cultures and sustainability. With growing interest in how institutions can respond to the climate and ecological crises, the museum promotes collaborative working, cooperation and collective action. The title of this project was 'Building Ecological Action', and it sought to map the networks of action that were taking place in Manchester. Conversations with activists, students, ecologists, educators, researchers, and community members revealed the important work already taking place across the city and the motivations behind their action (linking to Objective 2). However, as it stood, there was a limited amount of accessible information about the recent and ongoing work. For example, there was no clear understanding and documentation of the range of skills, experiences, and resources held by individuals and organisations involved in this action and the impacts and changes such work has achieved. This case study provided an opportunity to explore Objective 4: the gaps between those with power and influence in decision-making (the museum) and those taking action.

*Key findings:* There was limited connectivity across action groups, and the majority of them need further support in accessing funding. The museum's response was a commitment to becoming a hub for community action and positioning itself as a resource for building collective action. Findings also indicated a need to ensure continuity with any intervention/ project with the

museum. A continued presence of support is necessary to bring together projects and community engagement and minimise one-off projects.

## 4.2 Theme Development

The interviews provided a detailed overview of the current practices and experiences in public creative engagement. Direct quotes from the interviews and notes from the case studies were divided into the five themes identified through interview coding (Gibbs, 2018; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Patterns began to emerge and consequently, the themes were identified, forming an analytical framework to organise and discuss the data findings. The five themes are shown in Table 17:

<b>MOTIVATION</b>	Reasoning behind people's interest in urban greenspaces (UGS) and the drivers for environmental action.
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>	Access to space, knowledge, skills, funding, time and resources, as well as equal access to opportunities to influence decisions and engage with space.
<b>SUPPORT</b>	How support affects action and how, through understanding motivation, one can begin to understand why people engage and want to be involved to improve support.
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Actively listening to people, responding and working together efficiently. Additionally, how communication can strengthen relationships – e.g. volunteers and the council.
<b>OPENNESS</b>	Engaging with people with the ability to be open and flexible to change or adapt. Furthermore, taking onboard emerging factors that may not have been considered in the first instance.

*Table 17: Key themes of data analysis*

This table illustrates the five key themes of engagement: Motivation, Access, Support, Communication and Openness (MASCO). Motivation remained a key theme throughout this research. As an initial focus within Objective 2, motivation became intrinsic to multiple stakeholders' experiences, so it was deemed essential to include it as a theme through analysis. The following sections (4.1.i-v) provide further details about each theme within the context of the research findings.

### 4.2.i Motivation

Having a sense of presence in UGS when conducting any form of engagement was important to most interviewees. They remarked that where people can see a tangible positive change in a space through their involvement, they would likely feel motivated to continue and develop a sense of pride and belonging

towards the space. This can easily change; however, if motivation is not maintained effectively, enthusiasm can drop, and communication channels begin to break down. Harnessing motivation over time can be very beneficial to those running projects as people can see through the ingenuousness of people coming into their local space to change it for them, not with them.

#### **4.2.ii Access**

The most common findings were that there is inequality of access to UGS juxtaposed with the hugely beneficial impacts on health and well-being. Additionally, there are barriers to people finding opportunities or navigating processes of change within their local spaces. This information can include finding the right person to talk with, finding consultation events, completing surveys, and understanding the process through which change is being decided upon. Psychological factors also influence a person's access to UGS (e.g. not feeling safe or welcoming or being too far away for casual/daily visitation). Addressing these issues therefore becomes fundamental for increasing engagement. Furthermore, it was noted that if people can easily access UGS and feel connected to their space through literal means and, more broadly, the maintenance of the space, they are more likely to want to participate in decision-making and environmental action.

#### **4.2.iii Support**

Most interviewees remarked that improved support mechanisms that mutually benefit individuals, groups and the state are necessary to ensure sustainable relationships between decision-makers and lay folk. Some of the issues mentioned with support were linked to the identified three key dependants of participation – knowledge, capacity and resource. When a facilitator felt constrained by time-based targets, this limited their ability to foster meaningful connections and interactions, reducing engagements to sole figures and temporal quotes/insights. Therefore, there is a need to develop an engagement framework that allows for iterative feedback focused on building relationships and people's capacity for more sustained and integrated stewardship of UGS.

#### **4.2.iv Communication**

Interviewees discussed the need for good communication to improve support across multiple interested parties. For example, councils being better trained to communicate their plans to friends groups or activists being able to organise and demonstrate their ideas to decision-makers. This goes beyond *just* 'the people' and 'the state' and includes cross-institutional and third sector networks. The key insights of communication were that there needs to be an effective communication channel bespoke to each project to ensure clarity, openness and any mutual benefits for their involvement. Although challenging



and often area specific, a ‘universal’ or ‘everyday’ language needs to be the default to ensure transparency, accountability and increased sustainability.

#### 4.2.v Openness

The ability to remain open within creative engagement was challenging for a lot of interviewees, although the majority remarked that it is crucial to their role personally and professionally. Despite the limitations of openness from top-down approaches, there were also issues from bottom-up approaches that included self-confidence to get involved and the ability to contribute to the process. Notably, across both approaches, the fear of the unknown can be paralysing for many; therefore, it can be institutionally shut down. Furthermore, openness is often limited when knowledge, capacity, and resources are stretched. When fully incorporated, openness to adapt one’s approach to engagement has proven beneficial to those involved as it improves relationships and helps build trust.

In sections 4.3 to 4.7, data is presented, analysed, and discussed within the themes. Interview data is initially considered within each theme, followed by data from the case studies. A summary then brings the two together.

### 4.3 Motivation

#### 4.3.i *Motivation in the Interviews*

Often, according to people participating in this research, when there is a presence of genuine care toward a greenspace, they can appreciate it and it can encourage motivation to become involved. When discussing the drivers of motivation, P1 stated that "*people have to see something to believe it; it can then ignite people’s interest*". Similarly, when there is a lack of care or neglect towards a space, it becomes difficult for people to engage. This is also dependent on who is caring for the space. P7 discussed a time when their group of young people did a litter pick in Crowcroft Park in Longsight, Manchester, on a Saturday morning. They cleared the park of rubbish and felt pleased with their work, only to find it had returned to being full of litter soon after. They remark:

*“On reflection, the mistake we made was going into the park when it was empty and tidying the park up. Because then the perception was that the council had been in or the fairies, either way, have been in and cleaned up the park and it can be messed up again.”*

Many interviewed (P1,2,3,7 and 9) mentioned that *seeing is believing* with motivation in participation. By fostering a sense of care or presence within a space, a group can feel included and motivated to care. To boost motivation within engagement, P1 talks about how:

*“Speaking to people is actually the best thing to do... I think there has to be more alignment with actually talking to people. I don't think we talk to people enough; I think we're surveyed to death, and people don't really look at the surveys unless you're in that kind of business or you've got that passion”.*

Several interviewees shared this opinion. P2 also suggested that good participation relies on having a regular presence in the spaces that are undergoing maintenance and that any changes are key to the sustainability of engagement, interest and, in turn, motivation.

Retaining motivated individuals can be a significant challenge, particularly when it comes to funding allocations. Austerity measures have significantly impacted local governance and the voluntary sector, making it difficult to maintain the necessary resources and capacity for sustainable engagement and motivation. According to P12, a council worker, there is a perception that the council lacks a strong history of community engagement, although he mentioned they have been *“doing some quite exciting things. What we tend to do is peak and trough”*. However, there is a tendency for these efforts to fluctuate, with periods of innovation followed by a return to conservatism. This inconsistency is evident across various projects, which may start with great momentum but eventually plateau and fizzle out. As P12 explained, their role involved *“building a culture of participation”*, combining *“quick wins”* that were enjoyable and engaging with a broader, long-term perspective. To ensure more sustainable and multifaceted engagement, it is important to cultivate a culture of participation within the framework.

Effective engagement seeks to motivate people to participate in some form of action. P5 emphasised that successful engagement *“is down to an ongoing (and open) process”*. She highlighted that community organising is not solely about achieving a specific goal or addressing a particular issue, as these may change over time. Instead, it should be about being responsive to the community's needs and tackling relevant challenges at any given moment in time. By adapting to the community's current circumstances, engagement efforts can address pressing concerns and foster motivation for participation.

In relation to this point, P13 reflected on a Heritage Lottery funded commission that the council undertook in Alexandra Park. The commission aimed to restore the park to its original Victorian-era design, including the installation of high-end metal urns that were exact replicas of those present in the park during that time. Initially, P13 had reservations about the urns, fearing they might be vandalised or stolen due to the park's public nature. However, in retrospect, she acknowledged that they *“added that cherry on the top of the cake... And it's kind of increased, I hope, people's sense of pride and ownership of the park”*. By incorporating aesthetically pleasing elements, the commission fostered a

sense of motivation and appreciation among park visitors, ultimately increasing their willingness to care for and maintain the park.

This example shows that appreciating beauty in a space encourages people to care for it and engage actively. Creating an environment that fosters pride and ownership boosts participation, leading to better and lasting outcomes. However, aesthetics alone may not keep people motivated long-term. Lasting engagement needs more robust strategies that focus on inclusivity, collaboration, and shared goals. Relying solely on visual appeal, without addressing systemic issues and promoting genuine community involvement, can lead to decreasing motivation. A comprehensive approach that combines aesthetics with active participation, fair decision-making, and community empowerment ensures enduring motivation. Creative methods, like organising unique events or leveraging local skills and groups, can deepen engagement and connect people with their surroundings.

A simple task, such as clearing litter from a park, can provide a tangible outcome that has engaged several elements to bring about a positive result. P14 emphasised the importance of having a purpose or catalyst for change to activate engagement. She believes that *“campaigns have always been the most natural forms of self-led creative public participation”*, bringing people together and motivating them with a shared focus or goal to work towards. Without a clear objective or something to transform, the potential for activating creative public participation may be hindered. Therefore, structuring participation around specific issues, such as addressing injustices in resource access or lack of support from the council, becomes crucial. In this context, the facilitator’s role is to collaborate with communities or groups, identify problems, and collectively develop approaches to address these issues. By providing a structured framework and fostering collective problem-solving, the facilitator helps empower communities to engage actively in the process of change. This links to the facilitator’s presence within a project or campaign, as their actions within a space can motivate individuals to join or contribute. For instance, when a small group of volunteers prunes vegetation in a park and catches the attention of passers-by, it can inspire them to interact and participate.

As highlighted by P14, individuals come with their own motivations, which can stem from diverse perspectives and ideologies. She also provided the example of right-wing versus left-wing individuals by stating that despite potential clashes:

*“They’re all kind of trying to move in one direction to save or protect a certain thing that they value that hasn’t been valued, usually by their city council, or by the owner, or developer, or what have you.”*

Recognising this common cause and maintaining a sense of shared purpose is crucial. She also noted that people naturally gather together when there is an occasion or trigger, such as a celebration, a birthday or a threat to the space. Understanding these triggers and reasons for engagement is a fundamental aspect of participation, which is often overlooked within contexts that prioritise targets and deliverables in community engagement or consultations conducted by councils and organisations.

P6 highlighted the importance of access to opportunities in driving motivation and subsequent engagement. This person emphasised that volunteering or participating in activities can provide people with a sense of purpose and contribute to skills development, particularly for those who are unemployed. This purpose and sense of accomplishment associated with volunteering in nature have gained more popularity, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has also significantly impacted the volunteering and third sector (Thiery et al., 2021; Bynner, McBride and Weakley, 2022; Roy, Bynner and Teasdale, 2023). This impact is particularly evident in the irregularity of opportunities provided by charities, community groups, and organisations in greenspaces, typically due to limited capacity and resources.

P6 also mentioned that before and during the initial lockdowns, their events were consistently overbooked and at full capacity. She further explained that when individuals encounter opportunities and are told there is no space available, it can demotivate and diminish their enthusiasm. Capacity becomes a crucial factor in these situations, such that many events and projects cannot accommodate hundreds of volunteers, resulting in interested individuals being placed on waiting lists. P6 expressed that people who were unable to participate in these events often felt frustrated, especially when they were eager to contribute to the community. This provides evidence that denying the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities can have a lasting impact and be a significant demotivating factor. It is important to recognise that even the decision to engage in an activity requires considerable thought and processing. Measham & Barnett (2008) emphasise the personal nature of motivation to volunteer, proposing that “contributing to community; social interaction; personal development; learning about the environment; a general ethic of care for the environment; and an attachment to a particular place” (2008:540) are drivers for volunteering. Therefore, to be turned away from volunteering activities after making that decision to volunteer can have a detrimental effect on individuals’ motivation and engagement.

P9 suggests that one-off events can have a lasting impact by creating memorable experiences that motivate further engagement. However, P1 cautioned against organisations, charities, or councils “*parachuting*” in to conduct events without providing ongoing support, as this can demotivate

individuals when they are left to continue without assistance. Both approaches can be effective to varying degrees, emphasising the importance of actively engaging and establishing relationships with the target groups/individuals to determine the most effective strategies for interaction. It is therefore essential to find the balance that ensures sustained motivation and support while creating meaningful experiences that leave a lasting impression. This is echoed in Measham and Barnett's (2008) paper, where they argue that leaders of volunteering programmes need to ensure they provide opportunities to develop social connections and consider motivational factors for volunteering rather than simply focusing on labour issues.

Reflecting on their practice and spending more time in these natural environments has greatly influenced participants' approaches to creative engagement in UGS. P9 spoke about the motivational drivers in their practice, emphasising that *"stopping in the outdoor space, being observant and just letting it have an effect on me... was very, very profound to me; it was very unexpected"*. Additionally, P9 mentioned that people can sense whether a facilitator is genuinely committed to engagement and consultation. I contend that self-reflection is an inherent element of engagement as it drives change to lead and empower people to engage and build relationships that enable them to feel like their voice or action matters. Therefore, it was important for me to state my motivations within the interviews, as any subsequent work or collaboration was driven by a genuine passion for driving change.

It must be acknowledged that not every project will be successful or lead to positive change. However, the process of people coming together and organising for change or action becomes a significant factor in this research. According to P14, participation can sometimes be a matter of luck, with timing and being in the right place at the right time playing a role. She emphasised the importance of perception alongside facts, recognising the emotional state of individuals and communities at a given time and capturing their engagement during that opportune moment. This argument stood out in the interviews as a pivotal insight, highlighting that sometimes things may not work out, and that is acceptable if lessons are learned and progress is made.

#### *4.3.i.a Effective organisation*

An important consideration of engagement is effective organisation, as this can be key to enabling facilitators to create opportunities that appeal to the targeted audience. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how to conduct research that genuinely interests the chosen participants. Learning from each perspective of those who engage with people at multiple levels was deemed essential to achieving the research objectives.

Understanding people's motivations for engaging in greenspaces allows for testing replicable factors that can ignite interest and curiosity. However, P3

argued that “*participation has become so intrinsic and used across institutions, organisations and authority that it can be difficult to find the right participation that you want to get involved in*”. This person also emphasised the need to streamline participation to ensure that the “right” people contribute. With growing awareness of global ecological crises and increasing eco-anxiety – “a chronic fear of environmental doom” (Clayton et al., 2017:68) – individuals may feel overwhelmed and unsure where to focus their attention. In this context, the effective organisation of participation is crucial. It must be tailored to engage multiple audiences and foster conscious decision-making. This approach ensures that motivation remains high and is not adversely affected. Furthermore, incorporating creative approaches during the organising of engagement can also enhance the sustainability of environmental action.

This contrasts with traditional consultation processes, where decisions are often pre-determined. P3 believes that purpose-driven public participation, focused on social and/or environmental positivity, is most engaging and motivating. Therefore, the organisation of participation must incorporate elements of transformation or the potential for transformational effects to motivate individuals to participate.

In *Exploring the co-benefits of environmental volunteering for human and planetary health promotion*, Patrick et al. (2022) identify opportunities to interact with nature as a motivational factor encouraging people to be involved. P3 continued to express concern that not enough was being done to sustain motivation for participation and that measuring its impact on individuals remained challenging. Hence, this research aimed to identify motivational factors for engagement and provide insights for organising participation scenarios that encourage sustainable and meaningful engagement. By recognising and addressing these factors, those interested in organising participation can enhance their efforts and foster sustained engagement.

P14 highlighted that engagement in UGS can be temporally mediated and therefore difficult to maintain, whereas P13 emphasised that there must be a drive to keep things moving forward. Consequently, thought must be given to ensure the practicalities are in place to maintain any implementations in UGS. For P1, meaningful engagement must be mutually beneficial for all involved, and P14 emphasised the necessity of adequately explaining and sharing new solutions to address issues in UGS (e.g. issues regarding climate change) with local residents, as perceptions of “*enhancements*” or environmental improvements can vary between the council and the community.

#### ***4.3.ii Motivation in the Case Studies***

Individual and collective motivations to begin and maintain engagement emerged across all case studies. Understanding motivation played a crucial role

in examining ongoing environmental action. Recognising what drove individuals and groups to act provided insight into what triggers environmental action. Grasping these motivators allowed for a more comprehensive understanding collective issues and detailed knowledge about the various elements influencing public engagement.

#### 4.3.ii.a Groundwork GM

The Groundwork GM case study identified the motivations, networks, and support needs of friends groups engaged in environmental volunteering in GM. These motivations encompass collaboration, volunteer recruitment, training and recognition. The summary of findings argued that further investment in network building is necessary to support more sustainable mechanisms for action, in turn improving volunteer experience and the ability to include creativity in engagement.

The survey asked respondents how they initially were recruited or got involved with their friends group. Question 7: *What are YOUR main interests within your group?* allowed respondents to input their main interests within their group's work. This question was incorporated into the survey to see if there is a relationship between the activities completed within the volunteer or community group and the main motivations for involvement. Ultimately, this provides insight into what motivated their form of environmental action.

This question enabled respondents to describe their group's activities in their own words. The 86 responses received were initially coded into themes for analysis. If a respondent's comment spanned two themes, it was included in both, allowing for multiple answers per respondent. Notably, not all 96 respondents were required to answer every question, resulting in a varied number of responses. Table 18 shows the themes and the types of activities included within each.

Stewardship	Organisation	Health	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Maintenance of the environment and wildlife</i></li> <li>• <i>Gardening</i></li> <li>• <i>Controlling invasive species</i></li> <li>• <i>Creating habitat or sections</i></li> <li>• <i>Litter picking and tidying</i></li> <li>• <i>Whatever is necessary</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Community development</i></li> <li>• <i>Arranging things</i></li> <li>• <i>Social events</i></li> <li>• <i>Fundraising</i></li> <li>• <i>Increasing participation</i></li> <li>• <i>Promotion</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Exercise</i></li> <li>• <i>Walks</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Food production</i></li> <li>• <i>History</i></li> </ul>

Table 18: Coded theme from the environmental volunteering survey

The graph below (Figure 11) amalgamates the above table and represents the key interests of environmental volunteers and the frequency of terminology mentioned.

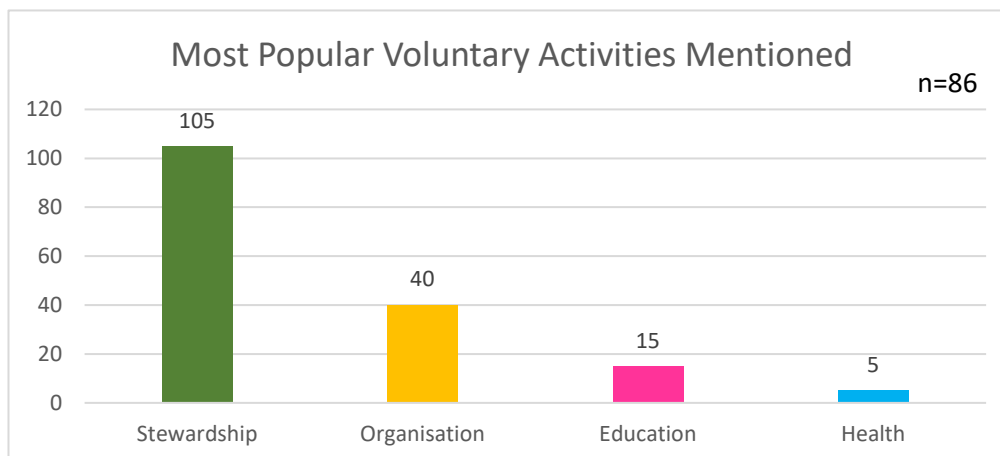


Figure 11: Graph to show key interests of environmental volunteers

Respondents could input several interests within this question, and results were compiled to understand the types of activities most common across different groups. These results highlighted the importance of stewardship tasks within environmentally focused groups. They began to provide evidence of a relationship between the activities done within the group and the main motivation of individuals.

Additionally, an important question for this research was to determine the motivation behind volunteers initially getting involved with environmental action. Question 10 asked, *how did you initially find out about the volunteering opportunities you take part in?* Table 19 illustrates the responses of 88 volunteers (again, respondents were permitted to select multiple answers):

	Responses	Percentage
Other (please specify):	45	51.14%
Group/community websites	23	26.14%
Social media	22	25.00%
A project officer or organisation	14	15.91%
Newsletters	8	9.09%
Email (e.g. subscription)	6	6.82%
Advertisements	3	3.41%

Table 19: Question 10 volunteer responses to how they found out about volunteering opportunities

Interestingly, the 'other' option accounted for more than 50% of responses. Respondents were asked to specify their initial motivation, and these results were also coded and are shown in Figure 12:



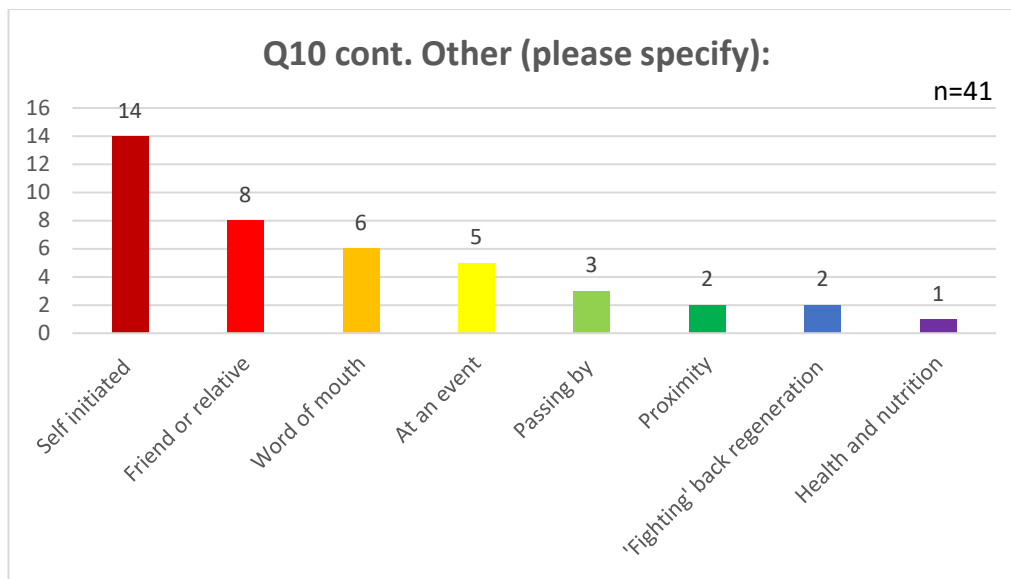


Figure 12: Graph to show other volunteer responses to Question 10

The results indicated that even with increased connectivity through digital means, a considerable number of personal interactions also influenced peoples' motivations for becoming involved with environmental action. This indicates that passing interactions and personal circumstances are key motives for interest and continued involvement. This was summarised by one respondent who shared their initial volunteering experience:

*"I joined the group as I walk my dog on the site and I did not want it to be built on because it is a wildlife sanctuary and also because I did not think a school should be built on extremely toxic land. The more I did in the group, the more I wanted to do. I already did maintenance work on the site, but I then became involved in helping to run the Events and becoming Secretary nearly two years ago."*

Interpersonal relationships are therefore an essential factor for establishing and maintaining engagement. This also indicates the importance of having representation or engagement on the ground (e.g. from a group or organisation member). Groups taking environmental action and the organisations supporting the action must have the capacity or resources to implement a dual approach when it comes to supporting and maintaining motivation (both digital and in-person support).

#### 4.3.ii.b FoBP

Similar to other friends groups, motivation for the FoBP revolved around stewardship for the park they have lived near for many years. They collectively spoke about how investment and funding help them to develop the park and work together. These relationships with the council and members of the friends have allowed them to become successful with many funding pots. The group's knowledge and expertise have enabled them to develop several areas

in the park for a wide range of users in turn motivating them to maintain these areas and develop further.

Within the FoBP focus groups, we began by identifying their main interest in the park, their favourite part of the park and describing the park in one word. An extract of the outcomes is shown in Figure 13 (each colour represents a participant):



Figure 13: Extract from the FoBP focus group

This short exercise helped to identify what is important to individuals, where motivations and interests align, an indication of what spaces the friends are happiest with, and to see if patterns were emerging in the language used to describe the park. The majority of participants (5 out of 9) indicated that their favourite part of the park was one of the main pathways running parallel to the brook, where lime trees grow on either side. Co-leads of the forest garden area within the park indicated that as their favourite part. Their interest mainly focused towards the daily use of the park and the habitat it provides for many plants and animals. Interestingly, one participant remarked that the park could be described as 'rural', indicating that this park, although managed and maintained, feels natural. This links back to Hursh et al.'s (2024) study that manicured areas have become a 'new benchmark' for natural spaces, which skews the younger generation's understanding of what constitutes a natural environment. However, the difference in this research was that the friends members I engaged with were mostly over 50. Therefore, it cannot be argued that this solely affects younger generations as Hursh et al.'s observation also applies to older generations in this research.

During the focus groups, the friends were asked to reflect on what engaged people to come to the park and what they think stops people from engaging (an overview is shown in Figure 14). Most participants contributed by writing directly on the online MIRO boards. This meant the conversation did not flow as naturally as it could have. However, a few people commented on the

wildness of the park. One participant mentioned, *“there’s lots of different spaces in the park to enjoy and lots of different birds”*. Another commented, *“I think loads of people engage in the park, I can’t think of why people wouldn’t”*. Following this, another participant discussed:

*“There was a few reports from the park a couple of years back of attacks in the park... I walk in the park at night, and I have never felt unsafe there... but there are times that I have not gone in on the principle that other people have reported being attacked”*.

This issue was partly addressed in one section of the park through a new pathway that bypassed a woodland pathway. A member of FoBP explained, *“we made Winn’s walk as part of FoBP to help with people not feeling safe walking on certain paths, as the new pathway is more open.”* Further comments suggested that the park *“looks a bit run down in places”* which could be off-putting to some people.



Figure 14: Extract from the FoBP focus group

Furthermore, discussions revealed more reasons that may stop people from engaging with the park. The fact that there is no specific shelter in the park was again raised, along with the lack of toilet facilities, which was an ongoing issue for the friends as they felt this would put some people off coming to the park. Many spoke about perhaps a sense of not feeling safe, which might deter individuals, especially in areas where they have been made aware of crimes taking place.

This case has helped to understand the motivations for involvement and continued stewardship of space from a volunteer group’s perspective. Some of

the participants in the focus groups have lived and volunteered at Friends of Birchfields Park for over 20 years and have seen over £500,000 of investment in the park through their funding bids. They have extensive knowledge about the park and yet remain a largely untapped resource for the council and other entities to get involved in. Additionally, when speaking about new initiatives or projects, one participant commented that for any change, *“someone’s got to be leading it and pushing it for it to get anywhere; there needs to be some energy behind it”*. This alludes to the need to communicate ideas well in order to develop and sustain motivation.

Further work is needed to help bridge the gaps between those on the ground, working with the space daily and those managing the park on a governance/state level. The ideas and discussion points generated through these exercises allowed the group to articulate what they wanted to achieve and how to constructively approach improving the park for all. Decisions and changes made within greenspaces need mutually beneficial aspects for all interested parties to function well. Therefore, improved communication is necessary to understand how these changes or developments can be multifunctional. This case study has highlighted the need for further collaboration, and findings emerging from the focus group fed into the framework for increasing environmental action.

#### 4.3.ii.c MUD

The motivation of the directors of MUD and their volunteers stemmed from personal interest and passion for food growing. Community garden building, they said, gave them a sense of purpose. They strive to create inclusive environments where people can learn and share, which, in turn, inspires new ventures and skills. After gaining further recognition for their work and lots of positive feedback, volunteers maintained their motivation and drive to support MUD’s continual work.

The Dig for Victory project tested literary hypotheses of the socio-environmental benefits of community gardening. This involved looking at those taking environmental action in MUD’s community gardens, i.e., understanding volunteers’ motivations. The literary hypotheses of community gardens included:

1. Having a direct effect on social inclusion. Several studies concluded that being involved in community gardening increases people’s involvement within the community as it can increase neighbourhood connectivity and improve security (Gregis et al., 2021).
2. There is evidence that participating in community gardening has psychosocial effects, with people reporting higher levels of well-being,

mental health, confidence, and improved quality of life (Spano et al., 2020).

3. Community gardening can positively impact more vulnerable populations, including ethnic minorities, refugees, and low-income families, by addressing social and health inequalities such as food poverty, access to food, improving health and developing relationships (Malberg Dyg, Christensen and Peterson, 2020).

To test these theoretical benefits, virtual interviews were conducted with six volunteers at Platt Fields Market Garden (PFMG) and one with their partners, the owner of *Where the Light Gets In* restaurant in Stockport, about their collaborative project, *The Landing*.

MUD have become a significant presence within the local community. PFMG enables a sense of community that many volunteers, collaborators, and visitors alike agree on. During what was a very difficult year for many in Manchester, volunteers within PFMG reflected on their experience volunteering in 2020:

*“It honestly provided a little haven of tranquillity, stability and normality during lockdown and made me feel a whole lot saner. It also connected me up with people from my local area and formed a little community which I found very helpful to my mental well-being over the pandemic. MUD provided a safe, friendly and stabilising environment for me.”* – A MUD volunteer

These conversations gave insights into how motivation for sustained engagement is achieved. When people’s experiences of environmental action are as positive as his, they are more likely to continue their involvement. MUD have streamlined their focus to building strong relationships with those participating or interacting in their spaces. The relationships have ensured a sense of sustainability towards PFMG's stewardship and helped them develop their practices for more sites around the city. Volunteers are continually motivated to take part and have been encouraged to put forward their own ideas to contribute to MUD’s offer accommodating many different types of people:

*“I saw MUD as an opportunity to learn and connect with a great cross-section of locals. My neighbourhood is an inner-city suburb, so to have the opportunity to make spaces greener and bring communities together is something I really believe in, and this is what MUD does... we’re all working towards one common goal.”*  
– Another MUD volunteer.

The interview results demonstrated the passion, skills and knowledge base around PFMG. This has been fundamental to MUD’s sustained progress and continued impact across Greater Manchester. PFMG is a prime example of

what stewardship towards UGS looks like. In terms of linking to the objectives of this thesis, it was deemed essential to understand instances where exemplary environmental action was being taken and the motivation behind people's engagement. This case study provided clear examples of how developing these types of partnerships across the city greatly increases sustainable environmental action and participation toward UGS stewardship.

#### *4.3.ii.d MM*

The MM staff were motivated to align their institution to address issues associated with ecological crises and actively support climate activism in Manchester. Their primary drivers are to increase stewardship, enhance local spaces, and address environmental injustices. They are dedicated to forging partnerships and fostering resource-sharing to provide vital support for individuals, groups and activists, especially as they recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout this project, numerous groups with expertise ranging from youth groups and green infrastructure to environmental activism were interviewed about their motivation for addressing climate crises. These groups either directly focused on these issues or were focused on other governing principles (e.g., well-being activities, creativity, or youth clubs).

Interviews with groups uncovered the activities and roles of each group whilst simultaneously establishing what ecological action looks like. Overall, a vast variety of action is being collectively achieved across Manchester through different mediums and activities that connect people to nature. For example, the manager at Hulme Community Garden Centre (HCGC) remarked that HCGC has *“developed a lot of respect and a reputable name for ourselves, we are skilled at encouraging community members to come get involved, and we act as a community hub”*. She stated that her motivation stems from wanting to create a space for all. Their overall objective is to *“involve the local community in gardening for mental health and wellbeing reasons”*.

Connections varied across groups that specifically work with nature to broader groups, such as housing associations looking to provide green community areas. The motivations for starting groups varied, from people utilising outdoor areas to do nature-based activities or care for these greenspaces, groups campaigning to protect their local places, and those acting to address environmental injustices. By charting the activities unfolding across Manchester, the museum gained a detailed perspective on the collaborative endeavours of diverse groups and the collective goals of these networks. Furthermore, this method and outcome motivated other kinds of creative engagement. A staff member in the Museum reflected:

*“...that whole mapping thing started off another mapping activity that we started doing in Ardwick as part of an exhibition called WILD that we are developing and actually, we used those mapping points and we printed a great big map, where you can see where your house was kind of level [scale]. We went to Brunswick Church and started getting involved in an ongoing discussion with their counsellor and various other interested parties and local community members around greening stuff/climate action in the area... [asking them] where are the spaces that are wild and green”.*

This case study allowed me to address, from an institutional level, what environmental action looks like and how different levels of society can work together to streamline efforts and best support individuals acting across Manchester. It has uncovered motivations behind people’s involvement with(in) nature and UGS (Objective 2) and helps to identify aspects that can feed into the development of a framework for encouraging engagement in UGS. For the museum, this helped to develop large-scale mapping activities to link art groups with other groups and institutions. Thus, this case study has worked to help bridge a gap between those working ‘on the ground’ often daily and those with power and influence in decision-making in cities.

Overall, these case studies offer valuable insights into the diverse motivations that inspire both individuals and groups to engage in environmental action. These include personal interest, a sense of purpose, partnership, accessibility, and a shared desire for sustainable and impactful actions. Understanding the motivations for involvement allows effective strategies to be developed to support and nurture environmental action to address the identified challenges. The development of such knowledge serves as a foundation for empowering individuals and communities to create positive change and contribute to a more sustainable future.

#### ***4.3.iii Applying Creativity to Motivation***

Harnessing motivation was a key topic when discussing sustained environmental action. Knowing people's motivation for action helps to make sense of the 'catalysts' or 'triggers' for change or engagement. By understanding the triggers, one may begin to incorporate creative activities to further detail collective problems and gather in-depth knowledge of the different factors at play within public participation.

Motivations within this research were captured across a broad range of perspectives. Understanding the needs of the facilitator versus the action taker revealed opportunities to improve engagement creatively. There should be an allowed level of transparency to understand the agendas that every individual

brings to decision-making. Additionally, when the facilitator understands the reasons behind environmental action, they are able to build more effective and meaningful relationships (Perry et al., 2019). In turn, they can design creative engagement activities to bolster engagement and spark the interest of others.

Occasionally, despite not directly speaking about motivation, it was clear that all individuals and groups had the motivation and drive to establish stronger networks and understand the systems surrounding UGS management through which people and places co-exist. The overarching outcome of this thesis was that if there is limited support for individuals or groups, then motivation can be diffused, and frustration can take hold (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015). Motivation can therefore be uncovered through incorporating creativity to develop meaningful relationships and build trust.

Considering people's motivations when approaching new audiences is a useful endeavour. It may be that the reasons for engagement are similar and can be replicated. Role-play here could be a useful starting tool. Prototyping was also mentioned as a good way to understand what people want to see and do in UGS. As one participant said, prototyping can explore the '*fuzzy grey areas*' of decision-making in spaces. Leveraging creativity can be used to draw out deeper motivations and insights among individuals, thereby strengthening interpersonal connections.

#### *Insights for Framework development - Motivation*

Outcomes revealed that motivation should be explored alongside any support provided. Once initial support is achieved, understanding individuals' motivations is key to learning how to drive and sustain a project. Therefore, getting to know the audience on a more meaningful level is greatly beneficial toward reaching communities and making informed decisions.

#### **4.3.iv Summary - Motivation**

In conclusion, sustainable motivation arises from achievable actions that foster a sense of accomplishment and enable individuals to witness the impact of their efforts. To foster sustainable engagement, it is crucial to incorporate elements of purpose and transformation, allowing participants to contribute meaningfully and perceive the difference they make.

One aspect worth further exploration is the sustainability of motivation. It is crucial to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that drive long-term motivation. Furthermore, there is a need to develop measures that capture the significance of sustained public engagement over time. P3 highlighted this need by expressing concerns about the insufficient efforts to sustain



motivation among those choosing to participate. An effective approach that has shown promise is to create scenarios that not only attract people's interest but also involve them in the journey of change.

According to three interviewees, for participation to be truly engaging, there must be a sense of purpose and the opportunity to contribute to social and/or environmental progress. P3 emphasised the importance of "*doing something good*" and effecting transformation, stating that sustainable motivation stems from tangible actions that yield visible results.

Research by Alford (2009) highlighted that individuals are motivated by intrinsic, social, and normative factors and material rewards when participating in the co-production of public services. It is important to recognise that motivation for volunteering of any kind can be influenced by material rewards and not always driven by self-interest (Pestoff, 2012).

When examining citizen engagement in the co-production of social services in Europe, Pestoff underscores the significance of two key factors: the accessibility of participation and the motivation of individuals to engage in the service provision process (2012). The ease of citizens' involvement is influenced by various factors, including proximity to volunteering sites/services and the availability of relevant information, which directly impacts the transaction costs associated with participation. Moreover, the motivation of citizens to participate is closely linked to the perceived importance of the activity in their lives and the lives of their loved ones, with greater significance leading to increased motivation for active participation in the co-production of social services (Pestoff, 2012).

## 4.4 Access

### *4.4.i Accessibility in the Interviews*

Access is a fundamental requirement for engaging with UGS. P3 and P10 note that when people have opportunities to experience nature in various ways, it can ignite their motivation to care for the environment. P9 highlights humans' innate ability to connect with nature, recalling instances during a creative residency in Affleck's Palace where, even in densely urban areas, people often depicted natural elements in their artwork. She explains that "*even though there's not a blade of grass around*", these depictions symbolise the significance of nearby spaces and their significance to people.

Accessibility was a prominent theme that emerged in the discussions surrounding UGS, and both physical and psychological aspects were highlighted. Physical access refers to the ability to physically reach and enter the greenspace, while psychological access encompasses opportunities and information available to individuals (Byrne, 2011; Zhou and Rana, 2012). Availability and visibility were identified as crucial factors influencing the care

and usage of UGS. P10 succinctly expressed this perspective, stating, "*if you've got no access, why would you care?*".

Access to green spaces is a matter of justice and equity, as highlighted by Wolch, Byrne and Newell (2014) and Sisk et al. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent UK lockdowns in 2020-2021 have further exacerbated the challenges of accessing greenspaces (Slater, Christiana and Gustat, 2020). Notably, P9 and P3 stated that they observed an increase in people exploring and utilising their local spaces during and between lockdowns in Greater Manchester, suggesting heightened engagement with these areas. However, the underlying issue remains that without easy access to greenspaces, individuals' well-being is significantly compromised (Sisk et al., 2020; Office for National Statistics, 2021). This can also be linked to health-related factors whereby social prescribing measures are becoming more common to ensure people have access to greenspaces and nature to improve their mental health and well-being (Van den Berg, 2017).

Echoing the argument Wolch, Byrne and Newell (2014) put forward regarding the concept of 'just green enough' spaces to counteract the effects of gentrification, P10 emphasises the importance of accessible spaces that foster a sense of belonging and can be utilised daily. Moreover, the same person points out that physical access is closely tied to an individual's cognitive decision-making process. For instance, research by Natural England (2010) revealed that individuals are more likely to use a space regularly if it is within a 5-minute walking distance. The psychological restriction imposed by the time spent commuting to and from the space reinforces the significance of physical access (P10).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought increased attention to the inequality in accessible greenspace, prompting participants to reflect on the vital role of volunteers in maintaining these areas. P3 highlighted how councils have come to rely on older individuals as stewards of greenspaces, particularly in times of austerity when resources, capacity, and funding are limited. P12 further emphasised the impact of budget cuts, revealing they have seen a 40% reduction since 2010 and a loss of approximately 30% of staff, resulting in a depletion of valuable experience and knowledge. This echoes a recent study by Smith, Whitten and Ernwein (2023) investigating parks during austerity from 2010-2019. During this period, large cuts were introduced to local authorities, leading to difficulties in managing spaces across the country (Dempsey, Burton and Duncan, 2016). This 'austerity urbanism' led to a focus on UGS as income generators and a reliance on community groups and volunteers to fill in the gaps of services cut (Smith, Whitten and Ernwein, 2023).

A significant barrier to understanding community needs and aspirations is the limited time and capacity available to engage with people in these spaces. P12 emphasised the necessity to adopt a more formal approach to participation due to resource constraints. This formal approach often neglects the exploration of feelings and emotions, which are challenging to quantify. He also

questioned how measuring these intangible aspects and gathering people's opinions is increasingly difficult whilst remarking that there is an oversight of *“emotional and feeling engagement, which can be harder to measure versus the numbers we need to say we engage with”*. Consequently, there is a tension between the desire to capture emotional experiences and the pressure to provide quantifiable evidence of engagement.

These reflections shed light on the challenges faced in allocating sufficient resources and adopting appropriate methodologies to effectively understand and meet community needs. The implications of engagement within the context of neo-liberalism and austerity often lead to resource limitations and consequently shift engagement towards more formal and structured strategies (White et al., 2018). This, in turn, has profound implications for fostering meaningful connections between communities and greenspaces.

Regarding access, the notion of "opportunity" emerged as a significant factor and can be seen in some instances as synonymous with this research. In terms of creativity, access took on an abstract meaning, relating to the availability of spaces and opportunities for individuals to express their creativity. Four of the 13 interviewees emphasised the importance of providing adequate space, time, and encouragement to foster creativity. P10 aptly expresses, *“Creativity is born out of an atmosphere of allowance, and trust, being able to tell someone what you really want to do”*.

Reflecting on the interview findings, it became evident that providing people with options and opportunities for creativity is crucial, as interviewees with extensive experience expressed. P6 explained that creativity can arise from any intervention, activity, or interaction, even in seemingly logical situations where choices are made, i.e. how someone would prune a tree. They highlight that creative thinking can be involved in any decision-making process.

The term "*creativity*" holds diverse meanings for different individuals, and when labelling an event as "creative", it can sometimes discourage engagement. P3 and P6 observed that people may perceive creativity as something not meant for them and subsequently dismiss it. P8 said that "social expectation" of creativity may stifle a person's ability to be creative. She remarked that creativity may signify different things to other people, *“maybe that sort of association will put people off being creative because they think it's associated with hippies”*. However, for P3, creative approaches to participation are an important tool or method for achieving informed decision-making, stating that:

*“there is something really exciting in being encouraged to stretch your imagination to see the world a bit differently through mixed medium... if we don't and we fail to do that, or we create no space or no room to do it, I think where's the fun, where's the playfulness*

*you know... and where do we get our motivation from, we're not all going to sit reading reports in an A4 document with a few pictures".*

P9 emphasised the importance of offering a wide range of activities to cater to different individuals, fostering an environment where everyone can thrive. Generally, all agreed that reframing the concept of creativity was necessary to overcome the barriers that prevent people from exploring their creative potential. P9 further emphasised the significance of allowing individuals to progress at their own pace, encouraging a sense of belonging and reducing pressure to create or conform to specific standards.

These insights also intersect with other themes identified in the analysis, such as openness and support. Thus, it became apparent that creative facilitation also plays a pivotal role in enabling meaningful engagement.

P10 contributed to this discussion by referencing Joseph Beuys' statement, *"everyone's an artist."* She interpreted this as highlighting the inherent creativity within individuals and the need to embrace it in one's life consciously. She further remarked, *"if you say creativity is not for me, then you suppress it and it doesn't come out"*, and only through activities that acknowledge creativity and nurture it can someone's creativity flourish. In this sense, creativity is a mindset that can be applied in everyday contexts to approach things slightly differently or to try new things that seek to improve people's relationships with others and UGS.

P10, drawing from their extensive 30 years of experience with community engagement, succinctly encapsulates the entire process in two phrases: *"we love what we enjoy, and we protect what we love."* Elaborating on these phrases, she explained that *"the first part is about access because you can't enjoy something if you haven't got it. So the provision is important"*. Hence, the emphasis is that simply providing access, such as making a space physically accessible, is not enough. It is essential to actively "build access" tailored to the desired audience, reaching different groups of people and designing interactions that resonate with them. This could be facilitated through co-production to understand how people want to use and care for UGS. The (co-) production of this type of knowledge is useful for improving environmental governance and, in turn, benefits policy, practice and society as a whole (Frantzeskaki and Kabisch, 2016).

Expanding on the second part of the phrase, P10 underscored the significance of finding creative ways to involve people as part of the access process. By creating access in a manner that is appropriate to individuals, meaningful relationships are formed between the people, the space, and the community. When individuals feel a sense of ownership, they are motivated to contribute. This sense of ownership fosters openness to education, learning, and experiences. In addition, P10 emphasised that deepening the learning

experience over time requires a gradual and continuous approach, as opposed to a one-time educational session. Commenting that *"you can deepen that learning experience over the years because you need to drip feed the general public; you can't just sit them down and educate"* P10. This firsthand evidence and experience provided valuable insights into creating access and opportunities that effectively engage people creatively. These approaches unlocked individuals' imaginations when discussing problems, relationships, and decision-making processes.

The role of the facilitator emerged as a prominent theme among the majority of interviewees. Collectively, they have facilitated, led and assisted numerous projects involving people. P1 highlighted that regardless of whether the projects were creative or not, they revolved around deliverables and managing expectations, which necessitates a deep understanding of the audience. According to P6, effective facilitation requires a creative approach to understanding and addressing the goals and aspirations of communities or groups, whereas P7 emphasised that successful engagement projects rely on motivated individuals and the facilitators' ability to enable meaningful change. This suggests that achieving and sustaining projects hinges on a strong alignment between the participants' intentions and the facilitators' collaborative strategies.

Building upon these insights, P7 also raised the issue that the role of the facilitator, consultant, or researcher can sometimes stifle creativity and innovative thinking. Speaking from their experience as a youth worker, they stated:

*"I'm going to be pretty controversial here and say, the thing that stifles creativity is the worker, it's not the young people, the young people bring the energy and kind of want to do stuff. And quite often those processes aren't completed because the worker or the workers, kind of don't believe in them".*

This observation stems from their experience of working with various stakeholders who have not believed in the process. Similarly, he noted that having highly motivated participants or groups without an effective facilitator can also pose challenges and hinder the process of change. Minder and Heidemann Lassen discuss the role of designers as facilitators, arguing that designers can help create excitement and foster environments where people can explore their ideas (2018). However, depending on the context, they can also attain a perceived level of ignorance or risk by being overpowering.

This sentiment can be recognised throughout the interviews where those who facilitate creative engagement often for an organisation or group face more constraints from above them and not from those participating. P14 elaborated

on this institutional perspective when discussing the ‘nervousness’ of organisations to take onboard people’s ideas, commenting:

*“When an organisation says that it wants to be participating in socially engaged activists, and then [participants] go, well, actually, these are our ideas. And then they [the organisation/institution] go, Oh, no, that's too scary. No, we didn't mean that. We just meant this... it is quite frustrating... it's power struggles”.*

Therefore, these power dynamics and structures are important considerations when creating tools to facilitate engagement in environmental action. In that sense, my framework looks beyond designers/artists to create a tool for engagement organisers to become better facilitators.

P9 cautioned that public engagement should be led by individuals who genuinely seek to make meaningful connections and provide assistance. She also noted that many individuals may get involved in engagement as a job or for research purposes whilst lacking genuine resonance with the people they aim to involve. She also suggested that facilitators should adopt an attitude of working alongside the community, being prepared to adapt and change themselves to suit their needs. This does not imply a complete transformation of the facilitator's identity but rather an openness and curiosity toward the different needs and aspirations of the participants. This type of facilitating lends itself to creative facilitation which, in turn, cannot just be injected into engagement organisation but rather relies on the intention and determination of organisation actors in terms of *“receptivity, recognition and support to new ideas, besides the necessary conditions to their implementation”* (de Alencar, 2012:107).

All interviewees raised the importance of providing inclusive physical access, as well as clear and easily accessible information about participation opportunities. However, they highlighted the difficulty of accessing information, seeing it as a significant barrier. Additionally, the particular context and individuals involved in the engagement process were recognised as influential factors. P13, working in Manchester City Council, highlighted the difficulty people may face in understanding architectural plans versus experiencing built environments, thus allowing them to appreciate the purpose behind them in their own way. Transparency of information was identified as a crucial element of access, linked to communication, support, and organisational aspects. P1 and P2 expressed frustration with the difficulty of finding information about consultations and the use of jargon, suggesting that accessible and user-friendly platforms are necessary. P1 also stressed the importance of ensuring that everyone, including those with literacy issues, should have a say in decisions that may impact their lives.

Regarding creativity, everyone acknowledged its complexity. Shared experiences and interactions between individuals were seen as catalysts for creative outcomes. Encouraging people to recognise the value of their experiences and explore different perspectives can foster knowledge, skills exchange and better planning (Renn et al., 1993). Engaging with individuals in the present moment and tapping into their opinions and insights was emphasised as valuable, especially when reaching out to diverse individuals beyond the usual participants. While the term creativity is subjective and had nuances across the participants, many agreed that incorporating creativity was an important aspect of their engagement strategy. P5 discussed that *“good engagement or community organising is inherently an imaginative creative process that should encourage that kind of thinking”*.

Reaching the right people and engaging with them effectively is crucial for engagement. Several highlighted the importance of this and said that one needs to reach people in the *right* way and on their level. P3 also emphasised the need to observe the social context and allow public engagement to unfold naturally. Adopting this approach led to the involvement of individuals who may not have initially signed up to engage. She explained her recent public participation project:

*“We wanted to explore the reality of the situation rather than create an intervention that was not false but was structured or constructed by us. We wanted to see what the social life was doing and how public participation would come to life if we just happened to be there to invite it”*.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift to digital platforms. This transition expanded opportunities for broader engagement, including for those who may not typically have physical access to the space but still wish to participate in the decision-making process.

P14 emphasised the critical role of community "linchpins", such as park keepers or youth workers, as intermediaries to facilitate conversations and inclusion. She remarked that:

*“Every community will have those kinds of people, and they will crop up, and they can be both a force for good, and they can also be a negative force that blocks change”*.

It was acknowledged that relying solely on familiar participants can hinder change. P8 discussed the challenge of engaging individuals who lack interest or do not perceive the benefits of engagement. Understanding their motivations and addressing barriers becomes an integral part of this research.

When discussing access to opportunities to engage, P3 commented that participation is prevalent across institutions and organisations. This has led to

a saturation of opportunities, making finding the desired type of participation for each individual challenging, resulting in a '*sense of exhaustion*'. The need to streamline efforts and target specific participants is becoming more apparent. The exhaustion of both the world's resources and individuals underlines the importance of conscious decision-making regarding participation. With this in mind, even the smallest act should be recognised as effective and meaningful toward a common goal to motivate sustainable action.

P14 explains that a barrier they have found disheartening is the "*exhaustion from the effects of inequality*" and that this type of inequality can be quite abusive. She elaborated on her experience supporting volunteer groups, where achieving certain goals required resilience and determination. The abuse stemmed from those in power pushing people to their limits, hoping they would give up. This plays an integral part in people's ability to remain motivated to keep access to their space. Although other factors are at play in terms of raising housing demands in the city, an example of this pursuit is the consistent advocacy undertaken by the Save Ryebank Fields group. This group exemplifies sustained community resistance in a prolonged campaign exceeding 19 years to safeguard their local UGS from additional development. Despite their enduring efforts, the matter remains unresolved, perpetuating a state of uncertainty regarding the future of this UGS. At the same time, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority declared a biodiversity emergency in March 2022. This paradox serves as a timely reminder that UGS is still undervalued and can be developed even in the face of climate change issues and people needing access to UGS for increased quality of life. This has been on the minds of many in recent years, yet there is still a disconnect between capital and ecology. This highlights the challenges faced by individuals who may not have equal access to resources and opportunities to participate in shaping greenspaces. The inequality and abuse of power perpetuate barriers to accessibility in the pursuit of creating inclusive and equitable urban environments.

P7 shared an example of eco-injustice within central parks in Manchester, where care and improvements are unequally distributed based on socio-economic factors. He described a situation where some broken glass was left unattended in the long grass near the children's play area in Crowcroft Park, which had not been cut for weeks and was posing a safety hazard. This observation led him to suggest that such neglect would never occur in more affluent neighbourhoods such as Didsbury, demonstrating a disparity in the level of care provided. Furthermore, when he spoke with the council workers on site after this event and asked why they had not been to cut the grass or empty the bins during this time, he recalled that "*they said quote-unquote 'well we're looking at turning park X into a green flag park, so we've put all our resources there'*". This inequality in the maintenance and accessibility of



greenspaces can prevent certain communities from fully benefiting from and participating in the use and enjoyment of these urban natural environments.

P11 commented that in her training course in urban planning, there was a reluctance to engage with local communities regarding designs in their areas. She reflected that *"there was even quite a strong, not only implied, but sometimes completely explicit, 'Oh, well, you know, it doesn't really matter what people think'"*. The disregard for people's opinions within the planning realm poses a significant challenge for those seeking engagement and inclusive decision-making processes. By excluding community voices, the accessibility of urban planning processes and the ability of individuals to actively contribute to the development or improvement of greenspaces are hindered (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015). To ensure accessibility, it is crucial for planning practices to recognise and value the diverse perspectives and experiences of the communities they serve. However, this is often easier said than done, with knowledge, capacity and resource being critical determinants of quality engagement.

Time is another barrier to accessing engagement opportunities. Several participants (P3, P9, P11, and P12) express the extensive time commitment required for meaningful community engagement. Limited time can restrict individuals from engaging in activities in greenspaces. The demand for sustained engagement and the need to be in the right place at the right time further emphasise the challenges individuals face in accessing and actively participating in initiatives that aim to improve UGS. Creating accessible opportunities requires considering and addressing individuals' time constraints, ensuring that participation is feasible and inclusive for all.

This research highlights the intricate and ever-evolving nature of engaging with local greenspaces, encompassing various layers and complexities. As P14 aptly stated, *"there's [always] the potential for an unexpected variable that will suddenly come into that location or demographic, adding another layer to it."* Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge and remain attuned to these factors, adjusting the approach accordingly in response to unfolding events. Additionally, critically evaluating the limitations associated with time-based projects is crucial. While such projects may not provide a comprehensive picture or narrative of engagement, they offer valuable insights, allowing for the examination and improvement of processes and the identification of lessons learned within a specific timeframe. By recognising the dynamic nature of engagement and embracing a critical perspective, the accessibility and effectiveness of initiatives can be enhanced.

#### ***4.4.ii Accessibility in the Case Studies***

Similarly, as encountered in the interviews, access was a topic discussed by participants across all four case studies. It encompasses various layers of

complexity within the scope of this research. On the one hand, there are organisational or institutional efforts to engage different individuals and groups, and on the other, individuals or groups are attempting to connect with those in positions of power overseeing greenspaces in Manchester. Furthermore, unequal access to greenspace for people more generally, whether this is physically or psychologically, remains an issue of social injustice. Physical access to greenspace is hugely disproportional across the city in favour of more affluent people being able to afford to live closer to greener and healthier spaces.

In the context of my case studies, access was commonly referred to as knowing the right person to talk to for assistance and knowing what routes to take to attain support, i.e. funding and resources.

#### 4.4.ii.a Groundwork GM

For Groundwork GM, findings showed that those involved were keen to access more opportunities for training, accreditation, and recognition from organisations. In general, accessibility was deemed an important factor in volunteering, especially when organisations do not offer or support travel arrangements, as there is a likelihood that it will prevent people from participating despite being aware of opportunities. Table 20 shows that 50% of volunteers surveyed travel across multiple sites to volunteer. In contrast, results from the organisations answering Q39 *How do volunteers get to the site where they are volunteering?* (Figure 15) indicated that only 24% arranged accessible travel for their volunteers.

Q15. As part of your voluntary group, do YOU work across different sites?		
Yes	44	50.57%
No	43	49.43%
	answered	87

Table 20: Volunteer results for Q15

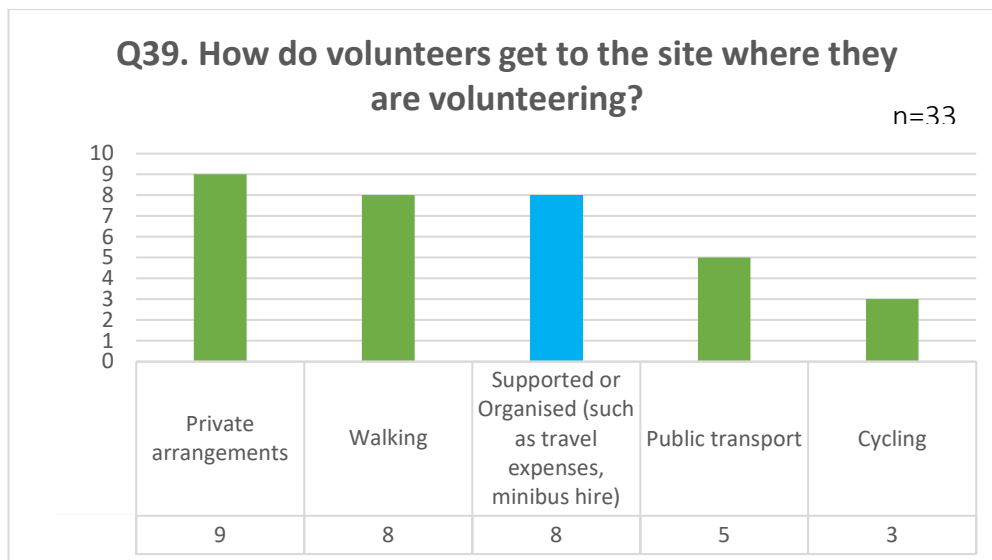


Figure 15: Graph showing how volunteers travel to different sites

Without equality of access to opportunities, organisations miss chances to connect and engage with transient residents, younger people and/or people with physical or mental health challenges. Furthermore, this can affect other engagement drivers, such as motivation to be and remain involved.

Overall, the main challenge identified in this case study was a need to assess, improve, streamline and combine the various network(s), tools and systems already in place to deliver more significant benefits to people and the environment. Future detailed discussions with environmental volunteering groups and support organisations would be required to better inform consistent practices. Co-design offers an opportunity to ensure that joint decision-making and shared ownership is adopted. By working with those interested in developing it, there would be better synchronicity that can serve a dual purpose of improving organisational facilitation and voluntary experience.

Based on survey insights, an outcome that Groundwork GM was keen to develop was a volunteering network purely focused on environmental action, given the breadth of different volunteering activities. This would enable greater connection between individuals, groups, and organisations with distinct and shared interests. It would also facilitate a stronger connection with green and blue infrastructure and provide a 'one-stop shop' where opportunities (placements, events, training, news, rewards/awards, recognition, funding opportunities) could be shared and accessed. A 'one-stop shop' has the potential to reduce resource requirements for supporting organisations (for example, maximising the effectiveness of recruitment and maintaining retention) and make the voluntary experience simpler and more accessible, providing portability and enhancing development pathways.

#### 4.4.ii.b FoBP

Similarly, in this case study, there was limited access to information. They also found it challenging to find the right person to speak with when wanting to improve the space or access management plans. One participant stated:

*“All the roles in the council change so frequently that it’s really difficult to know who to contact about project ideas or tools, material, and so on. You think you’ve got the right person, and then they change around, often without telling anyone, or any of us anyway.”*

This issue blends into communication challenges, but nuances between accessing information and expertise through communication channels warrant the distinction. Furthermore, reaching different members of the community to include them in their work provides a similar challenge for organisations when working on environmental improvement funding bids and projects.

Access was again brought up in this case study, in particular, being unable to access parts of the park due to muddy or boggy areas not being managed and the gates not being wheelchair-, pram-, and bike-friendly. Reflecting on why people may or may not access the park, one participant commented:

*“you have access to the running water more so than in any other surrounding park which is nice. But having no toilets or refreshments in the park could put off some people coming into the park or staying there for say an entire afternoon”.*

Furthermore, there were discussions surrounding other people’s involvement within the park, in terms of maybe not knowing how they can participate, make a difference, and develop a sense of belonging to a place. They discussed that access to information in the park was difficult, and the display cases containing information were often vandalised. In addressing these issues, again, the friends reflected that it is often frustrating to go through the processes of reporting damage and then waiting for replacement items. Further work could be done to ensure people can access information and collaboratively work together to put forward ideas for further funding and support.

Access within this case study varied from physical access to certain park features to feelings of safety once in the park for the general public. Additionally, for the friends, the term ‘access’ revolved around access to information and in turn support. Again, this illustrates the interconnectedness of the MASCO themes of engagement. This therefore highlighted the obstacles to engagement and the consequent actions desired to address them pertaining to Objective 2.

#### 4.4.ii.c MUD

Similar to FoBP, MUD's accessibility challenges revolved around limited access to funding and resources. Although they reach a diverse network of volunteers and communities, they are constantly looking for ways to develop their network and reach the wider community. However, their resources are limited to factor in relationship development: *"you've got to be looking for pots of money a lot of the time"*, MUD director. Interestingly, this is a slightly different challenge to general outreach of those wanting to engage with people. For MUD, connecting with other groups is essential to ensure their work continues. By working together, MUD, friends groups and organisations can collectively access multiple beneficiaries and connect with those making the decisions in greenspaces and access to expertise and resources.

For MUD's volunteers, access was discussed in terms of being able to volunteer in the community gardens and access skills and knowledge from fellow volunteers with their own unique expertise. Furthermore, their volunteering allowed them access to learning and bonding with people outdoors. A volunteer reflected on their experience with MUD, stating that volunteering has:

*"helped me to become more empathetic with different people. I now make sure that I speak with all the volunteers on site. We have great conversations... I feel more grounded; it has been therapeutic for me and made me absolutely appreciate being outside and having access to that".*

This supports evidence of how connecting with UGS positively impacts people's well-being (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Twohig-Bennett and Jones, 2018). This participant, among others, discussed that being able to volunteer in the 'open air' has benefited their well-being and mental health. Another commented that doing something *"physical and rewarding"* with access to talking with people hugely benefited them, and *"the fabulous food is an added bonus!"*.

Further conversations about access discussed the development of MUDs community gardens across Manchester, where another volunteer stated that consideration needs to *"make different project locations more accessible for volunteers, such as providing transportation"*. This again reflects consideration for all organisations to think about how multiple sites of voluntary opportunities affect volunteer access. On the one hand, it provides others an opportunity to get involved, but on the other, it can undermine a person's motivation to continue if they cannot access the sites.

Overall, this case study has allowed me to gather experience and insight into how a social enterprise takes environmental action. In turn, it has highlighted how communities can work together with the land around them, especially in very built-up environments, to produce food and understand seasonal ecosystems, connecting them with their consumption and the impact of their habits. Reusing abandoned spaces in urban areas for community projects (such as MUD's PFMG) is proving to help increase biodiversity and increase people's interaction and relationship with nature. By focusing on food, MUD have reached a broader and more diverse audience to share knowledge and growing techniques. Through this improved connection to people's local areas, MUD have increased engagement within UGS and through the interviews, it was clear that those involved are stewards of these spaces and are invested in their protection. This engagement is also mutually beneficial as all those involved in this project have mentioned that their motivation in the first instance revolved around getting outdoors and feeling more involved in the community.

#### 4.4.ii.d MM

The results from the MM case study showed that they want to improve their accessibility by encouraging more engagement and interaction with the museum. Using the museum's conveying power, they seek to join up the efforts being made and collectively address topics surrounding access to greenspaces. Since the project with the museum, they have opened a community space on the top floor, accessible for all those interested in taking environmental action or building connections with people with similar interests. This space was described just before opening by a member of staff:

*“the space and access to it, the physical layout and the pros and cons of noise floating up, people walking around and the practical sense of what does that mean in terms of how we can be a place for community groups and organisations - people who have shared values - these are the things we had no idea about until we opened the doors”.*

Further research would be needed to measure the success of this new space over time since it opened in Spring, 2023. However, for the museum and interested groups, this provides a central, accessible space to convene and share skills and expertise. Thus evidencing the museum's commitment to addressing climate and ecological issues. Some groups felt that this was a welcome idea; however, one group noted that they wanted the museum to be more present within different communities outside of the institution. One group stated there is a *“need to figure out ways that the museum can come out to the community - not simply thinking of engagement as bringing people in”*. This is an interesting finding as it questions the positionality of an institution in such conversations of environmental activism. For some, they may not feel a

sense of community or belonging within such spaces as institutions can represent powerful elites (Henry and Frazier, 2017).

Overall, this case study allowed me to understand what role a museum (or institution) can play in fostering accessible environmental action. Issues raised by action groups revolved mainly around access to funds and support, similar to findings from other cases. These issues affect the access to resources such as staff, physical space and equipment.

#### ***4.4.iii Applying Creativity to Access***

Many interviewees remarked that factors concerning UGS in terms of management, care and interaction ultimately come down to access. Whether this be physical or psychological access to greenspace and related action. Furthermore, social inequality and injustice are intertwined with access to greenspaces (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014). When it comes to concerns around access, applying creative approaches can help to understand the barriers and collectively identify more inclusive solutions.

When access to UGS is prioritised, people's health and well-being are improved. This phenomenon is well-recognised in literature (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005; CABE/DETR, 2000; Fuller et al., 2007; Richardson et al., 2013; Shackell & Walter, 2012; Twohig-Bennett & Jones, 2018; Jimenez et al., 2021). The organisation of engagement is also important, as participants spoke about the process of organising events, activities or participation and accessing the right people, places and permissions. Relationship building was deemed an intrinsic part of the organisation process, and many mentioned that the time to access people is limited and should be prioritised more. Creative approaches can and should be applied to developing relationships between decision-makers and action-takers to plan events collaboratively. This can take the form of a carefully designed open question which prompts multiple responses (as suggested by P5), role-playing (as mentioned by P3) or community mapping (like in the FoBP focus group).

Within the case studies, access related to a mixture of organisation, people, and provision of support. Finding the right people to talk to is often a lengthy process, either through bureaucratic processes or by finding the key drivers within communities. Furthermore, opportunities to provide funding support also proved difficult, and it was clear that for UGS, this was disproportional across the city. One participant remarked that UGS in different areas of the city have more funding and resources than other areas, discussing that perception of 'care' influences the decisions made and investment. Throughout, people advocated for making the most of what everyone could bring to the table and

working together to have the most impact. This links back to creativity being a practice of being resourceful and adapting interventions based on what is available (Wakkary and Maestri, 2007).

Although this may not be a new concept, it is still reassuring that people across multiple layers of societal strata agree that collaborative working is beneficial and more impactful for decision-making. This research argues that there is an opportunity to incorporate creativity where collaboration occurs. This type of collaborative working with communities was summed up by P5 as *“it's actually about getting a picture of the whole community and trying to work together and build relationships”*. Furthermore, P10 spoke about a more collaborative future, *“I truly hope against hope that [people] awaken to the basic human necessity for collaboration and work with interconnectedness”*.

There are examples of being creative to encourage people to access greenspaces. Take, for example, the People's Pop-Up Park in Stevenson's Square. Although not a specifically designated greenspace, the idea was to creatively imagine and prototype what the Northern Quarter could look and feel like if it were a pedestrianised park. This large-scale prototyping exercise provided an opportunity to access the space differently, providing a basis for attracting more people to it. The process through which the Pop-Up Park organised the event and produced materials can be considered a creative approach. Although it is difficult to argue that creativity is appropriate for any given scenario, in the case of the People's Pop-Up Park, having the opportunity to play with ideas and objects to represent how people want to use space and interact with others and the environment provided a meaningful co-creative experience that can influence policy.

#### *Framework input - Access*

In the development of the framework, access was deemed an important consideration when approaching people or facilitating activities or events. By incorporating factors associated with access, one can begin to understand the involvement of different interested parties or communities, such that this should be considered within multiple contexts (e.g. accessing people, understanding the barriers and access improvements for all).

#### **4.4.iv Summary - Access**

In summary, my research revealed that limited access to greenspaces hindered individuals' ability to form strong opinions about them. Motivation for environmental action stems from the initial opportunity to access and utilise these spaces. Similarly, access plays an essential role in sustaining motivation



for action (Patrick, Henderson-Wilson and Ebden, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to establish more accessible greenspaces that offer multiple opportunities for interaction, engagement, and self-expression. A key driver for enhancing greenspaces is ensuring accessibility is equal. Evidence shows that access to greenspace enhances well-being and mitigates the effects of (dis)stress (Kaplan, 1973; Wells and Evans, 2003; Pillemer et al., 2010).

Participants in this research also highlighted that barriers to access encompass both physical and psychological aspects, emphasising the inequalities and injustices in accessing greenspaces linked with the associated health benefits. Areas with limited exposure to nature can hinder engagement, as the benefits may not be perceived as relevant or valuable. Overcoming these barriers involves identifying and engaging specific groups while striving for mutually beneficial outcomes. As P1 and P12 emphasised, clear articulation of the desired outcomes for both facilitators and participants is essential – ensuring a “win-win” scenario for all parties involved is crucial for success (P1).

## 4.5 Support

### *4.5.i Support in the Interviews*

Support plays a crucial role in promoting and sustaining public engagement by creating an environment that encourages participation and maintains motivation. With strong ties to access, support moves beyond reaching the right people and spaces to connecting and engaging with UGS toward the sustainability of motivation and access. In this sense, efforts may decrease or cease without support for those taking environmental action. This research therefore emphasises the value of designing with the community, enabling open discussions, and incorporating diverse perspectives in processes of change and development with the support of the community.

A key aspect of providing support is actively listening to individuals and allowing them to express their desires and aspirations, as highlighted by multiple interviewees (P1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11 and 12).

P1 discussed that those making decisions are often averse to listening to those trying to share concerns:

*“I think it's quite important to say that sometimes people can shy away from hearing and listening to complaints”, P1.*

P2, 3, 11 and 12 then commented on the knock-on effects of not being listened to:

*“there's probably like a bit of an apathy [toward participating] for not knowing if your voice will actually be heard or make a difference” P2.*

*“[People] currently face consultation fatigue because they have all been told to come and participate, publicly put your voice out there for the record, it will be listened to, and they actually find out it's really not been listened to and the powers that be have actually made a decision on their behalf” P3.*

*“The reason people have consultation fatigue is because they are pissed off with being asked things and nobody takes any notice of what they've said”, P11.*

*“Once people perceive that their view wasn't listened to, they don't go back again”, P12.*

Mitigation of these issues was reflected upon by P5 and 10:

*“the idea is to try and have as little agenda as possible... listening to people's answers and working together with people to come up with solutions that work for everyone... it's not just about inviting people into whatever you're doing over there but actually looking at it properly and looking and listening to what's going on and seeing where the connections are”, P5.*

*“you actually have to listen to the beneficiaries and then you find a way... they also have human needs and desires and dreams. And when you listen to those, you can begin to design things”, P10.*

P10 shared her experience with the Black Environment Network (BEN) projects, where a focus on taking people to the countryside and allowing cultural elements to flow into her experiences led to meaningful outcomes. It was noted how individuals expressed their interest in singing and sharing stories about their own culture and nature. Thus, the BEN helped facilitate meaningful engagement with people to connect them to UGS through creative approaches, i.e., facilitating opportunities to share their stories and memories and providing outlets to express them. Simply asking what people want to do to be able to connect or restore connections to nature ignited people's creativity and ability to share experiences. By fostering openness and tailoring the experience to participants' needs, the project allowed for meaningful engagement in nature.

Recognising the efforts of individuals who actively engage in their local communities is another important aspect of support identified through the interview process. Recognition plays a vital role in both voluntary work and decision-making processes (Nesbitt et al., 2018). P1, working in the environmental charity sector, emphasised the significance of acknowledging people's skills and talents as a means to inspire them and motivate others to contribute:

*“We also get involved in a lot of capacity building... So that side is very much about the training of volunteers. It's not all about formal training; it's building their self-confidence to participate in activities that will engage the wider community... and recognising those skills and talents and recognising that we don't have to keep them in that geographical area or locked. Let's share it!”, P1.*

Additionally, the contributions of older individuals who are often retired or nearing retirement were highlighted by P8 and are often under-appreciated. With an ageing population, the value and contributions of older volunteers are often underscored or not recognised. She stated, *“it's not just a hobby. It's actually something really important that they're contributing to through the next phase of their life”* (P8). P3 echoed this sentiment, expressing, *“we've been so reliant on older people, and I mean those who are semiretired from 50+, to care for these spaces”*. The council heavily relies on friends groups (predominantly comprising older members) to care for UGS. Reflecting on the example of older volunteers who had to self-isolate during COVID-19, P3 questioned who will continue to care for these spaces going forward if that workforce is depleted. Therefore, there is a need to ensure sustainable management and succession planning to avoid losing their vital contributions when they eventually step back.

Support for individuals undertaking environmental action is identified as a fundamental aspect, with most participants touching upon the role of facilitation in their projects. They emphasised that having motivated individuals is not enough without a facilitator to guide them through the process of change. P1 noted that successful projects, whether creative or not, involve deliverables and managing expectations, highlighting the importance of understanding the audience. P7 highlighted the key components of successful participation: motivated individuals and the skills to take action or facilitate it, whereas P9 emphasised the significance of finding a good match between the community/group and the facilitator involved. P6 also expressed that their organisation prioritises facilitation, stating that being able to think creatively about what the community wants is essential. This also involves effectively communicating with diverse audiences and establishing meaningful connections to optimise interactions. By assuming the role of facilitators, professionals can empower and guide motivated individuals, ensuring that projects achieve desired outcomes and create positive change.

Support and facilitation are often synonymous in the context of environmental action, as both concepts involve guiding and empowering individuals to actively participate and achieve their goals. An approach mentioned by several interviewees (P3, 9, 11 and 14) was to encourage creativity through facilitated support, and it is worth noting that the majority of participants were involved with and appreciated creative approaches. This undoubtedly tilts the

consensus towards viewing creativity as a positive element in participation. However, the interviewees were aware that not all aspects of creativity are always useful. One mentioned that creative approaches have their time and place, and engaging in creativity for its own sake can sometimes be a waste of time or inappropriate (P9). This echoes the caution raised by Peck (2005) and McRobbie (2018), who critique the endeavour of Florida's *Creative Class* (2002), a glorification of the utopic idealism of creativity in society and the overestimation of 'creative' jobs in comparison to 'deadening' jobs (Peck, 2005). Furthermore, adherence to this perspective can be divisive among communities by disregarding those seemingly untalented people and focussing on the 'winners' (McRobbie, 2018). This perspective divides people quite distinctly to those who self-profess their inability to be creative as they are not as creative as others. It is important within this research that creativity is approached as a tool that can be used on different scales, depending on who is involved and the logistics of engagement.

When used effectively, P3, 9, 11, and 14 expressed that creative facilitation helps to uncover deeper needs and aspirations. P14 stated that "*creativity or creative practices can be used as a toolkit for approaching complex problems.*" Expanding on this analogy, P14 explained that this toolkit offers a different perspective for emphasising scenarios, problems, or issues. She argued that creative thinking can be valuable when approaching unknown or uncertain challenges. However, she also cautioned against a lack of structure in engagement, emphasising the need for a certain level of structure, stating:

*"If you put a whole load of people together in a space and say, hey, go and do something, everyone would just sit around and look at each other. And go, what do you mean."*

Hence, the facilitator's role is valuable in ensuring that the process is supportive and remains open yet with a clear structure. P11 referred to this approach as "*creative structured facilitation.*"

P14 further highlighted the importance of clarity from the beginning regarding the level of structure in engagement. She noted that taking an all-or-nothing approach by saying "*do anything*" and then imposing restrictions can lead to frustration among participants. Power relationships and the struggle to understand where and how public participation can be most effective also play a role in this dynamic. Often, engagement is supported by those who have more power in terms of resources and time to initiate these processes (Turnhout et al., 2020).

It was widely acknowledged that embracing a range of approaches is essential for achieving broader engagement, as expressed by P1, 2, 3, 9, and 14. However, P12 highlighted the challenges of realising this diversity due to resource and capacity limitations. His work at the council involved

understanding people and communities, but he often found it difficult to establish robust evidence or quantify success to secure additional funding or resources. In his own words, *"you're always relying on your networks and relationships to set the stuff up, and that takes time"*. This process not only demands time but also requires striking a balance between long-term objectives and *"short-term wins"*.

The collective conversations on creativity and support underscore the importance of collaborative work with stakeholders "on the ground" and emphasise the benefits of creative participatory approaches to ensure the sustainability of services. The impact of austerity measures has significantly affected their collective work, constraining the time and resources available for exploring new initiatives. Creative approaches to participation emerged as valuable tools not only for effective communication but also for problem-solving and driving action and change throughout the process. Again, it is worth noting that creativity is not always appropriate and should be considered alongside limitations of knowledge, resource and capacity of organisers. Furthermore, creative approaches must be designed to be context-specific, enabling a nuanced understanding of the intersections and conflicts between social and environmental injustices.

Another way to support communities is by fostering a sense of self-confidence, as mentioned by P1, 2, 5, and 12. P1 refers to this as capacity building, which helps individuals gain the confidence to engage with the wider community. This, in turn, enables community members to approach fellow residents and effectively encourage engagement from within. P2 emphasised the power of having community members take the lead, stating that *"to have someone from the community itself is so much more powerful"*. She further explained that participation should focus on building the confidence and skills of individuals so that they can independently initiate and sustain engagement, ultimately aiming, in their words *'to make ourselves redundant!'* That is to say, empowering community groups to become independent leaders and facilitators who no longer need as much support. This remark highlights the importance of supporting long-term, sustained engagement rather than one-off projects. This aligns with community resilience strategies where a community develops the capacity to engage and respond to change to sustain, renew and collectively develop (Magis, 2010).

Support, in this sense, is a way to upskill communities to have agency over and reclaim their local shared spaces. P1 states that by providing individuals with new skills, they feel more empowered. P12, working at the council, discussed his approach to working with community leaders was to offer training to residents to become better advocates and promote community engagement. This approach highlights the need to invest in people rather than solely focusing on the council's role, thereby contributing to more sustainable public

engagement. P12 also mentioned that this model is not commonly seen across the country, underscoring Manchester City Council's unique and effective nature.

P9 and P11 stressed the need for a balance between local knowledge and professional knowledge, highlighting the importance of sharing skills and adopting appropriate approaches. P11 explained that:

*"Local people have tons of expertise because they live locally; they bring their life experience, knowledge of the place, its history, and what's going on. This is as important as professionals bringing their technical knowledge".*

She argued that both aspects are necessary to enable communities to invite professionals to support their desired initiatives. P7 also underscored the significance of a diverse skill set to maximise the level of creativity within a project. Achieving this balance requires a collective understanding of everyone's role in decision-making processes. Hou and Grohmann (2018) reiterate this concept by discussing the importance of clarity of roles to ensure participatory planning is achievable.

P12 discusses the establishment of a participatory culture, emphasising their role in building such a culture. He suggested that it can be achieved through a combination of quick, enjoyable, and engaging activities while maintaining a broader perspective. Understanding the factors contributing to creating and sustaining a culture of engagement is essential, and examples of successful implementation should be sought (Ansell and Torfing, 2021).

The key elements of this culture of engagement can be derived from P5's insights on the three core values of community organising: *"Listening, Power, and Action"*. She highlighted the significance of listening workshops in community groups, stressing that community organising was not solely about imposing one's own ideas on the community but rather about gaining a comprehensive understanding of the entire community and fostering collaboration and relationships.

In addition, P9 asserted that recognition should be given to all contributing individuals, not just those who have *'loud voices'* or are highly active. She also observed that certain parks or greenspaces tend to be dominated by a few vocal and exceptional individuals, while many others go unrecognised for their contributions. P13 iterated the importance of making sure engagement is completed with as many community members as possible and not allowing *"one person with the strongest opinion or the loudest voice dominate"*. This sentiment was echoed by several interviewees (P1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 14), underscoring the importance of acknowledging participation in any capacity. For example, when discussing the sustainability of engagement, P9 discussed:

*“I think the difficulty is, there's only a few people that are completely engaged and actively and publicly talking about it... but it's about giving credit to the people who are quietly doing it... sometimes in a space like that, it tends to become owned by a few vocal, fantastic people. But there's actually this, mass of other people who don't get recognised for it”.*

Another crucial consideration is how engagement activities and opportunities are shared, implemented, and evaluated. P14 added that there is often a significant amount of engagement that goes unnoticed or unacknowledged, such that there is a higher level of participation occurring than what is commonly perceived:

*“It's not so much the big paid charities or organisations; it's volunteers who actually are the backbone of a lot of spaces and places, keeping them going... in terms of levels of participation, I think there is a huge amount out there” P14.*

P3 further reflects on the prevalence of public engagement, emphasising how it has become saturated to the point where one's choices and modes of public participation are closely tied to their professional decisions, reputation-building, and profile development (Alford, 2009; Pestoff, 2012). This suggests that in the UK, our participation choices and preferences are influenced by their alignment with our individual lives and professional lifestyles. For example, in my case, I chose to volunteer for a friends group or an environmentally focused charity because it aligns with my PhD research and career interests. However, it is important to note that not everyone shares the same motivations for participation.

Barriers to supporting engagement in UGS, whether through creative engagement or general contributions to sustainable action, must be carefully considered. Support and the level of presence can be intertwined with elements of engagement, as support often involves both physical and digital elements, such as directing individuals to the right resources or physically being present in the community. Within this intersection, various topics were discussed, including funding, training, emotional support, and collaborative support, all of which are interconnected and influenced by power dynamics and the level of support from exterior entities to individuals or groups taking environmental action.

One significant barrier that P12 highlighted concerned the discrepancy between decisions made at the Town Hall level and their implementation at the neighbourhood level. In other words, decisions have already been finalised, and the social value is predetermined before the affected community can engage, interact, and formulate opinions. P12 also commented, *“often you don't have the power in neighbourhoods to work with people to define social*

*value*". He elaborated on his experiences working with developers, noting that in many cases, the power to define social value in neighbourhoods lies with developers rather than community members. Developers are primarily motivated by financial considerations, aiming to generate profits for their shareholders and sustain their business operations. Consequently, there is limited opportunity for meaningful community engagement and consultation, leading to a growing trend of projects being initiated with little to no consultation. This phenomenon suggests that participation has become dominated by statutory actors. Cornwall (2017) discussed institutional participation as a means for more networks to be included within decision-making whilst realising there is still a long way to go to establish equitable arenas for engagement. P3 further contributed to the discussion by highlighting how the language surrounding public participation, engagement, and consultation has become a mere box-ticking exercise for property developers, governing bodies, and even local authorities. This situation underscores the lack of support for individuals who aspire to be part of the decision-making process and understand the plans before they are finalised (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015).

Funding emerged as a common barrier to engagement, as all participants mentioned that funding heavily influences the projects and level of involvement they undertake. Practical barriers associated with funding include limitations in terms of knowledge, capacity and resource. P5 highlighted how these constraints can hinder creativity and imagination, as the pressure to deliver results with limited resources poses a significant challenge. To address this, P1 emphasised the importance of taking a step back, breathing, and proceeding at the right pace for all involved.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that being flexible with time constraints and deliverables is not always feasible. P12 pointed out that people's time ultimately costs money, citing significant budget cuts that have caused the council to lose staff, expertise, and knowledge. The shifting priorities of the council over time, driven by considerations of time, money, and knowledge, further contribute to the challenges faced in providing adequate support. P12 further commented that "*the ethos of the Council – and some councils are more progressive than others – means that it really comes back to time and money and knowledge*".

Academia may present an opportunity for better support of creative engagement, with P14 noting that it currently falls short in this regard, highlighting a gap where research is conducted without actively contributing to larger goals. Ethical research that promotes mutual benefits and contributes to systems and structures must be advocated for, emphasising the need for academia to support research and environmental action symbiotically. This research needs to extend beyond conducting participatory research for the



sake of it and place emphasis on the value of voluntary work and engagement, especially from those who quietly contribute. Furthermore, P9 and P13 suggested that it is essential for future investigations to be relevant to those who wish to engage with UGS. Additionally, it was determined that facilitators should receive appropriate training to conduct participatory research effectively, recognising the emotional labour involved.

Prototyping or role-playing when decision-making was iterated by P3 as a means to enhance support and engagement. An example of this form of prototyping was the People's Pop-up Park in Stevenson Square in 2019. The illustration and photos below (Figures 16-19) show the event at the time. This type of urban prototyping enabled individuals to envision alternative uses of space realistically and imaginatively. Such initiatives provide a sense of ownership over local spaces, allowing for direct influence in shaping future plans. Figure 18 shows that the visualisation commissioned by the council following this event depicts a different version of what Stevenson Square could look like with increased pedestrianisation. It does not reflect how people used and imagined the space. For example, there were more areas to sit and congregate, more 'vegetation' and no indicators of mass markets or vendors in the area. This highlights a discrepancy between how urban planners design and how people want to use space. P3 elaborated, "*why are those worlds not more intertwined, why are those worlds not actually just going, oh heck you know what guys, we need to like learn from each other on this*". This further provides an opportunity to increase support for these types of initiatives. The Pop-Up Park in Stevenson Square was a community-led initiative, not funded by the council, yet the council and urban planners could have used this large-scale prototyping to inform their design to reflect how people are and want to use space.



Figure 18: Image taken on the day (Dixon, 2019)



Figure 17: The Clean Air Day event in Stevenson Square - the People's Pop Up Park (Manchester Evening News, 2019)



Figure 16: Illustration of the People's Pop-Up Park (no author, 2019)



Figure 19: An artist's impression of what a permanently pedestrianised Stevenson Square could look like (Image: GMCA) (Manchester Evening News, 2019)

When developing a creative atmosphere, P10 spoke about how people can interact with people making decisions in UGS in the first instance to understand what is possible. She reflected, *“how often do you see park managers hanging around talking to people in the space rather than being in an office.”* Furthermore, she raised a pertinent question:

*“80% of people live in urban areas now (it's not just the minorities, it's everybody), how can you get people who actually either own or manage these spaces to begin to create that creative atmosphere?”*

Integrating creative engagement approaches to decision-making can help people think more broadly or differently about space and what they want to see in UGS. P1 suggested that talking to the local community and understanding their needs and trigger points is identified as the fundamental first step. P3 further emphasised a previously mentioned point of the importance of *“seeing is believing”* and proposes using prototyping as a creative method to experiment and explore new possibilities. Role-playing within prototype spaces can be a powerful tool for understanding how people want to interact and engage with a given environment. Although nature presents challenges in prototyping, creativity can be employed to represent it effectively. The People's Pop-Up Park example demonstrates the value of gathering ideas from the public and using role-playing to move away from assumptions and design for urban nature (wildlife). In 1949, discussions revolved around role-play as an opportunity to begin addressing social action (Young and Rosenberg, 1949). This approach has been further developed to build empathy, challenge people's assumptions, facilitate meaningful conversation and inspire novel outcomes through scenario building (Kumar, 2012). Therefore, creating environments where people can envisage ideas and express thoughts without immediate consequence can facilitate knowledge exchange and understanding of processes and decision-making in UGS.

The significance of ownership and pride is highlighted by P13, who worked on a project in Alexandra Park, acknowledging initial controversy and resistance that later transformed into acceptance and appreciation for the necessary changes. She explained:

*“there was much resistance to that project initially because many trees were taken down to strip [the park] back to its original Victorian design. There was much controversy about that, and a lot of kind of resentment and anger about the project initially, but now people love it”.*

Reflecting with the community about this project, P13 said that everyone agreed that it was a necessary requirement and that people were happy with the park's reform. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that decision-makers in these

spaces are equipped to facilitate conversations and provide support and understanding regarding project acceptance, funding, and execution.

Ultimately, better support needs to be planned for, assessed, and monitored throughout any engagement project. Facilitators or those supporting environmental action need to be equipped with skills to unlock the potential of people to contribute in more confident ways. Lack of confidence often stems from a fear of judgment or vulnerability. This fear was summed up by P14:

*“the fear that people have that what they're about to do or say, or produce is going to come back on them in some way, then it prevents people from being creative, or wanting to participate”.*

Creating a safe environment where participants can develop ideas and articulate their needs in a style that suits them becomes essential. Overcoming this challenge is complex, as activities in projects across the city prioritise time, money, and resources. P3 shared an anecdote where an architect expressed reluctance to engage with people:

*“I don't want to have to deal with the community... that's not what I enjoy, it's not what I do'... I found it really arrogant, but I think he was being facetious... but it's something that desperately needs questioning... that you can't really design a building [or space] without knowing or understanding the participation of the people, you know it really matters”.*

This highlights a systemic issue that needs to be addressed in UGS decision-making. It is, therefore, important to recognise and understand the engagement of the people within space and design with these insights in mind.

#### ***4.5.ii Support in the Case Studies***

The case studies presented in this section highlight the critical role that multiple sources of support play in ensuring the sustainability of public engagement projects. Insufficient support, whether in the form of financial resources or other forms of assistance, can significantly impede the progress of seemingly simple tasks. In its various dimensions, support encompasses funding, capacity building, resource allocation, and collaboration with different stakeholders. For instance, community members, individuals, institutions, organisations, and local councils can contribute to initiating, functioning, and establishing networks for long-term environmental action. In each specific case study, support was frequently cited as a key consideration for ensuring the viability of collective environmental action.

##### ***4.5.ii.a Groundwork GM***

Groundwork GM was particularly interested in identifying the support requirements of volunteers involved in local environmental action and

assessing the organisational opportunities and challenges associated with such support. Consequently, improved assistance emerged as a priority area for Groundwork GM, prompting them to actively seek avenues for enhanced support to streamline and sustain environmental action. However, the effectiveness of surveys and reports in improving support for volunteers remains uncertain. Nevertheless, conducting such assessments represents a crucial step toward comprehending the dynamics of collaborative action and identifying the associated challenges.

When asked about the current support they have received from organisations, 53% (43 out of 89) of volunteers have completed training as part of their voluntary work, yet 70% (28 out of 40) of volunteers have not been accredited (formally or informally) for training that they have completed. Furthermore, only 29.5% (13 out of 44) of volunteers are aware of recognition schemes (such as personal development, certificates and awards) within their group or organisation – and were not necessarily receiving them. This uncovers an opportunity to better support groups for their voluntary work. When asked about their group's connectivity, results showed that only 13% (11 out of 83) of volunteer respondents are connected to both friends groups and organisations (Figure 20). This insight indicates a need to improve the connectivity of groups and support from organisations across GM.

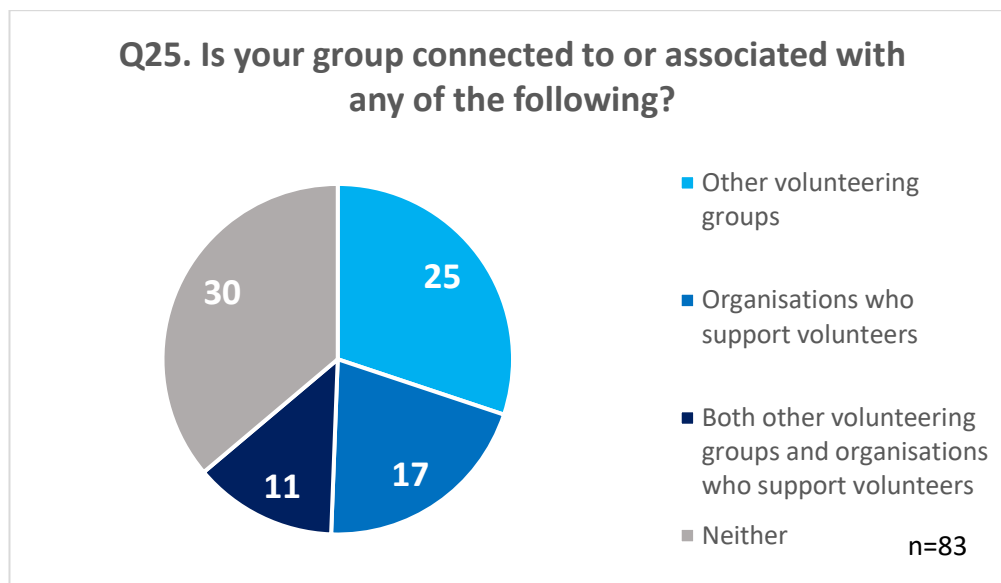


Figure 20: Volunteer results from Q25

Other results revealed that 84.1% (37 out of 44) of organisation respondents said they support volunteers through training opportunities, yet only 52.8% (47 out of 89) of volunteers have accessed training. This indicated an opportunity to better support or incentivise training for volunteers through organisations to help upskill volunteers.



Training volunteers was deemed an important aspect of an organisation's role. Figure 21 shows the types of training available according to the organisation respondents. In total, 59.5% of organisations provide both in-house and external training, suggesting ample opportunity to develop skills as a volunteer. Interestingly, only 17.1% (7 out of 41) of volunteers have received in-house training, and only 24.4% (10 out of 41) have received any external courses funded by organisations.

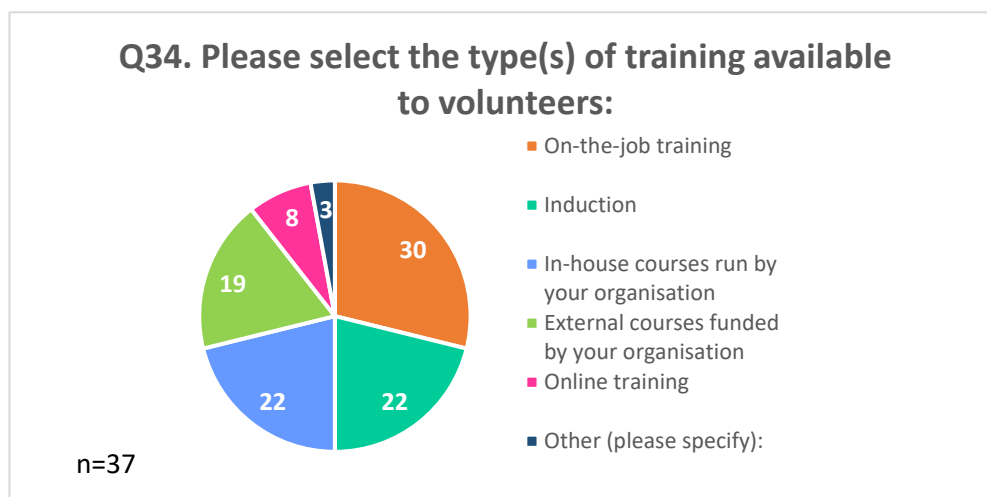


Figure 21: Organisation results from Q34

A way to incentivise training is to provide some form of recognition on completion, whether it be formal or informal. Responding to the questions regarding recognition, only 38.6% (17 out of 44) of respondents from organisations use recognition schemes for their volunteers. Where training was offered and completed, only 30% (12 out of 40) of volunteer respondents said they received accreditation (Table 21). This is an important form of recognition for skill development and voluntary work. Recognising voluntary work has proved to be a crucial factor in motivating people to continue with their environmental action.

Q20. Were you accredited in any way for completing your training?		
Yes	12	30%
No	28	70%
answered	40	

Table 21: Volunteer results from Q20

The overall results showed inconsistencies in voluntary support and experiences, especially when it comes to accessing training, recognition for training and connectivity. Furthermore, there is no cohesive support system between organisations and environmental volunteers. Consequently, the ease of navigation and dissemination of opportunities is not effective enough, and

these factors could inhibit rather than facilitate the impact on people and the environment. Therefore, a suggested hypothesis is that a better environmentally focused system may help to ensure that environmental volunteers and supporting organisations are better connected. This could not only help support people's action in UGS but also motivate and encourage more action.

#### 4.5.ii.b FoBP

FoBP exemplify a group that seeks greater help but currently faces limitations due to inconsistent support from the local council and park rangers and the absence of organisational assistance. Council representatives and other decision-makers responsible for the park rarely attend FoBP meetings and infrequently provide updates to the committee. This situation is indicative of the austerity measures impacting local governance, particularly within the parks department, where an individual may oversee the management of over 40 parks across the city. Even the park rangers in Manchester are tasked with managing several greenspaces simultaneously. Consequently, maintaining consistent communication channels becomes a significant challenge. FoBP often feels disheartened by their exclusion and finds it difficult to participate in the decision-making processes of the park, despite their longstanding commitment to its maintenance over the past 20+ years. The chair remarked:

*"I'd like to get more recognition for the work we do. In terms of recognition from organisations and councils - it would also be nice to have an archive of what we've achieved over the years - we must have raised up to £500,000 till now".*

The group agreed that this effort was ultimately impressive and warranted some form of recognition. During the focus group, FoBP were asked, 'how would you like to see Birchfields Park in 2025?'. Throughout the conversation, basic maintenance issues were raised, such as *"good paths and better amenities"*, *"more information about the park"*, and *"better access into the park and to restore some of the features"*. Further responses were recorded on the MIRO board (shown in Figure 22). With key group members being biodiversity- and wildlife-focused, results tended to revolve around introducing more native plants and more wildlife areas and engagement that helped to share the importance of these areas. However, as the friends grow in membership, the focus has developed to become more inclusive of different ways to engage with the park.

Maintenance issues were important and frustrated the friends. This was also discussed in the motivation section of the analysis and is thought to be due to confusion over who on the council they should report to. Participants remarked that it is more common now that the council outsources third parties





taking care of the UGS and those making decisions and provided insights into how to begin to address those concerns. Having the focus group online using a platform that could facilitate collective idea generation provided an opportunity to articulate issues dynamically. In turn, this allowed them to begin to focus on priority areas for improving support (i.e. who FoBP need input from in their meetings and what they want to collectively achieve moving forward).

#### 4.5.ii.c MUD

MUD have encountered limited support from the council, particularly during the initial stages of their endeavour to reclaim unused spaces. Their journey involved navigating through bureaucratic obstacles and struggling to gain support from influential entities to improve an unused and overgrown bowling green for the surrounding community. One participant mentioned that the council is often *“driven by capital”*; therefore, it is difficult to navigate that ‘world’ if, as an organisation, they are more community garden and growing focused. Despite these challenges, MUD has earned a reputation for enhancing spaces, connecting people with nature and local food sources, and celebrating local culture. Their successful model has even been adopted in other greenspaces. Consequently, the founding members now find themselves stretched thin, seeking external support such as funding and ensuring the overall sustainability of their environmental initiatives. From the perspective of MUD's volunteers (e.g. those who regularly contribute to the Platt Fields Market Gardens), the experience of volunteering within MUD's safe space has proven instrumental in fostering positive mental health. This demonstrates the multifaceted nature of internal and external support as it relates to MUD.

Volunteers interviewed within the project shared that they felt very supported by MUD and their ethos. One participant remarked that volunteering with MUD *“has helped me deal with my mental health issues as I have met lots of new friends and feel useful to the community”*. Two others shared that they were supported to complete a course hosted by MUD to develop gardening skills. Furthermore, another participant said that MUD have accommodated her level of involvement as she remarked she is an older volunteer, *“they are very inclusive to me... they are very organised whilst being relaxed”*.

Going forward, one volunteer remarked that for MUD to develop further, *“they need someone that can support them”*. They have previously developed effective partnerships with numerous organisations, including corporations, small businesses, and not-for-profit organisations, to develop community gardens around Manchester. Partnerships are increasingly more common and more successful in funding bids. More ‘buy-in’ or support from different organisations strengthens projects and their potential impact; therefore, it is worthwhile seeking multiple opportunities to work together, not only to get further funding but also to exchange knowledge and skills. Even partnering

with bigger corporations can be beneficial due to potentially larger funding pots being available. Although one participant stated caution may need to be taken depending on their corporate responsibility and resource, in other words, *“working with an oil company or a climate change denying company would not be a suitable match”* for environmentally focused projects due to limited shared morals or priorities.

Subsequently, since this project in 2021, MUD have hired a funding manager that has dedicated time to complete funding applications and organise fundraising events. This is time-consuming, competitive and often extremely tedious. With a tendency of grassroots community groups being hands-on and focused on practical aspects of spaces, achieving a steady flow of income is difficult. They continually seek support for their work but ultimately want to develop a self-sustaining enterprise that directors of MUD say can *“support itself”*.

#### 4.5.ii.d MM

MM aim to establish stronger support networks and foster ecological care. Through this seed project, the museum gained valuable insights into the extent of networks and actions taking place across the city. Overall, the groups interviewed and included in the research expressed a need for increased support in terms of assistance with funding applications, support with collaborative projects and help to promote their work. Notably, those interviewed said they would like to collaborate with the museum either on future projects or through being able to use their space to host events. Positioned as a centralised hub, MM now provides groups with the opportunity for space to convene and organise activities. In turn, this helps to sustain a support system for those engaged in environmental action.

The results from the report helped to support the museum’s decision to develop this hub; as one of the museum staff explained:

*“The interviews allowed for that evidence to support the development of the hub and connections to people to develop. So that gave me some grounding to make an assessment of where we were but also why we made certain decisions about what we’re going to do. It was really useful to have something that felt like an external perspective grounded in community research to offer something tangible to say this is why we are doing this”.*

MM’s response moving forward must focus on persistent support that can be made visible within the community to build relationships and networks. This is also true of other institutions or organisations with influence or power. Having a hub for like-minded people allows them to commit to environmental action that can help establish stronger networks and more impactful work.

Overall, this case study identified an extensive network, albeit not fully connected, of environmental expertise and knowledge across Manchester that is available and accessible to those determined to find it. Findings have indicated that the best way institutions (or organisations) can support groups is by developing structural systems tailored to the different levels of support those groups need. The key area of need would be supporting groups with financial help and access to grants or funding pots. Additionally, it is crucial that any future work of this nature contributes towards building deeper connections between groups and has a long-term plan - especially not just one-off events. This has helped to identify what factors are important to consider and has influenced recommendations within the creative engagement framework for improving the quality of contributions to those planning activities.

#### *4.5.iii Applying Creativity to Support*

Those interviewed took support very seriously and often saw themselves as facilitators of (creative) engagement. They sought to provide greater assistance in project development, emphasising sustained relationships and fostering environments for iterative feedback.

As previously mentioned, having a presence within UGS was deemed an important factor for those supporting action-takers. This alluded to having something or, in certain cases, someone within the area or UGS, which means people know who to contact when issues arise or if they want to organise something within the space. Presence with the interviewees was brought up when discussing the sustainability of support in projects within UGS and how one-off projects in areas are often interpreted by communities as organisations, institutions and groups 'parachuting in' and then leaving after the project is finished. Therefore, if support is only temporary or sometimes transactional, then the trust of communities may be reduced for future projects (see Arnstien, 1969 and O'Hare, 2021). Presence was also linked to seeing a tangible positive change in a space. "*Seeing is believing*" was a term used to discuss presence and support. In turn, any change within a given space can instigate discussions and engagement in different localities. Creative approaches can therefore be applied to any planned change or intervention in UGS. In this sense, creative engagement can be used to provoke or stimulate interest. Consequently, the planned support structures need to incubate motivation and drive informed decision-making about environmental action in UGS.

The three aspects of support mentioned frequently across both methods were Knowledge, Capacity and Time. Under these topics came finance, skills and

knowledge exchange, as well as bureaucracy, red tape, decision-making, and systemic challenges. At its core, good support is an opportunity to connect those with lifetimes of site-specific knowledge. Therefore, the goal should be centred on building relationships and trust to get the best out of everyone. To develop these connections, engagement facilitators can adopt the creative approaches highlighted in the creative engagement framework (CEF). Support was often discussed with a focus on improving connections to people who use and work with spaces and those who control and decide what can or cannot happen. Furthermore, it was suggested that support can sustain environmental action.

Appreciation of people, groups or communities having different support needs allows creativity to be applied when approaching relationships. For example, what might work to attract certain types of people may not be appropriate for others. Therefore, multiple creative approaches need to be considered. A series of creative tools or creative approaches can be used to ensure a facilitator can meet someone at their level, creating more meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships. Bringing in creative approaches to introduce collaborators can be a more human-centred strategy to improve processes and allow people to express themselves, ultimately leading to more open and honest discussions.

#### *Framework Input - Support*

It is clear from the research methods conducted in this thesis that an effective support system is the foundation for sustainable action. In turn, it is intrinsic that future projects should effectively manage the expectations of all those involved and employ active listening skills to ensure participation is taking onboard people's thoughts and ideas. Support should be thought through before starting a project and therefore is a crucial consideration for organising engagement in the first instance.

#### ***4.5.iv Summary - Support***

There is a pressing need to enhance the accessibility of support when interacting with greenspaces. Results showed that limited support in terms of financial resources can undermine motivation for environmental action. In turn, it can lead to discouragement and frustration with ineffective systems of change (O'Hare, 2021). Providing increased support and fostering transparency in decision-making processes makes it easier for individuals to engage and actively participate (Moore, 2010). Inclusive systems, such as SeeClickFix (2024) a platform for reporting issues to local government, can be employed to facilitate engagement and promote a sense of inclusivity.

The findings from the interviews and case studies highlight the pivotal role of support in promoting and sustaining public engagement in environmental action. This takes various forms, encompassing financial resources, capacity building, resource allocation, and collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Interviewees emphasised the importance of actively listening to individuals' desires and aspirations, fostering openness, and tailoring engagement experiences to participants' needs. Furthermore, the case studies highlighted the critical role consistency played in providing support in terms of finance and skills sharing to ensure the sustainability of public engagement projects. Recognition of the efforts of engaged individuals, including older volunteers, was deemed crucial. Facilitation emerged as a common theme, highlighting the need for skilled facilitators to guide motivated individuals through the process of change.

Creativity was seen as a valuable tool for engagement, but interviewees cautioned against a lack of structure and emphasised the importance of clarity regarding the amount of structure in engagement. For instance, organisations may have set deliverables that structure engagement, whereas voluntary groups may have more opportunities to try several approaches. Therefore, being transparent about what is achievable during the engagement process from the facilitator's perspective is essential. Embracing a range of approaches was advocated for broader engagement, though challenges in realising diversity were noted due to resource and capacity limitations. This is also reflected in Perry et al.'s (2019) study, where evidence showed creative approaches can aid in overcoming consultation fatigue and reignite the interest of those participating.

Fostering self-confidence and capacity building were identified as ways to support communities in engaging with their environments effectively. Balancing local knowledge with professional expertise was deemed essential, emphasising the significance of sharing skills and adopting appropriate approaches. A culture of engagement centred around values of listening, power, and action is crucial. This reflects the notion of more site-specific approaches that are adaptable and inclusive (Campbell and Svendsen, 2008; Fisher, Svendsen and Connolly, 2015; Nesbitt et al., 2018).

These findings highlight the need for enhanced and accessible support in environmental action, recognising its multifaceted nature and impact on motivation and engagement. Transparent decision-making processes and inclusive systems can facilitate engagement and promote a sense of inclusivity.

## 4.6 Communication

### 4.6.i Communication in the Interviews

Effective communication permeates all the other themes, as it serves as a fundamental pillar for successful public engagement in environmental action. It is a universal component in participation, exhibiting variability across different projects and achieving its utmost efficacy when all parties possess a sense of agency and communication skills. When communication falters, it can lead to frustration, apathy, and strained relationships in participation processes, whereas to be effective, communication must be transparent and uncorrupted (Perry et al., 2019).

Transparency in communication holds particular significance, especially from the standpoint of a facilitator, as it allows the realisation of intentions, plans and decisions (Moore, 2010). P2 highlighted the importance of commitment to the engagement process to prevent disillusionment and subsequent disengagement. Throughout the interviews, participants consistently emphasised the role of communication in guiding their projects. P10 underscored this by stating, "*Communication is the key to finding out more about people and the space, in terms of understanding the community you are working with*". Engaging in conversations revealed crucial information about their needs, desires, and aspirations, ultimately expanding the opportunity for positive change. P10 continued, "*If ordinary people do not have a sense of potential for change, then they don't tell you anything*". When individuals perceive the potential for change, they are more likely to actively contribute to the process.

Listening emerged as a central theme in discussions about communication in participation. P2 highlighted the consequences of inadequate listening, explaining that it can lead to indifference among participants who doubt whether their voices will truly be heard or have an impact. This scepticism often occurs because decisions are frequently made irrespective of their input (O'Hare, 2021). This leads to what participants labelled 'consultation fatigue', where people become apathetic to engagement processes. P11 proposed a remedy for consultation fatigue by suggesting an alternative approach which emphasises the importance of demonstrating that people's inputs are valued, even if it's not replicated verbatim. This acknowledgement can rekindle participants' belief in the process. This insight underscores the significance of capturing and making participants' views visible and accessible in the research; safeguarding the visible and recognising the invisible (Haraway, 2016).

P1 underscored the importance of acknowledging individuals who raise complaints or pose challenges in the participation process. She noted that people often shy away from engaging with those who express concerns, but these individuals can bring valuable perspectives and ideas to the table. This

observation highlights the need for additional training for those involved in participation to enhance social responsibility and empathy skills, ultimately improving communication and building stronger relationships.

P14 talked about how the complexities of community-based practice or participation are often not taught until the practitioner gets 'stuck in' and mentioned that it is an experience that '*develops over time*' through hands-on involvement. P14 also raised a critical perspective of academic rigour in the evaluation of engagement, challenging the assumption that an increased quantity of interviews correlates with increased rigour. She illustrated this by contrasting the value of conducting 80 brief interviews with the depth and richness obtained from 10 comprehensive conversations. She advocated for a deeper understanding of the individuals behind the data, emphasising the importance of social justice and addressing inequalities in research rather than focusing on numbers. This reflects a call for *deep* data over *big* data when concerning people's needs and experiences (Gheerawo, 2018).

P13 discussed the transition from theory to practice for university graduates by remarking that software offers a way in which designers can communicate realistic ideas that can provide a clear visual to know what to expect from a project. However, through their experience, she remarked that speaking directly to people is always better, she set the scene for the type of engagement she enjoys:

*"Nothing beats really sitting in a draughty community centre with a cup of really bad coffee and just waiting for the public to come in, and to engage with them and talk them through the designs... sometimes stripping it down to basics, basic communication, getting an understanding from people in terms of what they want is a really, really important part of any kind of public space programme".*

Hence, the value of digital tools and face-to-face interactions is emphasised through the communication of design ideas, particularly in public-facing forums. Stripping participation '*down to basics*', P1 emphasised the significance of simply speaking to people by stating, "*I think we're surveyed to death and people don't really look at the surveys unless you're in that kind of business or you got that passion*". P1 also stressed the need for clearer communication about the benefits of involvement to foster mutual understanding and support, especially in complex engagement processes. This is quite a simplistic approach to take when other interviewees discussed that participation can be complex, but perhaps having a simple framework to follow allows for the process to be more inclusive (Perry et al., 2019).

P12 pointed out that the confusion surrounding participation terminology is dependent on what one wants to achieve through the process. Often, this can

be challenging when collaborating across different agencies. He also noted there was a tendency for councils to fluctuate between innovative and conservative approaches. He highlighted that the council in Manchester does not have a good *“history of really good community engagement”* despite them being able to do some innovative projects. He discussed his experience in the council as having peaks and troughs of engagement and then *‘conservatism hits back’*. The trial-and-error nature of participation and the importance of collective learning and idea development are deemed essential to enabling good practice. Throughout the interviews, participants mentioned the ability to gather ‘lessons learned’ to improve strategy and effectiveness. Some of these lessons come from being able to ascertain motivations and beliefs for involvement. P10 underscored the value of achieving this by gauging people's natural conversations about specific topics to assess awareness and engagement levels.

The interviews revealed concepts that contributed to the development of a framework for increasing engagement in environmental action which allows the incorporation of creative activities designed to achieve deeper connections to interested parties. P9 provided a defining perspective on creative participation, emphasising the importance of activities that disrupt the norm and engage participants actively, moving beyond mundane conversations. She described creative engagement as *“just tapping into things that slightly disrupt... just because you've got something to focus on, rather than just having a conversation, there's something to actively do”*. This definition emphasises the value of genuine connections and the avoidance of conventional and often dull approaches. It is often the case that people are not consulted or included in urban planning processes (Perry et al., 2019; O'Hare, 2021). P9 elaborated that *“often people who are not usually approached in parks are shocked to be asked their opinion about the space they are in”*. Similarly, this was also mentioned by P7, thus, demonstrating the importance of speaking with people on-site about where the plans are affecting them.

P3's perspective aligns with the research's aim, highlighting that public participation is, at its core, a form of social connection. Shifting the focus from involvement to social connection opens the door to more meaningful and transformative approaches, moving beyond checkbox engagement strategies and fostering relationships that resonate with our inherent connection to space and place (Macaulay et al., 2022b).

Social interaction can be linked to emotions and understanding people's emotions can be a useful way to delve deeper into people's connections and relationships with nature. P10 suggested using numerical scales to measure emotions as a precise method to understand, what motivates individuals to engage. She stated from her experience of engagement, *“people's feelings are very precise... You know what the difference between 3.1 and 3.7 is? You even*



*know the difference between 3.3 and 3.4*". Therefore, she highlights the precision of numeric ratings, emphasising the value of quantifiable data in assessing emotions. While this is an approach that can be useful to determine how people feel, it is essential to complement this approach with qualitative data, involving detailed conversations and multi-faceted assessments to fully capture the complexities of motivation (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Results showed that good communication influences a person's motivation, thus allowing an activity or opportunity to be conveyed better to individuals. This can then progress from initiation to completion and illustrates how recognition for contributions is communicated, including the platforms or mediums used. Additionally, communication plays a role in describing the impact of engagement on the involved individuals. P1 emphasised the importance of understanding motivations from the outset and adapting engagement methods based on participants' needs and expectations. This approach reflects an iterative and flexible process that responds to participants' input and encourages deeper exploration of motivations. Again, this resonates with the Jam and Justice project (Perry et al., 2019) where reflexivity is deemed an essential aspect of participatory projects.

The interviews revealed persistent communication barriers, from both interpersonal communication challenges and issues within bureaucratic systems. Hence, the pursuit of effective communication channels often encounters hurdles at all levels of administration. P12 illustrated this by discussing the communication of policies, highlighting the inconsistency and challenges in how policies are conveyed, varying from person to person and between different organisations, institutions, or charities.

Employees of Manchester City Council also pointed out internal barriers, with difficulties in understanding "*who is doing what*" within the council itself. They noted that language and communication styles differ across departments, causing confusion. For example, P12 talked about how Highways use the word *consultation* to tell people what they are doing, whereas, in the Neighbourhoods team they use *consultation* to get ideas and work with people. Furthermore, predetermined outcomes can hinder meaningful engagement, as P3 discussed "*I think certainly with green spaces in urban development, public participation can be really controlled*", highlighting how decisions may already be made despite soliciting public input.

P10 stressed the importance of establishing clear communication channels to avoid assumptions that certain actions are prohibited, especially when park signage is restrictive, "*a lot of signs in parks say don't do this, don't do that*". The 'ruling' of how people should behave and use public spaces can be a demotivating factor towards engaging with the space, and P10 further commented on how parks put signs up whereby visitors/users are told they cannot play ball games, cannot feed birds or loiter. Hence, there is:

*“that sense of control - you immediately create a sense that this is a park that doesn't allow you to do anything. They really control it. And people don't like it”.*

Before even entering a space which is publicly ‘accessible’, people are already under a certain level of control and constraint. This is not to say these are not valid rules and guidance that should be in place; but how they are delivered can be quite threatening. Examples of this type of signage are shown in Figure 23.



Figure 23: Author's own photos from Crowcroft Park in Longsight, Manchester (2019).

P11 suggested that good communication is achievable but often hindered by the use of specialised language, emphasising the need for a universal language that simplifies concepts and reduces misunderstandings, *“otherwise you just mystify everything”*. P9 and P13 suggested that creating relatable experiences and working on comprehensible language in urban planning and development could be seen as ways to address these communication barriers. Additionally, working across sectors was identified as a means to share knowledge and increase transparency. P11 discussed there is a lot of work being undertaken in this area but there is a need to work together to ensure communication channels remain open.

Language and communication barriers can be effectively addressed through design principles, as noted by P3. She discussed, how *“design can be a key in making sure we learn from what has been done before”*, emphasising the need for a universal language in UGS planning and management, advocating for everyday language to make concepts more accessible. She continued with:

*“we need a place-making literacy which I know place makers and I know the place-making community are really trying hard to promote and articulate, but there's more work to be done”.*

She remarked that this work can be achieved through the inclusion of those who have received design school training where the idea of *“design language is actually everyday language because it can enhance the way we think more systematically”*. In turn, this inclusion of designers within these processes can facilitate a more inclusive understanding of space and the associated decisions being made. Through the incorporation of an ‘everyday language’ within participation and urban development, she believes it would help to empower individuals to participate more meaningfully and make informed decisions by learning from past experiences. This was an important consideration to take forward when developing a framework.

P14 highlighted the value of creativity in public participation, commenting that it *“gives you a much broader toolkit and provides a 'different way of emphasising’*. It is, therefore, important when approaching uncertain or unfamiliar concepts and problems, that creative engagement should strike a balance between good communication, openness and structure. While allowing participants to lead the outcome is important, clear intentions and guidelines are also essential to avoid frustration and power struggles, as P14 elaborated, *“I think there is something about valuing artists, creative practitioners and facilitators in that process”*.

It was discussed that within the structure of participation, multiple agendas are at play. P5 pointed out *“sometimes people talk about how there's a blank sheet, and to start with no agenda, but that's rarely possible”*. Agendas often influence public participation and P5 discussed the importance of openly discussing them at the project's outset. She acknowledged the challenge of maintaining creativity in decision-making, noting that once a decision is reached, the creative process can be perceived as concluded, noting, that once a decision is made, it is no longer creative. Instead, they advocated for open dialogue, responsiveness, questioning, and listening to foster a coproduction approach. A critique of this method is that it can take time and be a little convoluted to get to an agreement or, ultimately, a decision (Perry et al., 2019). However, P11 added that the creative process can be messy and chaotic but is essential for innovation, even if it may take time to reach agreements or decisions.

For some participants, creativity is seen as an extension of the self (P9, 10, and 14), making this process more accessible and natural for facilitators, although this can also create barriers for others, as entering a creative space may be challenging for some. It has been suggested that neglecting someone's experience, especially when it comes to creativity, can lead to more convergent thinking (Sun, Wang and Wegerif, 2020). Nevertheless, P8 and 13

believed that creativity can be (re)learned with an open mindset but the facilitator must adopt a genuine approach, as people can detect if facilitators do not fully believe in the process or project in general (as suggested by P9). Creativity can also be intimidating and often requires venturing into the unknown. Therefore, facilitators need to embrace this and provide encouragement and belief in the process. P10 expanded on the concept of creativity as an extension of the self, viewing it as an integral part of everyday life, rather than a mere product to sell and ultimately it can be a tool to engage with people:

*"I always thought of creativity as in continuity with ordinary life, and that there's creativity in everything whether you design the environment, or whether you create the process or participation, all of that can be done creatively... and when you involve people creatively, then you begin to see the different ways of getting people connected to nature, inspired by nature, and then ultimately, contributing to nature".*

Ultimately, facilitators of participation must remain open, allowing people to engage in decision-making and capturing their genuine opinions to drive effective change. The inclusion of creativity can therefore enhance the depth of understanding and enable an increased potential of engagement, in this case with nature and UGS.

In the first instance, interviewees identified the initial barrier in any participatory project as engaging with people. Once engagement is established, the communication process can unfold as follows: ensuring clarity about expectations and benefits for participants and emphasising the importance of a mutually beneficial process. P1 stressed it should be a "*win-win for everybody*." Additionally, P12 highlighted the importance of accountability for the project and its outcomes, although this can be difficult when collaborating. He mentioned the increasing pressure to quantify their work, especially regarding people's needs, aspirations, and emotions, which can be challenging. These conventional metrics for measuring impact are not effective when measuring intangible values such as emotion and well-being within the realms of urban planning (Moore, 2010). According to P12, 'the team' may rely on other projects and partners to meet their targets, potentially leading to delays, funding issues, and resource limitations, resulting in projects experiencing fluctuations in successful engagement.

Aligning organisational, charitable, and institutional objectives with community needs can also be challenging within bureaucratic systems. P7 expressed the difficulty of balancing project work with administrative tasks, emphasising the never-ending cycle of paperwork and fundraising efforts – "*your reward for finishing a report is another report, or your reward for finishing a fundraiser is some more fundraising*". The consistent energy required for public-facing,

community-based projects can therefore be exhausting, affecting everyone involved. This was also reflected in how some volunteer groups have had to fight for their UGS, P14 witnessed the resilience and frustration of volunteers trying to take on the state and developers over redevelopment in Knutsford Vale, stating:

*“you've got to be so resilient, and so determined that you are going to participate, you are going to be creative in getting that thing done. And you have to draw on levels that are just, you know, abusive... [for the council/developers] to put people through that, just pushing them to the very edge hoping they're just going to give up - it's really horrible to watch”.*

To ensure the continuity of support, communication, and flexibility, there is a need to address the longer-term sustainability aspects of this type of work.

Speaking specifically about creative engagement in this research, P8 cautioned that overly rigid adherence to rules and ‘norms’ could hinder the creative process. She suggested that rules and ‘norms’ should provide guidance rather than stifling creativity, but some individuals may be put off by having to conform to the logic and rules set by powerful entities or decision-makers in the context of public space. This perspective aligns with Sawyer et al., (2003), who argue that while the foundation of any creative act is shaped by the specific domain’s possibilities, its recognition as ‘creative’ is ultimately determined by the power dynamics within the field. Similarly, P8 suggests that the imposition of strict rules by authoritative figures may deter individuals from engaging creatively, particularly in the design and utilisation of public spaces. This is typically due to the constraints imposed by these governing structures.

Moreover, P8 emphasised the need for allocated time and resources to engage in more open and creative processes of engagement. She indicated that having the luxury of time and resources is crucial for fostering creative involvement. However, this luxury of time may not be the case for all those wanting to be involved, facilitators and participants alike. In examining the processes and organisation of engagement further, P14 identified institutional racism and structural inequality as significant barriers that can impact participation and creativity. It was pointed out that institutional violence can intentionally suppress creative engagement. P14 further highlighted the historical contributions of individuals facing significant barriers in life to social activism and challenged the prevailing narrative that activism is primarily driven by white middle-class individuals. This narrative was further explored in *Becoming an Environmental Activist* (Allen et al., 2007). It is, therefore, important to challenge this perception through communicating more effectively and developing multi-faceted opportunities to get involved and take environmental action. The next section discusses how communication affected the case studies.

#### 4.6.ii Communication in the Case Studies

Communication refers to being able to make informed and effective decisions. Across all case studies, there are gaps and disparities in communication that cause frustration and delays. If communication is limited and not managed effectively, then decisions can go ahead without any input from interested parties, namely, the people who are likely to be affected by them.

##### 4.6.ii.a Groundwork GM

The research conducted for Groundwork GM gave a broad overview of this theme. There were many variations in how volunteers and organisations communicated and worked together, some groups felt more connected than others. Again, a limitation of an online survey to complete this work meant that communication was also limited to those with computer access and digital literacy. Alas, this is a wider issue in terms of how organisations communicate with their interested parties. As digital communication is a common way to send messages and works well for lots of groups, a more inclusive approach is necessary to ensure communication is accessible.

The graph below shows what main methods of communication between groups according to the volunteer respondents (Figure 24). The majority of responses indicate that digital communication methods were the most popular. As the respondents could select more than one option, the results show the range of different means accessible for groups. This can indicate that some volunteers are keeping up to date through a variety of means.

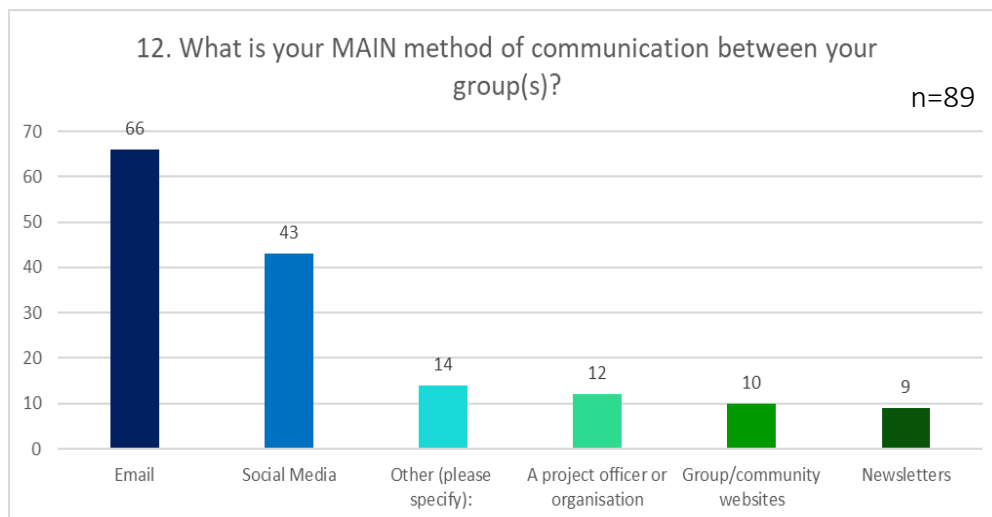


Figure 24: Volunteer results from Q12

Furthermore, the majority of volunteers said they communicate with organisations through either their social media platforms or websites of active groups engaged with a greenspace. Notably, online bias and digital literacy proved to be limitations of the study as the survey was only based online. However, as social media is a tool frequently used by both voluntary groups

and organisations for outreach and sharing, this seemed an appropriate place to begin the investigation.

The findings for volunteers showed that only 19% (17 out of 91) of respondents were recruited by an organisation. In the majority of cases, and mentioned in section 4.3.ii.a of this chapter, individuals began volunteering after a direct social interaction with the group. Once the volunteers were recruited by a group, they tended to keep updated about opportunities through electronic methods. These include 43% of respondents choosing email and 28% choosing social media.

The findings from the organisation's perspective showed certain discrepancies when compared to the volunteer experience. For example, 60% (27 out of 45) of organisations believe social media is the most effective tool for recruiting volunteers. However, the most effective tool from the volunteer perspective was through social interaction e.g. word of mouth. This finding provides evidence of the gaps between those facilitating organisational-level engagement and those taking action on a voluntary level. Directly addressing Objective 4 in this thesis, these differences highlight that multiple approaches need to be considered within the development of a creative engagement framework.

#### *4.6.ii.b FoBP*

Decisions within the group take time to organise and how they are communicated more widely is inconsistent. From experience of working alongside the friends and being a member, decisions made over email can be confusing and lose momentum when approaching funding bids or the state. Moreover, in between their quarterly meetings, there is limited communication and events are not always shared effectively. Often there are smaller, more focused meetings occurring with fewer people. As many of the central committee members live very close to the park and each other and have done so for years (in some cases decades), it means that those located further away or outside of that 'bubble' sometimes have a limited overview of the processes and decisions taking place. However, they remain keen to be inclusive and enthusiastic to new members and their ideas.

During the focus groups, I wanted to address an issue brought up several times in group meetings which was that often people, even friends members that have been involved for many years, would get confused when describing areas in the park. For example, one person would say one area was a football field whereas another would call it 'the MUGA' (Multi-Use Games Area). It was deemed an important exercise, as a group, to settle on terminology for the park to ensure everyone is informed when decisions or discussions develop. This exercise therefore aimed to improve communication with the friends and their collaborators, but it also made the conversation more accessible and



inclusive. The below image (Figure 25) shows this section of the workshop. A map was initially shown to the group and areas were numbered. Several boards were presented with images of each area and discussions began on what each area was named. Each added their own sticky note of what they called each area and then we collectively decided on one. This exercise was also done with the second group and then all answers were combined below:

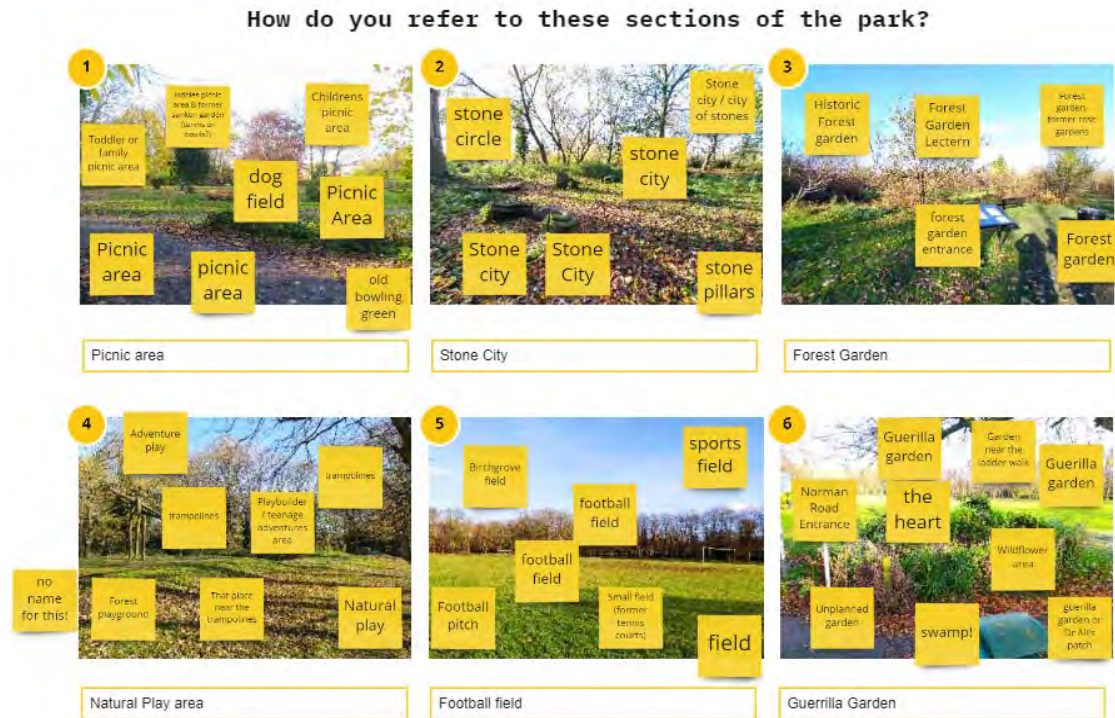


Figure 25: Naming areas in Birchfields Park – Focus group task

As a result of this exercise, FoBP have developed a features list of what is in the park and can be referred to on a map (Figure 26).



Figure 26: Extract from the FoBP park strategy shared with the council



This map has since gone into the new Park Management Plan, written by the friends group in collaboration with Manchester City Council. The friends are keen to establish more transparent communication with the council and contractors helping to manage the space. The collaborative park plan was met with scepticism due to previous experiences with the last park plan where the friends mentioned a similar approach was taken but then work was completed without informing the group, leading to further frustration. However, the friends integrated the discussion points from the focus groups and I also inputted the map above into the Park Management Plan. Although simple in practice, this exercise was very helpful in communicating how the friends want their local park to be looked after. This has been successful in that now the council and rangers have an understanding of the places in the park and what to refer to them as along with a mutually agreed mowing plan for the park to incorporate the planting completed by the FoBP.

Participants were then asked how collectively they could improve engagement. The below image (Figure 27) shows what was added to the MIRO board. Interestingly, a lot of the group mentioned something to do with communication. Whether this be through signage, making people aware of their presence (e.g. through t-shirts) or signposting for different events or ongoing activities. One participant noted:

*“I want to see better signs, and more permanent signs around the park explaining what is there like the plants, the wildlife - basically lots of signs”.*

Adding to the conversation about signage, one participant described the ‘magic’ of the forest garden in the park, “*it’s nice to see someone pick cherries off the trees as they’re walking down the path and the ability to share the knowledge that you can eat cherries off the trees in UK could help people to connect to space*”. Adding signage and having communicative people to discuss the park’s features may improve overall interest and therefore help to keep it as a community asset. However, signage within the park has consistently been vandalised over the past few years, so any intervention or addition to the park needs to consider or address this issue.



Figure 27: Responses to how to improve engagement in Birchfields Park

One thing that was mentioned during this exercise and now exists, is a FoBP quarterly newsletter. This highlights how positive outcomes are achievable from the focus group. Using a creative and collaborative platform (such as MIRO) helped to facilitate a discussion that allowed the friends to develop a list of ideas they could think about to help promote their work and recruit more volunteers. The notion of creativity here is subtle and although it was not the driver of conversation or interaction, the interactive method allowed for everyone to contribute at their preferred level. Hence, this focus group was a productive session to help the friends align priorities as a group and reflect on their processes in an accessible way. In this sense, the creative approach facilitated more detailed conversation – applying design thinking to complex relationships between people and place. These focus groups provided evidence for how collaborative tools can affect decision-making and what role creative approaches can have in effecting engagement (linking to Objective 3).

#### 4.6.ii.c MUD

MUD have developed a strong network and have continued support from local communities and like-minded businesses, however, there are still issues with local authority communication channels. As previously mentioned, they faced a lot of barriers to initially get set up and although the communication channel has improved, they remarked that the council are difficult to communicate with in terms of permissions for events, activities and access to other underused spaces. In terms of MUD's volunteers, they were generally very happy with their overall experience however, there were occasions where some expressed confusion over the communication about action days (a term used to describe events where people can plant, create or more generally volunteer in the space). In this case, MUD are at a growth and reflective point where the issues highlighted can be addressed. With their strong network of support and having a centralised place in Platt Fields, they strive to have accessible and open communication channels to ensure they sustain engagement and connect with wider audiences. However, this remains a challenge for MUD, as one of the directors explained that:

*“Communication is constantly challenging and it takes a lot of time to do it all. If we had a dedicated person that worked on communication it would be better, but we don't have that at the moment”.*

This challenge recognised by MUD was also mentioned by some of their volunteers saying that they thought MUD should have more communication options to help volunteers navigate their registration system. Another said that the system for getting volunteers is sometimes not efficient as *“lots of people sign up and then don't show up... and they don't want to say no to people”* but it was shared that they only have 15 volunteer slots per session so they can sometimes be short on help someday which effects the amount of progress they can make. Communication systems need to be improved to accommodate flexibility and more ad-hoc voluntary work patterns.

Overall, it is important for projects such as PFMG or any community-led project seeking development to measure and demonstrate their impact and benefits within wider contexts across social, environmental and economic aspects. This practice, if completed on a yearly or quarterly basis can help organisations to develop effective communication and promotion to improve the strength of funding bids.

#### 4.6.ii.d MM

Like any academic institution, communication within MM towards projects and decision-making takes a long time to establish, develop and deliver. This takes up a lot of capacity and resources which are often limited in the first instance, reducing communication opportunities and stifling network building. Outside

of the institution, the museum has access to communication channels which seemingly appeared to have a lot of engagement, with many followers so they can distribute information effectively. The museum therefore looks toward funding a role more focused on building a network and signposting 'ecological action' to wider audiences.

Within the report shared with MM, the findings showed that numerous groups have established a strong ability to communicate with and speak the (cultural) languages of their communities. This was a reassuring factor for the MM to be able to evidence. Staff at MM discussed the report findings:

*"[having] that report to somewhat reiterate some of the thinking of why we believe what we're trying to create here works and is responding and evidencing that there is a great need for something [like a hub]... The interviews allowed for that evidence to support the development of the hub and connections to people to develop".*

This indicated that MM's investment in environmentally focused initiatives is growing institutionally. Evidence from these community-centred projects in turn helps to develop an understanding of what support and communication needs are required to address the sustainability of environmental action in Manchester. Furthermore, it was deemed equally important to develop relationships with the key leaders, or catalysts of action in the different community groups to ensure the network develops collectively and can share skills and knowledge across like-minded initiatives.

#### ***4.6.iii Applying Creativity to Communication***

It can be more effective if creativity is used to attract people's attention in the first instance; trying different methods of communication can be worthwhile to understand what works best for those involved. Through a process of elimination those seeking engagement need to be prepared to try multiple options for communicating with individuals, groups and organisations. Although this can sometimes be a timely process, once communication is established, collaboration can take place with key contacts to be able to reach wider audiences. For instance, maybe there is a local school that can design posters for action days in a local UGS helping to attract more people to engage. Therefore, learning how people want to communicate through creative means will help to develop relationships and understand the communities around a UGS.

The majority of participants across both methods spoke about how communication is a key driver for engagement – if it is poor it was noted as a major barrier to engagement, such that those who want to have their say or to

act cannot source where to express their views or place their efforts. Furthermore, limited communication within projects can hinder the type of engagement that occurs, an example of this would be that only the 'usual suspects' turn up to engage and there is minimal reach into other communities (Lee and Abbot, 2003; O'Hare, 2021). The inclusion of more contrasting perspectives is an important endeavour for enabling consultation to be 'deliberative' (Boulianne, 2018).

Communication (and the ability to make informed decisions) was deemed a universal barrier within the case studies. Consequently, there are often project delays, and decisions being made without those interested having their say. Issues identified concerning communication were frustration and lethargy in decision-making. If communication is ineffective, momentum can be lost, and processes delayed. Most participants highlighted that good and clear communication takes time and should be factored into all projects in a more realistic manner. Creative communication takes into account the types of tools used to promote opportunities to engage as well how the opportunities themselves are designed. For instance, considering what may attract engagement in terms of the medium can make a difference e.g. different imagery or videos on social media to posters in parks contribute to developing a support network for environmental action.

Furthermore, it was noted that better training for those wanting to become facilitators or get involved with public participation needs to take place to prioritise and improve communication channels, establishing what mutual benefits and universal language can look like across different communities.

Overall, communication is vital for quality engagement, and sustainable environmental action is dependent on open channels being available through which transparency is paramount for effective decision-making (e.g. Perry et al.'s Jam and Justice project, 2019).

#### *Framework input - Communication*

Being able to effectively express change or action is dependent on knowing how people want to be supported or collaborate. Therefore, setting up communication channels and roles is important when beginning any form of creative engagement. By collaborating and opening up these channels one can engage with people in a bespoke manner that suits them. This needs to be put into perspective within the three aspects of engagement (knowledge, capacity and resource). Bespoke communication channels will need to serve the majority of people, as often there is no affordance for speaking to individuals

all in different ways. Therefore, multiple options must be considered to ensure everyone has access to equal modes of communication.

#### ***4.6.iv Summary - Communication***

In conclusion, communication is a key driver of engagement in UGS. A positive or negative communication interaction can be a key factor in how people want to engage. If people feel unwelcomed, they are likely to not use the space, whereas if they are included and valued, they may feel more inclined to care for the space. Therefore, improved communication through various channels would improve people's engagement with changes that affect them. Transparent communication is necessary as a means to provide clarity on who makes decisions, who is the first point of contact and how ideas can be actioned (Perry et al., 2019).

The interviewees demonstrated that effective communication is an essential cornerstone of successful public engagement in environmental action. It plays a pivotal role in fostering meaningful connections, building relationships, and ensuring that participants feel heard and valued. Transparency in communication, active listening, and acknowledging the contributions of all individuals involved are critical components of successful engagement. Overcoming communication barriers, both within and outside organisations, is vital for achieving the goals of environmental participation initiatives. This can be achieved through creative approaches.

Creativity in engagement is considered an empowering tool that can disrupt conventional approaches and open doors to novel solutions (Perry et al., 2019). However, it must be approached with genuine conviction and encouragement to make it accessible to all. The complexity of public participation necessitates hands-on experience to ensure evaluation moves beyond mere numbers and a deeper understanding of individuals and social inequalities is achieved (Moore, 2010). Finally, the challenges in balancing administrative tasks with community-based work highlight the need for sustainable approaches that support long-term engagement and flexibility in addressing community needs. Considering these findings, a framework for increasing engagement in environmental action should incorporate creative activities, emphasise transparent communication, foster social connections, and adapt to the evolving needs and motivations of participants to create a more inclusive and impactful approach to environmental participation.

The case studies revealed that gaps and disparities in communication can lead to frustration and delays in projects, and in some cases, decisions proceeded without input from those affected. The Groundwork GM research highlights variations in communication methods between volunteers and organisations, emphasising the need for a more inclusive approach, especially as digital communication can pose accessibility challenges. In the case of FoBP,

inconsistent communication and decision-making processes hindered their progress, while MUD faces challenges in dealing with authorities and occasional confusion among volunteers. MM also encountered delays in decision-making, primarily due to resource constraints. Therefore, effective communication channels, transparency, and inclusivity are crucial to improving engagement with UGS developments.

## 4.7 Openness

### 4.7.i Openness in the Interviews

This was highlighted as a key theme that enhances engagement by promoting successful outcomes in motivation, access, support, and communication. Its role as an essential driver for creative engagement, through collaborative decision-making and idea generation, was underscored in the interviews. The absence of openness hinders engagement, making its recognition as a distinct and overarching driver crucial. Creative engagement for the interviewees implied incorporating some form of collaborative decision-making and/or activity that helps to unlock people's opinions and ideas. Openness ultimately functions as the linchpin, strengthening the interplay between key engagement elements and fostering a more creative and effective approach.

The role of facilitators emerged as a central theme in the interviews, with many participants emphasising its significance in participatory projects. Facilitators are key to managing projects, understanding audience expectations, and delivering on project objectives (Moore, 2010; Perry et al., 2019). A common thread throughout the interviews was the importance of matching motivated individuals or groups with skilled facilitators who can effectively collaborate to drive change. P9 underscored the need for facilitators to be genuinely invested in and open to helping and building meaningful connections, emphasising the importance of attitude and alignment with the community's aspirations. This does not require a complete change of identity but rather an openness and curiosity about different people's needs. Additionally, P7 pointed out that the lack of belief in the community by facilitators or overly motivated groups without effective facilitators can hinder creative thinking and the overall success of participatory projects. A harmonious partnership between motivated participants and skilled, empathetic facilitators is crucial for productive and creative engagement (Durose and Richardson, 2015; Perry et al., 2019).

P1 highlighted the effectiveness of an adaptable approach, describing it as being a "chameleon" when working with different communities or groups. This approach involves aligning oneself with the motivations and inspirations of the community, allowing for better connection and understanding. P2 further emphasised the importance of flexibility and openness in tailored opportunities for each community or group, a sentiment echoed by P7, who

stressed the need for varied approaches as what works in one context may not apply to another. It is therefore the role of the facilitator to be open and adaptable to new and unfolding approaches. This adaptable approach was also noted throughout the case studies, particularly MM who seek to align their work with community needs.

However, P7 also pointed out a barrier to this openness, where individuals involved in consultation may carry pre-conceived answers or decisions, hindering genuine engagement. He explained, *“the biggest thing that I've come across, is that people don't try because they already thought it through. And decided that it's going to fail without actually trying”*. He emphasised the importance of avoiding premature judgments and trying new approaches before assuming they will fail. This highlights the need for open-mindedness and a willingness to explore different avenues in participatory projects. An example of this open-mindedness is reflected upon in the Jam and Justice case study (Perry *et al.*, 2019).

Creative engagement, as discussed by the interviewees, is fundamentally about enabling individuals to contribute their unique ideas and solutions. P11 discussed that true creativity emerges when people are genuinely encouraged to express their thoughts and perspectives. To achieve this, it was vital to frame questions and discussions in a way that allowed participants to relate to the concept on a personal level. P11 believes that:

*"all the answers are out there. I just think that we're not always very good at framing the right question to get people to want to comment on it. And sometimes you have to take people on a journey"*.

This approach fosters engagement that is not superficial but deeply rooted in individual experiences, making the process more meaningful and valuable (Perry *et al.*, 2019). P13 echoed the importance of avoiding excessive constraints when facilitating engagement. She argued that planners and architects should refrain from imposing preconceived notions of how things should be done. Imposing a fixed approach can lead to apathy among participants who feel that their input is not genuinely valued. This resonates with the idea that people are less likely to engage and even become more frustrated if they believe developers or facilitators are not open to their ideas, assuming the decisions have already been made without considering their perspectives (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015).

However, this should not imply that creative engagement lacks structure rather, the interviewees stressed the importance of having some form of structure or framework to guide the process effectively (P5, 11, 13, 14). This should be flexible and adaptable, allowing for learning, openness, and evolution (Perry *et al.*, 2019). While structure provides a loose framework for



discussions and decision-making, it should not stifle the creative process but support it. This means being able to sit with the unknown and feeling comfortable to not lock everything down or even come to an absolute conclusion. In some cases, the structure might even be the focal point of action, as seen when communities come together to protect spaces from development, showcasing how barriers can sometimes spark remarkable creativity. P14 explained this structure as a form of *'ethical framework'* that ensures no one is going to be harmed or taken advantage of when participating such that a group can address the barriers. She remarks that "*when barriers are put in place, you find the most incredible creativity comes out*". This is not to suggest that they are key to engagement, but rather they can form part of how an individual or group organises themselves or responds to challenges. This resonates with Schon's (1984) approach of harnessing reflective practice to navigate uncertainty, and further links to the concept of an unfolding awareness approach delineated by Taylor (2018) and adopted in this thesis.

P14 concluded that stifling creativity often results from not having the freedom to explore new ideas and see where they lead. This perspective underscores the need for creative engagement to remain open and flexible while also offering some guidance or structure. It's about striking a balance between freedom and direction, ensuring that participants have the space to contribute their creative input and that decisions remain open to adaptation based on these inputs. This re-enforces Perry et al.'s (2019) argument of how to co-produce governance reflecting on socio-environmental justice issues.

Furthermore, the role of the facilitator is pivotal in creative engagement. Facilitators must maintain an open and neutral stance, welcoming diverse perspectives, and avoiding assumptions. This openness is not only about including people in decision-making processes but also about genuinely capturing their opinions and integrating their needs and desires into effective change. Facilitators serve as the bridge between participants and the creative process, fostering an environment where creative ideas can flourish and have a real impact.

#### ***4.7.ii Openness in the Case Studies***

Although openness was championed and promoted as an important aspect of engagement, the cases varied to the degree to which they could be modified and therefore remaining open was subjective. In certain cases, often projects within the organisations and/or institutions seemed to have pre-set approaches which built in an idea of openness to achieve the set goals but may also be considered inflexible towards looking for different or multiple approaches. In this sense, they can risk just repeating the same processes and becoming set in their ways.

#### 4.7.ii.a Groundwork GM

Groundwork GM celebrates their ability to be flexible within their projects and priorities. They have developed very successful processes to engage audiences and champion a community-led approach which is achieved through adaptability and openness. For example, one of the participants remarked “*When I’m in Brinnington, I’m an honorary Brinnintonian*”. Further to this, a participant mentioned how their organisation approaches engagement:

*“every community, every group of people is different, so you’ve got to be able to do everything bespoke to those people”*

However, sometimes due to the makeup of the organisation, Groundwork GM faces inflexibility in terms of project delivery and outcomes, often due to funding bid requirements. For example, volunteers or interested parties can work on a different timescale compared to funders.

Openness was not a strong theme within this case study. The volunteer’s experiences spoke to some form of openness due to the nature of volunteering. However, organisations did not mention openness or flexibility throughout their answers. A previous report from Groundwork UK called *Communities Taking Action* (2019) stated that organisations and funders supporting volunteers should account for flexibility when considering funding applications to enable voluntary groups to focus on the ongoing nature of UGS maintenance rather than being so project-centred (Holland, 2019). This report when compared to the findings of working with Groundwork GM illustrates a need to be more flexible to community needs and those delivering engagement. Personally, reflecting on employment with Groundwork GM, I found that delivery of engagement, the needs of communities, and the required goals and outcomes from funders, varied considerably. Therefore, engagement strategies need to consider openness and flexibility of projects more thoughtfully to meet the needs of all involved in engagement.

#### 4.7.ii.b FoBP

FoBP aim to be flexible and they have been investigating how they ‘fit’ or adapt to funding applications. They are open to new ideas posed by members to engage with the wider community and are keen to collaborate however, aspirations are not always communicated well and acted on effectively. For example, they are keen to use different approaches to engage all sides facing the park however, they remark that they do not have the capacity to do so and, in some instances, do not express commitment to actioning ideas. This is linked to openness in terms of taking time to try new things rather than work the way they have always worked before. Often time and resources outweigh the risk of trying anything new. However, through the focus groups and opportunity to discuss ways to increase engagement in Birchfields Park from the friends’ perspective, one participant noted that:

*“I think it's been really nice to just chat about the park without any kind of agenda or without planning anything. It's just nice just to chat and give completely wild ideas, with no constraints, I think that's really nice. See, this is just software [a platform] but things come out that weren't intended”.*

This quote highlights that facilitating open dialogue and utilising different (sometimes more creative) means can spark conversations that bring new ideas to groups that would not otherwise think of other approaches outside their usual methods. The subjective nature of creativity here is variable and although it may not directly be assumed creativity was used here, I would argue that the contributions and conversations had during this focus group allowed people to open up and share ideas more creatively.

#### 4.7.ii.c MUD

Due to the nature of their social enterprise, MUD rely on volunteers and seasonal changes for their work which means they must be flexible to be able to adapt quickly. Engagement-wise they take onboard all ideas for workshops from volunteers and make the most out of collaborations with different food and arts events. An interviewee remarked that *“MUD are always open to lots of ideas from the volunteers and there's a lot of freedom to try anything”*. This has empowered the volunteers to try new ways of growing, making and connecting with others. MUD are food growers and gardeners first and foremost therefore they have had to learn business strategies along the way. Their success has developed from this approach of openness to learning and developing themselves and the surrounding communities.

Although their relationship with the local council has been difficult and often frustrating, they continue to create safe spaces for all to make connections and create experiences with nature in cities by remaining flexible to what the community wants to see and take part in. As one MUD volunteer shares:

*“I've volunteered with a widower and a former dean, artists, asylum seekers, people that run fantastic restaurants... [it's] quite unique, it's difficult to find a space with that range of people in South Manchester”.*

Openness for MUD seemed to play an intrinsic role that fed through their approach to volunteering, food growing and community engagement. By being open to ideas from their diverse voluntary workforce, MUD have been able to co-develop more creative ways to engage with people through multicultural and multi-generational events. For instance, workshops for connecting different cultures through food, family fun days and food and artisanal markets. This links to my third objective: proving that creativity can help encourage more engagement. Additionally, this project links to my final

objective (combining creativity, UGS and decision-making), with MUD being an example of bridging a gap between decision-makers, creatives and those taking action.

#### 4.7.ii.d MM

MM was open to ideas for mapping but remained uncertain about how they could continually incorporate openness going forward. Flexibility within a large institution can be limited. When speaking to the museum staff directly about the institution's role in decision-making, they commented that:

*“they're like a big moving ship trying to turn and sometimes when they turn it happens very quickly and you can see the legacy of a project that has been started and then some people leave or new leadership comes in and says we're doing it a different way so there's something about the fluidity of that and I don't know how you capture that”.*

However, they discussed during engagement projects or projects revolving around environmental action the importance of remaining open to the organic nature of projects, stating that:

*“the way things work is rarely as it's theoretically planned out to be and I think we're very open to organic, following things as they come up”.*

This case study highlighted the importance of building from past works and being reflective. Interviewees iterated that institutions need to understand the importance of organic growth whilst acknowledging the fluidity of institutions and large-scale organisations. This intention of being open reinforces the museum's inclination to remain responsive to emerging opportunities and challenges. The fluid nature of institutions necessitates a reflexive approach, drawing from past successes while remaining open to new directions.

Through the *Building Ecological Action* project, the museum staff reflected that they are developing confidence to move forward through the strengthening of its commitment to fostering spaces where social and environmental issues can be collectively addressed. This case study helped to address Objective 4 of this research by providing evidence of how developing relationships and remaining open to people's needs can help engage more people and improve decision-making processes.

#### 4.7.iii Applying Creativity to Openness

Most interviewees described themselves as open and remarked that openness helped to complete and improve their projects, however, the main barrier to openness comes when knowledge, capacity and resources are limited. Nevertheless, some interviewees remarked that creativity can still emerge

through these limitations, linking to resourceful creativity – doing the best with what is available (Wakkary and Maestri, 2007).

Throughout this research, it is argued that openness is creative. Embracing different scenarios and adaptive responses to change inherently fosters creativity as it ensures objectives are met and development progresses. An awareness of flexibility at the beginning of a project is fundamental to the engagement process. Openness encourages a willingness to experiment and try new approaches, even if they deviate from conventional methods. This experimental mindset can lead to innovative solutions and creative breakthroughs. It can also promote continued learning where a project's focus can evolve and improve, rather than lose momentum. An open mindset helps in overcoming resistance to change, which can be a barrier to creativity and innovation. By embracing change as an opportunity rather than a threat, individuals and organisations can more easily adapt to new challenges and environments.

For sustainable environmental action to be successful, there needs to be awareness as well as openness. The natural environment does not follow the same societal rules or norms hence it can frequently change and be unreliable. People and society are also complex and real-life factors can affect the 'success' of a given project. Therefore, being able to adapt to disruption is key to sustaining action (Taylor, 2018). This adaption can facilitate a more creative approach that is self-reflective and transparent, promoting good practice and learning from shortcomings.

Although the term 'openness' varied for all participants, a discussion point raised frequently was that that term referred to not sticking to the norm and trying new things to see what works – this further articulates what this thesis defines as creative approaches. The subjective nature of the term openness means that it is interpreted differently and can be overlooked especially when constraints such as time and capacity are limited. For example, when an organisation has an approaching target, it is often prioritised over quality engagement. There are often trends within funding streams that mean hopeful applicants bend their ideas to fit the trends. Hence, although it can be seen as a positive thing, it can also mean that continued presence or support within a given space is intermittent and inconsistent. Overall, openness seemed to take place on a more ad hoc basis and often depended on each individual or group on their respective approach. Furthermore, this poses difficulties when looking to integrate creative engagement. However, when creative approaches, such as co-production or co-creation, facilitate an evolving decision-making process,

participants stated that relationships across interested parties were strengthened.

#### *Framework input - Openness*

Openness is more of an outlook or frame of mind that can be useful to consider ensuring projects evolve and run smoothly and more genuinely. Therefore, this needs to be factored into every stage of the framework with clear guidelines or approaches to adapt. Reaching a consensus is not always worthwhile within public engagement and understanding the complexities and multiplicity is more useful, therefore being able to adapt to people's inputs can help to collectively work towards engaging with UGS more meaningfully.

#### **4.7.iv Summary - Openness**

This concise section strategically integrates the overarching theme of "openness" across previous sections, emphasising its pivotal role in engagement. Across the interviews and case studies, openness is positioned as an essential aspect of engagement that intersects with key elements like motivation, access, support, and communication, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness of participatory projects.

Facilitators emerge as central figures in this process, playing a vital role in project management and fostering meaningful connections with communities. Aligning facilitators' attitudes with community aspirations and maintaining an open-minded approach are deemed crucial and also reflected in previous studies and literature (Durose and Richardson, 2015; Perry et al., 2019).

Overall, openness towards projects, problem-solving, and stewardship is a worthwhile endeavour in theory but can often be challenging when there are time constraints and limited resources. Across the case studies, it was common that any event organised in greenspaces tended to be on an ad hoc basis and very dependent on key leaders in the community. Often ideas were simply, just ideas, and not executed unless the majority agreed, wanted to contribute, or could commit their time. Within decision-making, it is important to remain open during the consultation process – this is not always the case with certain projects and if there are predetermined outcomes or targets, they are often pre-set before the consultation begins. Building flexibility within the consultation period would allow people, who often have localised knowledge, to influence and provide insight into any intervention. Furthermore, taking a flexible and open approach creates opportunities for people to engage meaningfully in their local areas.

Flexible approaches, such as being a "*chameleon*" (P1) in different contexts and flexibility in tailoring opportunities are highlighted as essential for successful engagement, while the need to avoid preconceived answers in consultations is

additionally crucial. Successful engagement involves framing questions to resonate with personal experiences, allowing individuals to genuinely contribute. Although structured engagement is fundamental, it should remain flexible to support creativity without stifling it. Here lies the challenge to develop an engagement framework that can be adaptable, provide structure and advocate meaningful participation. Overall, openness is recognised as a unifying thread that strengthens the interplay between these diverse aspects of engagement, facilitating a holistic and effective approach. This approach echoes the theoretical underpinning of this research, through *living life as inquiry* (Marshall, 2016) and remaining open to an unfolding awareness (Talyor, 2018) to allow for a narrative to form encapsulating the opinions and actions of those taking environmental action.

#### 4.8 Chapter Summary

By applying design thinking to the notion of urban planning and application of public engagement, I have been able to explore the complexity of real-life realities (Rowe, 1987; Dorst, 2011), identify problems and seek solutions (Dewey, 1938; Schon, 1984). Linking to Buchanan's (1992) assertion of the design process being naturally reflective and iterative, the 'problems' of engagement were identified by participants who facilitated or rallied engagement often on a daily basis. These problem areas were defined as five key themes of engagement: Motivation, Access, Support, Communication, and Openness (MASCO).

The data collected in this research has provided insight into what engagement across Manchester looks like. Although over a relatively short period (between 2019-2023), it has provided evidence that demonstrates what makes engagement successful across projects and organisations. Collectively, those involved with this research have accumulated decades of experience in community engagement, with all participants continuing to dedicate their time to environmentally focused collective action. Throughout the research, there is strong evidence that creative approaches can be more inclusive and help enable conversation and facilitate engagement. Although it may not be entirely appropriate at every stage of a project, this research demonstrates that introducing creativity and taking an intentionally creative approach can derive deeper meaning and connection to space. Furthermore, having a varied and flexible strategy ensures more sustainable participation, engagement and action.

Overall, creativity can act as a tool to explore the *fuzzy grey* areas of decision-making, especially in the face of consultation fatigue. Creative facilitation can play a key role in bringing together multiple voices across groups/sectors/

decision-makers. It is clear from the research that there is a need to formulate a form of structure to promote and prompt creativity throughout the intersection of environmental action and decision-making of UGS.

Through the strategic infusion of creativity into the engagement process, the facilitator can enhance participants' motivation in the subject matter, thereby deepening their commitment to environmental action. By fostering an environment where creativity is actively encouraged and valued, it becomes possible to unlock innovative solutions to environmental challenges and inspire a more profound and lasting impact. In this sense, creativity is a mechanism through which engagement can be improved.

Across all the data, there have been a plethora of experiences and ideas shared to consider when planning engagement. To build meaningful relationships and support informed collective decision-making, it seemed appropriate to compile the research into a 'menu' of engagement. The development of a framework helped to consolidate these ideas and activities and therefore, aims to guide those looking to improve engagement. Key components for a framework that can help to facilitate improved engagement in UGS are outlined below. These indicate the key dependents, drivers and considerations needed when planning engagement:

- There are five key themes of engagement: Motivation, Access, Support, Communication and Openness (MASCO). Using these themes as a guiding principle, the planning and delivery of engagement should focus on uncovering insights for each theme to achieve meaningful engagement and sustainable environmental action.
- Plan for engagement by contemplating the key dependents of engagement: Knowledge, Capacity and Resource. (i.e. how much time is needed to engage? what materials are needed? and who can facilitate engagement?).
- Determine what key drivers will affect engagement: think about the MASCO themes. (i.e. is access to the UGS suitable? Are there any groups working there already and are they supported by others? And how much flexibility is there to try different engagement approaches?)
- Within the MASCO factors, consider and collaboratively plan activities that specifically address/promote engagement bespoke to the UGS or engagement group included. (i.e. Maybe a group is interested in food growing? Engagement can therefore be planned around sowing, growing and cooking food).

These key components are further explored and illustrated in Chapter 5.



## CHAPTER 5: CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

### 5.0 Introduction

The research explored current perceptions and practices of creative engagement from multiple perspectives, unlocking the motivations behind environmental action and the factors influencing the sustainability of such actions. It also examined how creative approaches can influence the five MASCO drivers which emerged during the interviews, focus groups and case studies: motivation, access, support, communication and openness. These key factors play a fundamental role in enhancing the quality of participation, ultimately leading to the development of strategies to improve organisational engagement in environmental action. This research reveals that public engagement is fragmented and varies significantly across projects, with a substantial amount of action occurring among smaller groups and individuals. There is a notable lack of consistency across different initiatives.

For some, public engagement can be seen as a hindrance to decision-making in which relationships may be fraught and tensions can develop. Factors such as knowledge, capacity, and resource all play a part in how an organisation engages. The Creative Engagement Framework (CEF) seeks to enable organisations to foster more meaningful participation by streamlining environmental actions, thereby improving informed decision-making within UGS.

For this research, the term 'organisation' refers to any group that performs organised activities of action within UGS across Manchester. This is therefore a collective term to describe voluntary groups, social enterprises, charities, not-for-profit organisations, NGOs, and institutions. Hence, this collective term helps to clarify those organising engagement to those taking environmental action.

Evidence from the data collected and literature highlighted that there are cases where funded projects may experience limited engagement, while projects with less funding can encourage more volunteering and involve a larger number of people. This could be due to the relationships and trust attained by those facilitating activities. For instance, if a group has developed strong connections and community support, they are likely to expect more engagement when compared to a project that only has six months of funding and is more hands-off with the community. This thesis does not attempt to create a monotonous system of tick-box activities but rather, a creative engagement framework (CEF) for facilitators to try multi-faceted approaches

to engage more broadly with people taking environmental action (see Appendix 5).

## 5.1 Key Components and Beneficiaries

Over the course of this research, the hypothesis that a CEF could increase and sustain environmental action and involvement across different organisations was tested.

Prospective users (detailed in Table 22) are those interested in increasing their organisation's impact through engagement. Users will be able to understand the key components, considerations, and activities to engage with audiences.

Beneficiaries	Why is it beneficial?	How will they benefit from using it?
Voluntary Groups and social enterprises	To gather ideas to engage with different groups and communities.	They will benefit from understanding their current level of engagement and plan for more diverse activities.
Charities, organisations, and institutions	To plan effective engagement strategies, identify activities that are more bespoke to their targeted audience.	They can benefit from attaining a more thorough understanding of their audience - in turn building meaningful relationships and trust.

Table 22: Engagement Framework beneficiaries (authors own, 2024).

Throughout data collection, a series of themes emerged that could be used to create such an engagement framework. Particularly through the interviews, it became clear that some key principles need to be considered when attempting, conducting, and managing engagement, these included:

- Having varied approaches to connect with people avoiding one-off projects and focusing on mutually beneficial relationship/network building.
- Making events, activities, and interactions accessible.
- Providing supportive environments that encourage opportunities for self-expression.
- Ensuring transparent communication and decision-making.
- Remaining open and adaptable to each activity or project through clear and flexible structure/instructions.

The development of this framework aims to improve sustainable environmental action through creative means. Consequently, I have developed a definition for environmental action: *The enhancement of areas to provide increased social and environmental benefits to all.*

Examples are shown in Figure 28 where each image contains a type of environmental action that has either:

1. Helped to improve a space directly such as Groundwork’s Eco-Streets where terraced house alleyways have been transformed into small green corridors or planting native spaces to encourage more bees in Birchfields Park.
2. Helped to connect people with nature and others such as celebrating wassailing at Platt Fields Park or planting vegetables to grow food at home in Hulme Community Garden Centre.



*Bee walk in Birchfields Park (authors own, 2019)*



*Wassail 2023 Poster (Manchester Urban Diggers, 2023)*



*Garden Crew (Hulme Community Garden Centre, 2022)*



*Eco-Streets (Groundwork Greater Manchester, 2021)*

*Figure 28: Images illustrating different examples of environmental action*

## 5.2 What is the CEF?

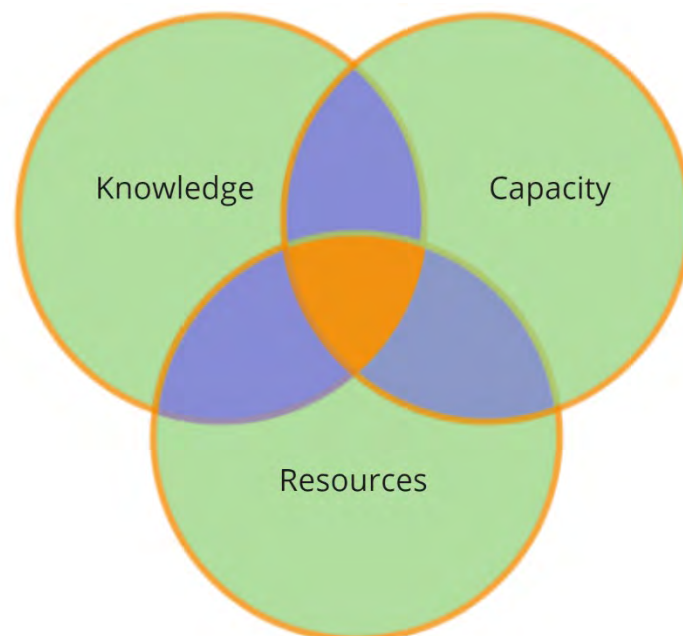
The Creative Engagement Framework (CEF) intends to strategically enhance engagement efficiency through the incorporation of more creative approaches. It is intended for groups/organisations to use at the outset of an engagement project, especially when there is uncertainty about how to begin. It also addresses the main research question: *how can creative engagement encourage communities to foster sustainable environmental action and stewardship within UGS?* The intention is that it may provide a foundation for

others to adapt and enhance their local space, aiming to boost the sustainability of environmental action in Manchester.

The overarching aim and objectives of this thesis were used to construct an engagement framework that may help organisations assess and improve their ability to bridge the gap between decision-makers of UGS development and communities taking environmental action.

Building from the findings through data collection, five key identified themes within the context of engagement facilitation, have been identified. These are motivation, access, support, communication, and openness (MASCO). However, these are dependent on three interconnected factors: knowledge, capacity and resource. Without these factors, any participation is compromised and can become ineffective and unsustainable. Once these factors are allocated, then engagement can be more intentionally planned by understanding the identified themes on multiple levels.

Based on the three key determinants of knowledge, capacity and resource, a Venn diagram was constructed to identify a starting point for framework development that presents a novel and practical approach to increasing creative engagement in UGS. In the Venn diagram (Figure 29), it can be observed that engagement takes place when all three elements come together (orange area). Less effective engagement is apparent when only two elements are involved (purple areas). Therefore, there needs to be consideration and ideally a balance of all three elements to bring about meaningful engagement.



*Figure 29: The key dependents of engagement*

This framework assesses the engagement level of an organisation and outlines key actions to increase public participation along with recommended activities. The aim was to assess the quality of engagement to look for opportunities to strengthen the overall impact and sustainability of environmental action through promoting shared knowledge and collaboration. It also promotes users to be responsive, inclusive, and transparent toward relationship building and decision-making, allowing for more intentional and thoughtful community engagement planning.

## 5.3 Framework Construction

### *5.3.i Intended Use*

The purpose of this framework is to assess the quality of an organisation's engagement, identifying opportunities for enhancing the impact of their environmental actions by integrating more creative approaches. Self-reflection was deemed an important aspect of engagement. P1 underscored this critical role in enhancing engagement, stating, "*sometimes you need to pull it back and sit down and review and say look we've not got the amount of people engaged that we need to do. What's going to be the approach. Let's try something different*". This approach led to experimenting with various activities and methods of engagement. As a result of these trials and embracing new interactions, they observed a notable increase in engagement, demonstrating the effectiveness of revisiting and revising strategies to better meet engagement goals.

### *5.3.ii Scope and Visualisation*

This plan aims to increase participants' understanding of the key drivers (MASCO), fostering a stronger and more meaningful relationship with their local UGS. For many organisations, these are consciously agreed upon, for others, this may be a subconscious decision reducing effective participation. The goal was to enhance the sustainability of environmental action by designing bespoke engagement plans through adopting creative activities that build relationships and value input from multiple perspectives.

Acknowledgement of the drivers allowed nine considerations to be identified (as outlined below) as playing a pivotal role in the development of stronger connections and relationships with individuals, as illustrated in Figure 30:

- Determine key motives and identify catalysts for action (Motivation).
- Equality and local knowledge (Access)
- Accountability and presence (Support)
- Universal language and transparency (Communication)
- Iterative feedback (Openness)

By integrating these aspects, a facilitator can incorporate elements of creativity into an engagement strategy. This may be in a variety of forms, ranging from intentional creative exercises, such as the creation and reflective discussion of tangible objects, to more nuanced approaches like using provocations or role-playing to stimulate thought and dialogue. Additionally, the design of bespoke activities tailored to the unique interests and needs of different audiences can further harness creativity. Such activities can cater to the diverse ways people learn and engage and open new avenues for creative expression and problem-solving.



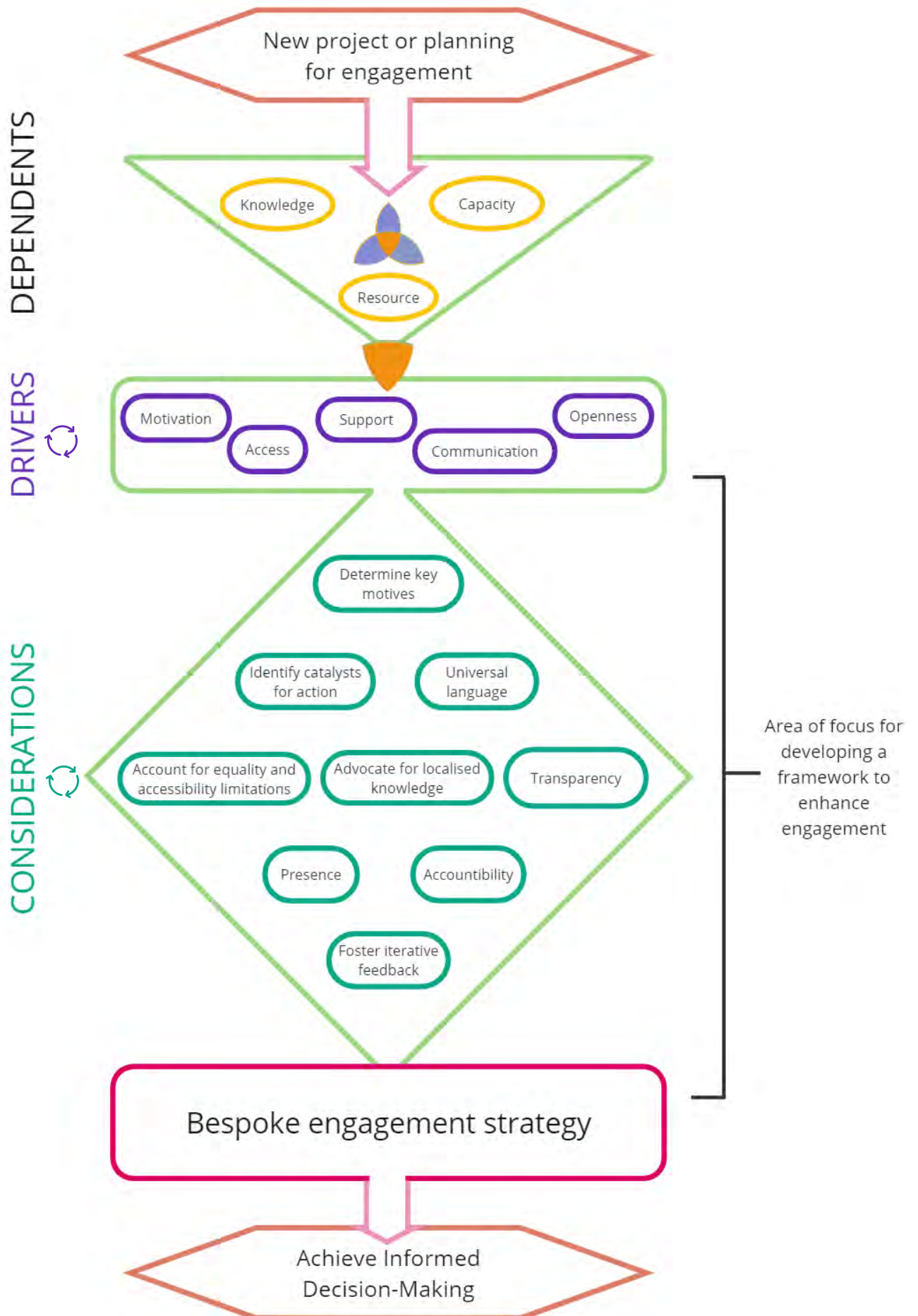


Figure 30: The engagement process including all considerations to achieve informed decision-making.

### 5.3.iii Framework Creation

Many participants found the success of engagement varied significantly depending on how the organisation of engagement was executed. The challenge was to produce a process of engagement that reflected most participants' experiences. The visualisation of this process is shown in Figure 31 where 7 Steps to the engagement process indicate the key areas of focus for an organisation/facilitator to improve their quality of engagement.

This illustrates a linear pathway towards informed decision-making whereby activities drawn from recommendations for meaningful engagement are employed, assessed and iteration can take place.



Figure 31: Framework process

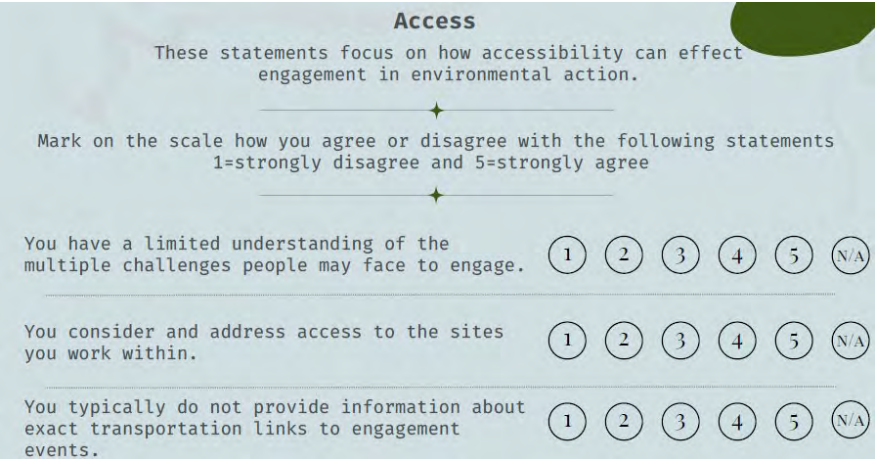
1. **Self-assess level of engagement:** To assess the current quality of engagement, the organisation's members or designated facilitators responsible for engagement should conduct a self-assessment using this framework. This assessment should be carried out within the organisation's internal processes or systems. It is recommended that performing this self-assessment before beginning any engagement activities allows progress to be monitored. By responding to a series of statements regarding their approach, respondents can gain an engagement score (each statement is scored 1-5 regarding agreement). It is worth noting that this self-assessment can be conducted in collaboration with individuals who have previously or are currently involved in projects, depending on the approach taken or any pre-existing relationships.
2. **Identify key gaps:** After completing the self-assessment, the organisation responsible for analysing the results should carefully examine the scores to identify areas where engagement can be improved. This analysis should take place within each organisation's processes and systems. By accumulating scores for each section of the self-assessment (MASCO), the areas of improvement can be determined. Once the areas for improvement are identified, the organisation can refer to the corresponding recommendations to gather ideas for improving their engagement.



3. **Review recommendations:** To plan for enhanced engagement, the organisation responsible for reviewing and planning activities should carefully review the recommendations provided based on the self-assessment results and associated activities. This review should take place before engagement begins. It is recommended to evaluate the recommendations and consider how they can be effectively incorporated into further planning and activities.
4. **Plan activities:** To improve engagement in the identified gaps, the organisation should develop customised activities. These should be aimed at addressing the specific areas identified for improvement. The planning process should take place within the organisation's initial implementation. It is advisable to incorporate the recommended activities into the organisation's engagement strategy, ensuring they specifically target and address the identified gaps.
5. **Reflect on success:** To evaluate the success of engagement efforts, the organisation responsible for evaluating any successes should reflect on the outcomes and impact of their activities. This reflection should be integrated into the organisation's evaluation and feedback processes. It is recommended to conduct this step after completing individual activities or at regular intervals. To assess the progress, the engagement framework should be revisited, participant feedback should be collected, and an evaluation should be made regarding whether situations have improved based on the self-assessment results and the organisation's defined success criteria.
6. **Develop engagement:** The organisation should establish processes and strategies that prioritise relationships and trust. These efforts should be integrated into the organisation's engagement planning and implementation. It is important to define clear expectations and goals, create channels for open communication, and monitor the development of relationships and trust with participants throughout the entire engagement process.
7. **Achieve informed decision-making:** The organisation's members responsible for decision-making and engagement should make these based on shared knowledge, understanding, and community development. This process should be integrated into the organisation's decision-making processes. It is recommended to utilise the insights gained from increased involvement, relationship building, and the previous steps to ensure decisions are informed, inclusive, and aligned with community needs.

To increase engagement in environmental action, I initially began formulating statements for the self-assessment (Step 1). These were based on the five key

drivers (MASCO) as well as being influenced by information collated from the interviews and case studies key drivers (Figure 32). The statements provided an opportunity for organisations to reflect on their current processes, a practice frequently emphasised in interviews as a critical element for successful engagement processes. A total of 50 statements (10 per MASCO theme) were developed to help organisations determine what areas they could improve upon. These statements required a user to mark the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement (Figure 32 shows an extract of some of these statements).



**Access**

These statements focus on how accessibility can effect engagement in environmental action.

Mark on the scale how you agree or disagree with the following statements  
1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree

You have a limited understanding of the multiple challenges people may face to engage. (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (N/A)

You consider and address access to the sites you work within. (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (N/A)

You typically do not provide information about exact transportation links to engagement events. (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (N/A)

Figure 32: Engagement Framework (version 1) extract showing example statements

Organisations count their scores for each set of themed statements (scaled 1-5). Step 2 allowed 'Identification of key gaps' providing organisations to map their self-assessment results and identify which MASCO theme(s) they should focus on to improve their engagement.

This idea was based on a similar format as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or 16 personality tests (Briggs and Myers, 1976). Without delving too deeply into the psychological discourse of Jungian typologies of personality types, this framework only adopted the style of statements in the test which allows for both positively and negatively framed statements, allowing users to mark their preferences. The benefit of choosing this format is that it uses the Likert scale offering fixed-choice questions where results can be easily quantified and able to be generalised across large samples (Vogt et al., 2014; Leavy, 2017). It is important to remain vigilant with Likert scales in terms of skewness however, for this framework, a scale of agreement enables reflection and the identification of areas for improvement (Vogt et al., 2014). The negative and positive statements were designed to ensure the validity of results and more conscious interaction with the assessment. This helps to avoid biases across results (Vogt et al., 2014).

Using the Likert scale of 1-5 across the statements provided a score of each section (MASCO) that could be mapped to a results table (Table 23). Participants were given the option to write their scores in each column or to shade in the relevant cell:

		Quality of Engagement					
Engagement elements	Basic	Moderate	Substantial	Significant	Valuable	Extensive	
	24 or below	25-28	29-33	34-37	38-41	42+	
Motivation							
Access							
Support							
Communication							
Openness							

Table 23: Creative Engagement Framework Step 2 - identifying the level or quality of engagement

### 5.3.iv Preliminary Testing

Before sharing this framework externally, I began some preliminary tests where I retrospectively applied the framework to the case studies to determine if the process of self-assessment functioned. Drawing on insights from the case studies, as well as my experience working within an organisation and volunteering, I conducted a preliminary test of the framework. This involved self-assessing the level of engagement to determine how a profile might be formed, identifying gaps in engagement relative to the key drivers (MASCO). This was simply to test the usability of the framework and whether it would yield insightful and useful results. Below is an example of what a results profile could look like (Table 24).

Key drivers for engagement	Basic	Moderate	Substantial	Significant	Valuable	Extensive
	24 or below	25-28	29-33	34-37	38-41	42+
Motivation						
Access						
Support						
Communication						
Openness						

Table 24: Example profile from a user of the Engagement Framework indicating the quality of their engagement according to the themes.

The results above provide an example and insight into whether the framework could demonstrate value. Consequently, once Step 2 is completed, a user can calculate their scores. With individuals or organisations scoring up to 50 in each section of the MASCO statements, they can become aware of which areas they score high in and which areas to focus on when looking to improve their level of engagement.

For example, in Table 24, the example results show valuable engagement (38-41) within the Openness section, i.e. they are open to new ideas and have a more fluid process of engagement. Furthermore, a basic level of engagement (24 or below) in Motivation is highlighted, i.e. they may not understand the reasons why people are engaging and may miss opportunities to develop more meaningful relationships. This process therefore allows for users to reflect on their practices and organisation of engagement and indicates areas through which they can plan more effective activities to achieve more sustainable action. A limitation of this step is that it depends on self-reporting, and on whether the individual or organisation has the agency and freedom to reflect honestly on their processes.

Following on from these preliminary tests, work began to define how to best decipher the scoring bands and quality of engagement. Initial testing proved that the framework was successful in highlighting gaps where engagement could be improved. Therefore, the idea of the framework was to facilitate organisations to understand their quality of engagement and provide key actions to increase public involvement in environmental action. By promoting shared knowledge, collaboration, and transparent decision-making, the framework should help organisations develop more intentional and thoughtful community engagement plans as well as foster meaningful relationships and informed decision-making for sustainable environmental action. Testing at this stage was deemed necessary to understand how people respond to a framework of this nature and what immediate issues may arise through such a process.

Recommendations were then developed based on the experiences shared across the data. For instance, when interviewing P3, she remarked that role-playing or large-scale prototyping ideas when designing space helped to draw out a deeper understanding of people's interactions and desires. Thus, using these activities can help to engage participants in envisioning novel projects or activities for UGS. This, can in turn, encourage diverse ideas and approaches to foster creative engagement in environmental action. For each of the five MASCO themes, recommendations were accompanied by general insights on the benefits of increasing engagement through these themes as well as 11 activities outlining how individuals or organisations can incorporate more creativity into their engagement strategies (refer to p.12-22 onwards in

Appendix 5). The recommendations were designed to be a broad series of ideas and not necessarily bespoke to each organisation at this stage.

Once the recommendations were formulated, participants from the case studies were re-contacted to obtain feedback on the framework. Testing revolved around comprehension of the framework and checking the usefulness of the elements of the model (i.e., would they use it?). The feedback from this testing is presented later in the chapter (see section 5.4). Once the checks for the completeness of the framework were established (i.e. what was missing or unclear), the amendments began.

### *5.3.v Testing with Participants*

When tested with participants, it became clear that further consideration was needed with the scoring. Within the first version, the negative and positive statements were proposed as an agreement scale between 1-5, 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Here, within the positive statements, the higher a user's score is more favourable to the final score as it would indicate they were achieving valuable engagement. Whereas, if a user scored a 5 on a negatively framed question it would indicate a gap in engagement. However, this was not reflected in the scoring when adding the scores up. This led to confusion with users and needed extra facilitation.

An inverse score would therefore be needed for the negatively framed statements to ensure it gave valid results. For example, when answering the negative statement below (Figure 33), if a user marked 2 whereby they disagree, that score of two would be inverted to a positive score of 4. As discussed by Vogt et al. (2014), the coding of results necessitates a reverse scale when using negatively worded statements to ensure the validity of results.

You find it challenging to ensure that participants have a meaningful say and influence in the process of the project.

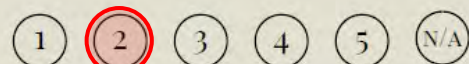


Figure 33: Example statement indicating how a user would respond

Consequently, this was a challenging process to go through with participants as it required careful attention to achieve a representative score. However, as the facilitator, it was important to ensure this was completed as easily as possible. The calculations that each participant made during Step 2 were crucial during the initial testing as it was important to decipher whether the framework worked well in principle before investing considerable time into developing the next steps (3-7). For the Myers-Briggs 16 personality test, these calculations of the self-assessment are monitored independently, and the results are presented immediately after completion. However, at the current iteration of this framework, completing this assessment on one's own would require additional skills. This was a limitation of this framework version. A more

seamless process, such as an online platform where results could be calculated more effectively would be a desirable endpoint to this framework provided it was fit for purpose.

## 5.4 Feedback

Once the draft framework was developed, it was shared with those involved in the case studies. Testing aimed to understand how and why people would use the framework to enhance engagement among those interested in taking environmental action. The feedback sessions took a similar format to the interviews except some were in-person and they revolved around a loose structure of 6 questions to explore the framework concept for this context. The questions were:

- Was the framework assessment easy to navigate/does it make sense?
- What is good about the framework?
- What is missing?
- How could it be improved?
- Can you see it being useful for others?
- If so/if not, then why?

It was important to understand whether a framework could work across voluntary levels up to institutional. Eight participants across the 4 case studies were asked to provide an overview of the scale and reach of the framework:

- Friends of Birchfields Park: 3
- Manchester Urban Diggers: 1
- Groundwork Greater Manchester: 2
- Manchester Museum: 2

The next section discusses the feedback gathered from participants of the case studies.

### 5.4.i Feedback: Groundwork Greater Manchester (GM)

The feedback received on the creative engagement framework from Groundwork GM provided a comprehensive and constructive evaluation of its strengths and potential areas for enhancement. Participants consistently praised the framework's user-friendly layout and its capacity to stimulate reflection on various aspects of engagement. However, they expressed a need for refining the scoring system, suggesting that an agree/disagree format for each statement could enhance clarity and ease of use. This aligns with the call for improved terminology and more straightforward language to ensure that the framework remains accessible to a wider audience.

Clear signposting and guidance on how to implement creative activities emerged as a recurring theme. This suggests that users not only want to assess their engagement strategies but also receive support in translating insights into actionable plans. Providing practical examples, case studies, and

recommendations that champion creativity within the framework could be pivotal in assisting users in implementing engagement activities effectively. Its value extends to facilitating community engagement and development, in harmony with the overarching aim of connecting creative engagement strategies with broader development goals. Recognising the potential for this tool to facilitate more informed decision-making, secure funding, and promote community-focused project management underscores its significance as a practical resource. While acknowledging the challenges of a one-size-fits-all approach, participants appreciated the framework's comprehensive coverage and potential to enhance engagement through creative approaches. This feedback suggests that the framework's adaptability to various contexts and project sizes is crucial. This adaptability, rooted in a creative approach, can ensure it remains relevant and practical for a diverse range of environmental engagement initiatives.

The framework's flexibility was celebrated, with participants acknowledging its value as a creative toolkit. This toolkit allows users to select and adapt components specifically suited to their unique contexts, embodying creativity in the customisation of engagement strategies. The framework's potential to bridge the gap between community engagement and development strategies was recognised as a significant asset, offering practical benefits such as providing evidence for funding requests and aligning with community-focused project management approaches. Overall, the feedback serves as a valuable guide for refining the framework, making it more user-friendly, adaptable, and practical for a diverse range of environmental action initiatives, ultimately aiding in the effective translation of engagement efforts into real-world action.

#### **5.4.ii Feedback: Friends of Birchfields Park (FoBP)**

It became clear early on that this framework might not be as useful for voluntary groups in comparison to larger organisations. FoBP mentioned that every Friends group is different and can have a wide range of challenges that are not comparable. They too commented on the confusion of the scoring systems, mentioning that it is clunky and difficult to add everything up with the positive and negative statements.

FoBP found the framework's structural organisation and its capacity to facilitate self-reflection and identify engagement gaps to be commendable. However, a recurring theme in their feedback is the call for greater clarity in terminology and a more accessible language, which would be essential to ensure that a broader audience can engage with the framework effectively. It was observed that the framework may be better suited for larger organisations or projects tied to funding, where the reporting and record-keeping aspects align with its structure. Concerns were raised about its applicability to smaller grassroots groups, suggesting a potential need for facilitation and additional

guidance in those contexts. Additionally, the need for examples and demonstrations to bridge the gap between theory and practice emerged as a common suggestion. Finally, the possibility of allowing users to customise the framework to their specific needs and encouraging collaborative use across agencies were intriguing ideas that surfaced during the feedback process, warranting further exploration. Ultimately, this feedback serves as valuable guidance for refining the framework to enhance its accessibility, utility, and adaptability for a diverse range of environmental engagement initiatives.

Overall, they believed it was a reasonable length for the intended use, it was thought-provoking and provided good examples of what they could do to increase engagement. However, the context and register of language needed to be reassessed or appropriately facilitated. They emphasised that the overarching challenge is moving recommendations into action and further into everyday practice. *“This framework is good in theory but how to put it into practice is the real challenge”*. One option to achieve this was suggested through the use of demonstrations. The concluding consensus of the group was that maybe this is a collaborative tool to be used across agencies rather than individually.

#### **5.4.iii Feedback: Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD)**

The feedback provided centred on improving the accessibility and usability of the framework for increasing environmental action through creative engagement. MUD noted that the language used should be more inclusive, avoiding overly corporate terminology to ensure broader appeal. They emphasised the importance of simplifying the language and making it more relatable, particularly in the flowchart section, with a call for clearer and easier language. Additionally, the feedback highlighted the framework’s strength in prompting self-reflection but suggested the inclusion of practical examples, pictures, and contextual information to provide clarity and inspiration. The ongoing challenges of effective communication were acknowledged, and while it was noted that dedicated communication specialists could enhance the process, the feasibility of such resources may vary among users.

Having examples of previous projects to provide insight into developing activities was also highlighted as an important aspect to consider when amending the framework. However, incorporating examples for all 55 activities into the framework could significantly lengthen it, potentially overwhelming users with too much information. Nevertheless, it is important to strike a balance by providing examples that offer guidance without being overly prescriptive. In this way, the framework serves as a tool that enables users to proactively adapt activities to suit their specific audiences, fostering a unique approach to engagement.



#### 5.4.iv Feedback: Manchester Museum (MM)

The museum believed the framework provided thoughtful considerations to allow for reflection on good practice of engagement. They also highlighted that the recommended activities are valuable. At the initial review, they mentioned that statements could be reworded to explicitly speak about environmental action rather than being so generic. In terms of wording, the museum said that the framework for them was more about assessing the *quality* of engagement rather than level - this was easily rectified and made more sense for the framework. As it is intended for those already looking at/incorporating engagement into their daily practice, so, quality of engagement would be a more appropriate form of assessment. The museum highlighted the importance of being explicit with some of the terminology used, for example, defining up front what environmental action looks like, or making it clear that there is an expectation from organisations engaging with the framework that will have constructed their definition of sense of purpose or intended impact. As it was highlighted, each organisation will have their unique expertise, resources and mission and the framework as it stood would risk being too vague and inapplicable.

Again, the overall comments revolved around wording and terminology to be revisited for clarity, e.g. the opening statements introducing the themes could benefit from cross-examining for alignment to ensure they reflect the statements of each theme. Furthermore, any assumptions of the framework need to be explicit and upfront. In other words, a detailed summary of how to use the CEF must be included to help guide users. Additionally, the museum staff commented a need to be specific about who should complete this assessment, whether they are those working exclusively with environmental action or not.

According to MM, the scoring required further refining, needing to be more explicit that the positive and negative statements score differently. For example, if you agree with one positive statement (5 points) and disagree with a negative one then the score (1 point) then the score did not reflect that you were within the higher quality of engagement. In this sense, if you disagree with a negative comment then the scoring should be inverted e.g. 1 would equal 5, 2 would equal 4 and so on. This could be achieved through structured facilitation of the person completing the framework assessment with a group. Or could be more easily incorporated onto an online platform where the calculation could be done for them. This needed further consideration.

Overall, MM commented that they believe the framework would be useful for them and others. They emphasised that it is useful for encouraging self-reflection on good practice for public engagement. With a review of the scoring process, the scoring matrix idea is a simple way of benchmarking where improvements could be made in an organisation's practice. They believe that

they could see how the framework would provide support to any organisations looking to develop more intentional and thoughtful community engagement plans.

With a little more context upfront, they believe there could be more clarity over the intended use of the framework and allow for comprehension of how to use it for an organisation's benefit. They also remarked that the scoring does not seem to be referenced within the recommendations which could be an opportunity to create more personalised recommendations for the organisation.

## 5.5 Amendments

The below bullet points lists are a breakdown of the amendments suggested by participants to improve the framework:

### 1. Terminology and Clarity:

- Several participants mentioned the need to revisit or clarify the terminology used in the framework. The language and terminology should be made more accessible and contextualised to ensure better understanding.
- Participants noted that some of the language in the framework appeared corporate and suggested making it more accessible to a wider audience. They mentioned that the level of engagement conveyed in the framework and recommendations felt somewhat robotic and recommended using simpler language to enhance understanding and engagement. For example, in the recommendations, *Collaborative Idea Generation* could be better phrased as an 'idea-athon' and *Openness in Funding Applications* could simply be 'funding workshops'.
- Clear signposting and guidance on how to implement activities emerged as a recurring theme. This suggests that users not only want to assess their engagement strategies but also receive support in translating insights into actionable plans.
- Providing practical examples, case studies, and recommendations within the framework could be pivotal in assisting users in implementing engagement activities effectively.

### 2. Structure and Usefulness:

- Participants generally appreciated the structure of the framework for self-reflection and identifying gaps.
- It was noted that the framework is suitable for larger organisations and projects linked to funding or charities that are more accustomed to this type of assessment.

- For smaller grassroots groups, there is a suggestion that a facilitator or more guidance may be necessary.

### 3. **Scoring and Clarity:**

- Some participants found the scoring system in the framework unclear and suggested adjustments.
- The distinction between positive and negative statements was appreciated but could benefit from more clarity.
- A few participants mentioned potential confusion in the scoring system, particularly in distinguishing between positive and negative statements. This feedback underscores the importance of refining the framework's scoring method to ensure that users can easily interpret and respond to the statements. An agree/disagree format could indeed provide greater clarity, making it simpler for users to navigate and engage with the assessment.

### 4. **Context and Specificity:**

- This was highlighted as crucial, and it was suggested that the framework should be more context specific.
- Some participants felt that the framework may not be suitable for friends' groups or very small-scale grassroots organisations.

### 5. **Examples and Demonstrations:**

- Participants recommended including examples to make the framework more practical and user-friendly.
- Demonstrations were suggested to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- There is a strong desire for the inclusion of examples or visual aids, such as pictures of activities, to provide context and inspire ideas. Participants found some of the wording and definitions challenging, and they expressed a desire for the framework to be made more relatable through practical illustrations.

### 6. **Collaboration and Customisation:**

- There was a suggestion that the framework could be more beneficial if individuals or groups were allowed to customise it to their specific needs.
- Collaboration across agencies was proposed as a potential use of the framework, indicating its potential for collective action.
- The feedback from several participants emphasised the need to streamline the framework. They suggested highlighting the desire for a more concise and efficient tool that does not overwhelm users. It is important to consider which components are essential and which can be optional or customised. By allowing users to choose elements that align

with their specific goals, the framework can become a more adaptable and user-centric resource.

- While acknowledging the challenge of a one-size-fits-all approach, participants appreciated the framework's comprehensive coverage and potential for improvement in engagement strategies. This feedback suggests that the framework's adaptability to various contexts and project sizes is crucial. This adaptability can ensure that it remains relevant and practical for a diverse range of environmental engagement initiatives.

**7. Engagement and Action:**

- It was emphasised that engagement with nature does not always have to lead to immediate action.
- The challenge of translating recommendations into practical action was recognised as a significant hurdle.

**8. Facilitation of Self-Reflection:**

- The framework was praised for its ability to prompt self-reflection. It encourages users to think deeply about their engagement practices, which is a positive aspect of the tool.

**9. Community Buy-In and Common Purpose:**

- The feedback underscores the importance of community buy-in from the start. Establishing a common purpose and ensuring that engagement efforts align with the community's goals and needs are vital considerations. This aspect highlights the framework's potential to guide users in building strong foundations for successful engagement initiatives.

**10. Community Engagement and Development:**

- Several participants saw value in the framework for community engagement and development. This aligns with the broader vision of the framework, which aims to bridge the gap between engagement strategies and development efforts. Recognising the potential for this tool to facilitate more informed decision-making, secure funding, and promote community-focused project management underscores its significance as a practical resource.

## **5.6 Amended Framework**

The main amendments made in the framework were to revisit some terminology of phrases used to reflect the variety of potential users, i.e. making sure it is accessible for someone to read who is starting out with engagement activities as well as those who have extensive experience. Additionally, to add clearer examples of the suggested activities proposed in the recommendations along with more tangible actions to guide the user toward implementation. For

example, after providing recommendations, an outline is provided for the rest of the steps (in Figure 34) guiding the user with suggestions on how to plan the activity and evaluate its success with the people engaging in environmental action.



Figure 34: The seven steps of the Engagement Framework process

To do this, an example activity was taken, and guidance was provided for planning the engagement (Step 4 of the framework). An extract of this page in the framework is shown in Figure 35. It was important to those who gave feedback on the framework for there to be more tangible actions and guidance for increasing engagement with environmental action. The example below shares the benefits of collaborative idea generation, opening ideas to people allows them to express their opinions and feel included and heard. Having activities like this one can allow for relationship building and trust to form. This is one of many activity ideas shared in the framework, thus allowing organisers to facilitate and engage in proactive plans and take ideas to community groups to encourage quality engagement.

The decision was made to not include examples for each task due to the sheer number of activities shared in the framework. Furthermore, at this stage, the facilitator would need to develop an engagement strategy bespoke to their audience. In this sense, the framework cannot be fully descriptive as each environmental action engagement will differ. This echoes data collected that a 'one-size fits all approach' to engagement cannot capture all the complexities at play. However, this framework begins to enable a facilitator to develop agency and a style of engagement that works for them and those engaged. Notably, for Groundwork GM, this framework was a welcome tool for prospective funding bids because it supported a community-based approach.



Those who provided feedback on the framework stated that the evaluation of engagement was something that could be further explored. Therefore, as shown in Figure 36, step five proposes a way to reflect on engagement activities by asking facilitators and participants the following questions.

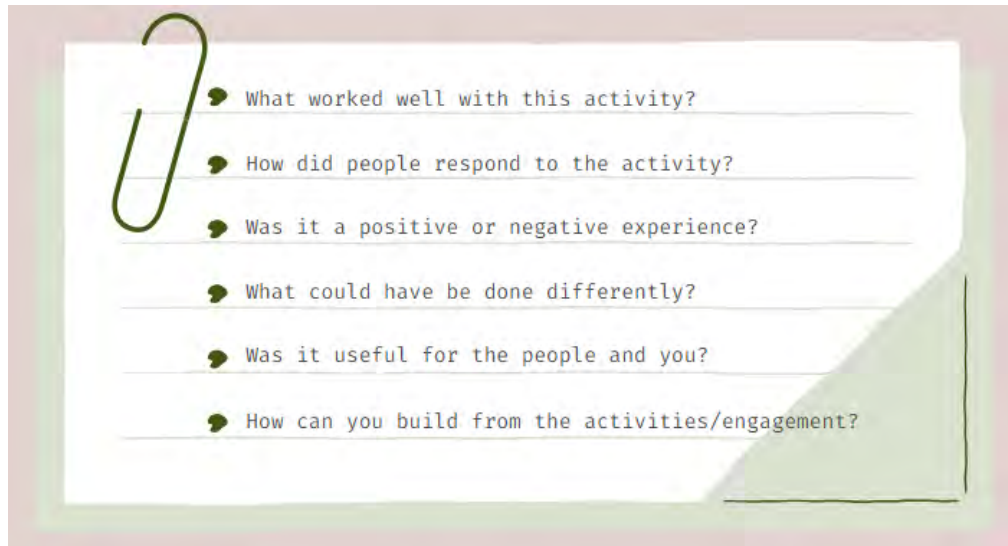


Figure 36: Extract from the Engagement Framework - Step 5 Reflecting on Activity Success

Reflecting on engagement activities is deemed an important step towards establishing genuine connections with those taking environmental action. From here the organisation can move on to Step 6 of the framework process: develop engagement plans further, as illustrated in Figure 37.



Figure 37: Extract from the Engagement Framework - Step 6 Develop Engagement Plans Further

By including reflections from Step 5, facilitators or organisers of engagement can begin to plan more detailed approaches. Consequently, accounting for the four parts of the circular process (Figure 37), an evidence-base or record of

participation can be created to demonstrate the impact of environmental action or engagement more broadly.

This iterative process encourages reviews and reflections of engagement to ensure the people are engaged, are aware of the process, and feel motivated to get involved with the decisions being made about their local UGS. Ultimately, this process guides facilitators to the final Step (7), where collective decision-making can be achieved. This is an important part of environmental action as it enables a sense of involvement and encourages ideas and shared views to improve space(s). Such engagement positively affects people's motivation and sense of accomplishment. However, it is important to note that not all decisions can be made collectively. Rather, this approach opens discussions to understand why and how local greenspaces are cared for and managed.

This framework provides guidance for tackling issues surrounding maintenance and care for UGS and aims to empower individuals and groups to feel like their input is valuable and recognised. Ultimately, if everyone's contribution to UGS developments is valued, then decision-making in these spaces becomes more reflective of what people want to see and how they want to interact with urban nature.

With Version 2 of the framework completed, participants were recontacted via email asking for some final feedback. The following section provides an overview of the findings for the final consideration of the framework.

## 5.7 Final feedback

The finalised framework can be found in Appendix 5 including the amendment suggestions from participants. This provided an overview as to how the framework may be used and adopted by different groups. Some remarked that it was a useful tool to increase the quality of their engagement, whilst others commented it felt more effective and flowed better across each stage. P1 commented that this framework would be beneficial to embed into their team, as she stated:

*“It helps to focus on the direction of travel with that all important review and lessons learned, facilitating conversations on where and how we can improve either during the project or within a similar project” (P1).*

P2 added they were pleased to see the addition of examples to the framework (see Step. 4 in Figure 34) which *‘helped bring it to life’*. She further remarked that:



*“It provides a great structure to work through and can help us to identify where there are gaps. It will be helpful to help us focus on elements of engagement we can strengthen in our projects”.*

Further feedback from FoBP gave a more in-depth critique of the framework suggesting further amendments. One member thought that the framework had improved, commenting that:

*“I particularly like the changes you've made to the scoring system to make it easier to use. And I think this framework would be beneficial for groups to use, I think it would be particularly helpful when developing a particular project like a funding bid”.*

Another member highlighted a disjointed approach that questions whether such a framework can be suitable for their group. They remarked that the revised version of the engagement framework demonstrated significant improvement in clarity and layout, presenting a more unified voice directed at an individual within an organisation initiating an engagement exercise. However, despite this progress, there were still challenges identified, namely a need for additional guidance on the application and assessment of various metrics.

A challenge for the FoBP chair was the scoring system in Step 2. He remarked that it lacks clarity regarding the interpretation of scores and their significance. More guidance was deemed necessary during Step 2 to provide clarification of what the scores signify. Furthermore, the lack of commentary on the implications of low scores or the relative rankings within the table was raised as a concern, especially if facing questions from fellow organisation members. He remarked:

*“It seems like a great deal of Step 1 effort is required from the users that then goes all woolly in Step 2 and somehow tails off. I would like some feedback at Stage 1 after my inputs”.*

By Step 3, he mentioned that he felt somewhat abandoned without sufficient guidance on the multitude of suggestions presented. The abundance of options felt overwhelming with limited clarity over how to make informed decisions or allocate resources effectively. Steps 4-7 are perceived as brief reminders for those whom he perceived as ‘insiders’, potentially causing a loss of energy for users unfamiliar with this type of framework/tool.

The CEF format was criticised for lacking explicit signposting and clarity, hindering its usefulness and the confidence of volunteers using it. The feedback suggested a need for clearer explanations, practical examples, and further guidance for volunteers to enhance its accessibility and utility for users, ensuring it aligns with the needs of busy individuals unfamiliar with the intricacies of the engagement process.

This contrasting feedback is useful as it sheds light on how volunteers unfamiliar with established engagement strategies can interact with a framework of this nature. Their critical feedback offered opposing reflections from an established organisation that believes the framework to be useful and a welcome tool for their engagement process.

Further amendments addressed these comments by incorporating an additional page within Step 2, which elaborated on the significance of the scoring system in more detail. A key finding from this feedback is that the framework will work better for some than others. It is therefore suggested that facilitation is necessary for volunteer groups or grassroots collectives to benefit more effectively from this framework. Overall, there is demonstrable evidence to support that the CEF can be a useful tool to support improved engagement in UGS. An individual or organisation can gather insights from the framework on multiple levels, whether this forms part of a strategy for engagement or simply inspires ideas to engage with others. This versatility can be beneficial, allowing it to function as a bespoke tool tailored to a wide range of needs. However, its utility may not be uniformly effective for everyone. In this sense, this supports the need for engagement practices or projects to be managed on an individual or case-by-case basis.

## 5.8 Summary

This chapter analysed findings gathered throughout this research aiming to enhance individual and organisational engagement in environmental action through a newly developed framework. Drawing from literature and empirical data, the research identified five key themes essential for effective engagement: MASCO. The framework then became a tool through which the themes were articulated and reflected upon. It is grounded on the foundational elements of knowledge, capacity and resource which are critical for intentional and sustainable engagement. Additionally, the framework is informed by interdisciplinary insights, recognising the transactional reality of human-nature relationships and the importance of inclusive, empathetic approaches in UGS governance and design.

The practical application of the framework is emphasised by its ability to guide organisations through self-assessment and improvement of their engagement strategies. It encourages a systematic approach to understanding the MASCO drivers of public engagement and addresses the complexities of equitable access to greenspaces. Feedback from initial testing has been instrumental in refining the framework, highlighting the necessity for clear terminology and adaptability to the diverse needs of groups and organisations. A more focused second round of feedback provided further insight into the framework's utility and effectiveness whilst highlighting the difficulties of a single framework that aims to provide equitable solutions for all. This iterative process ensures that

the framework remains a relevant and effective tool for fostering meaningful community relationships and informed decision-making in environmental stewardship. The iteration presented in this thesis is reflective of this research's timeframe and further validation and testing could improve its utility for individuals and volunteer groups.

In its final form, the framework serves as a guide for groups and organisations to navigate the intricacies of creative engagement and environmental action. It promotes collective decision-making, recognising the value of everyone's contribution to the care and management of UGS. By facilitating a deeper understanding of engagement quality and providing actionable steps towards improvement, the framework aims to empower users, enhance the sense of community involvement, and ensure that decisions in UGS reflect the people they serve. Ultimately, it is hoped that this will lead to more reflective and sustainable environmental action.

The feedback provided detailed insight to improve the usability and usefulness of the framework. All participants in the testing sessions believed that the framework has merit and offers a means to understand the quality of engagement an organisation has and how they can begin improving their process(es). However, there is a need for refinements in terminology, clarity, and customisation options to make it more accessible and useful for a wider range of audiences, particularly smaller groups. Furthermore, the main takeaway from this testing process was to ensure examples and demonstrations are used to enhance its practicality and collaboration across agencies. Overall, there was an acknowledgement of the framework's potential to bridge the gap between engagement and action but there are a series of amendments for consideration to ensure it is clear, applicable and valuable.

The development of the CEF allows communication and relationships to be developed to improve decision-making. The framework should be understood and acted on by everyone involved in environmental action. It can be used to gauge the current quality of engagement and provide steps to improve engagement through using creative approaches. Therefore, this framework helps to identify and bridge the gaps between decision-makers, everyday users and stewards of UGS.

## CHAPTER 6- CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter offers reflections and conclusions based on the research compiled in this thesis. It begins by revisiting the research aim, placing it within the context of the overall findings and subsequently details the research's contribution to existing knowledge. Finally, its limitations are discussed along with suggestions for future research to develop this investigation.

### 6.1 Overview of the aims and findings

This thesis aimed to investigate *how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within urban greenspaces (UGS).*

The motivation for this research stemmed from three main drivers:

1. There is limited academic work bringing together creative engagement in urban planning. This research has demonstrated that this is happening across the third sector but there is limited guidance or robust knowledge or frameworks for integrating more creative approaches to sustain environmental action.
2. The desire to conduct interdisciplinary research that bridges academic research and rigour to everyday contexts within the state and third sector, bolstering their impact and providing insights that can act as guidance or support for community-based participation and decision-making.
3. As a designer, this research is motivated by the belief that designers must be mindful of their contributions to the world. This entails a moral responsibility to leverage their skills for the collective good, aligning design practices with environmental sustainability (Papanek, 2019).

This research employed a Research through Design (RtD) approach, understood as a manifestation of design thinking, and characterised by its iterative, contextual process that cultivates knowledge through creative practice. Design thinking therefore provided a strategic framework for iterative exploration and problem-solving, while RtD facilitates knowledge generation through creative practices. Together, they fostered innovative engagement methods, offering insights into decision-making processes and promoting more effective ways to involve diverse voices in UGS stewardship. This approach highlighted the value of integrating creativity into engagement,

ensuring more inclusive and comprehensive exploration of UGS challenges and solutions.

This thesis has increased awareness of the complexities of UGS as interconnected spaces of economic, political, social, and environmental interest and injustice. For instance, the case studies and interviews demonstrated the ongoing challenges over park management between the friends group and community groups, and the decisions made by local authority (see sections 4.4.i and 4.6.ii.b). Additionally, there is inequality in the support provided to those wanting to take environmental action (see section 4.5.i).

This research achieved its aim of understanding how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within UGS by examining the key drivers of engagement from multiple perspectives. It also explored how creativity can be harnessed to motivate, support, and communicate involvement and collective decision-making, while fostering openness and accessibility.

By focusing on how people creatively respond to everyday challenges within UGS, this research demonstrated how individuals and groups interact with these spaces to engage with or care for their local environments. By understanding the motivations for engagement within these spaces, this research examined how community involvement could be increased to improve stewardship. Consequently, the following approach, research questions (RQs) and objectives were formed.

### ***6.1.i Research findings***

This research focused on the intersection of (1) decision-making in UGS, (2) creative engagement and (3) urban planning and was guided by four objectives derived from the literature review.

The principal research question (RQ) was: *how can creative engagement encourage communities to foster sustainable environmental action and stewardship within UGS?* Using each objective allowed subsequent questions to be asked and helped to structure data analysis. These are all shown below:

<b>Obj 1</b>	<b>To understand the current practices of public engagement from multiple perspectives.</b>
RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors facilitate empowerment and long-lasting public engagement?</li> <li>• How does environmental action influence decision-making?</li> </ul>

Obj 2	To understand the motivations behind people's involvement with public participation and engagement in UGS.
RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the current obstacles affecting motivation for public engagement?</li> <li>• Who and what are the catalysts for environmental action within UGS?</li> </ul>

Obj 3	To examine whether creative engagement can encourage people to engage more with UGS.
RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent can creative engagement approaches affect decision-making?</li> <li>• What role can co-production play in creative public participation?</li> </ul>

Obj 4	To bridge the gap between decision-makers and those taking action, enabling a framework to increase creative engagement in UGS.
RQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can creative engagement in UGS encourage more action, if so, how?</li> <li>• How can relationships between people and policy be improved to achieve informed decision-making?</li> </ul>

Through data collection and subsequent analysis, the research was able to clearly map the findings to the research objectives and questions.

**OBJECTIVE 1 - To understand the current perceptions and practices of public engagement from multiple perspectives.**

The interviews encompassed a diverse group of individuals engaged in UGS stewardship, creative approaches, and engagement, providing a comprehensive view of public engagement from various levels of influence, including facilitators, activists, and stewards. This diverse sampling offered insights into sustainable engagement, distilled into emergent key themes: motivation, access, support, communication, and openness (MASCO). These insights were instrumental in crafting the Creative Engagement Framework (CEF) with the aim of assessing and enhancing the quality of engagement in UGS. The case studies helped to understand the practicalities of what it means to work and interact with these spaces. Additionally, these cases demonstrate a cross-section of societal entities (from grassroots volunteers to institutions)

that focus on bringing people into UGS and collectively working to care for them.

Evidence from the data underscored the potential for environmental action to influence decision-making, exemplified by collaborative efforts across the case studies. It is worth noting that understanding the impact of environmental action on decision-making is challenging without a long-term ethnographic study. This is indicative of a certain level of complexity where opportunities for involvement can significantly affect outcomes. However, there is evidence in support of co-production which is productive in challenging the notion of power dynamics and expertise to develop more democratic decision-making (Lenskjold, Olander and Halse, 2015; Huybrechts, Benesch and Geib, 2017). This underscores the importance of integrating diverse voices and expertise to enrich the environmental stewardship landscape, making a compelling case for adopting more inclusive and participatory approaches in the management and enhancement of UGS.

**OBJECTIVE 2 - To understand the motivations behind people's involvement with public participation and engagement in UGS.**

All aspects of motivation revolved around a sense of stewardship and an innate human connection with nature and the environment. Within the interviews, motivations for individuals to become more involved with public participation stemmed from inaction from the state and a general desire to be connected to nature for health and well-being reasons. This tendency moves beyond literary findings that people are increasingly disconnected from nature (Brondizio et al., 2016; Kellert, 2018; Beery et al., 2023) and establishes a narrative that for some, there is a desire to work with others to remain connected or reconnect with(in) UGS.

Motivation within the case studies revolved around similar themes, including people wanting to improve their local space, help communities access space and learn what can be done in them (e.g. what plants can grow where and how to work with land to yield different benefits). Typically, motivation came out of a personal feeling of necessity to care for nature through activism and stewardship. The obstacles that people experienced when approaching engagement primarily revolved around the notion of access. If access is unavailable, opportunities to engage are significantly reduced. Inequality of access to UGS was also recognised as a key influence of social exclusion (Byrne, 2011; Zhou and Rana, 2012; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014).

Interestingly, actionable processes through which people desire to do various activities and follow through with ideas varied. For example, people expressed

a desire to host events but were unwilling to commit extra time to the organisation. Nonetheless, a key motivator was undoubtedly a mutual purpose of care toward UGS. Although creativity was not always explicitly spoken about, it was mentioned by those who have previously used creative methods, expressing that it can be used to attract and motivate more people to engage. This research has highlighted that more inclusive communication and adopting multiple approaches to participate can increase engagement (Perry et al., 2019; Ansell and Torfing, 2021).

The catalysts or drivers for engagement and rallying others to be involved also varied considerably. Typically, the people leading engagement were very influential over how others interacted. Thus, those who can develop meaningful connections with people and are able to find mutual ground are more successful at engagement. If design is to play a significant role in 'shaping human experience', all planned interventions, whether facilitated professionally or not, need to be useful and address human needs and values in multiple circumstances (Buchanan, 2019:9). Notably, in some cases, allocated resource(s) that went into the planned activities were not always indicative of quality engagement. Many noted that free events organised by volunteers were sometimes more popular than some engagement strategies hosted by other organisations or institutions.

Consequently, the decision to develop the framework was built upon the motivational desire to engage and drive enthusiasm for others. This served to be useful as a stepping stone towards attracting people but must be interpreted with the caveat that it may only attract more like-minded and similar people in the first instance (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015). In this sense, engagement strategies should be reflected upon and adapted to each project accordingly. Viewing engagement as more of an ongoing and unfolding process is, therefore, worthwhile to alleviate heavily prescriptive strategies that can often lead to limited and ingenuine results (Marshall, 2016).

**OBJECTIVE 3 - To examine whether creative engagement can encourage people to engage more with UGS.**

It was clear, through this research, that no one space or community is isolated. Although there is a clear network of environmental action taking place with similar goals in Manchester, it is not as streamlined, collaborative or communicative as it could be. One way to improve this is through adopting a creative engagement approach that focuses on relationship and network building. The case studies highlighted opportunities to address this by incorporating creative methods for engagement, e.g. co-producing the CEF and using MIRO (an online tool) to workshop ideas and capture motivations.



Overall, data indicated limited areas of creativity being utilised, although pockets were identified where more creative approaches could be applied. The extent to which creativity is known to affect decision-making processes is limited. However, when creative approaches were incorporated into the sharing of skills and knowledge, a much more engaging practice was achieved. This demonstrates that incorporating design thinking into UGS decision-making can significantly enhance engagement by leveraging co-production practices, thereby facilitating a more inclusive and creative approach to tackling the complex challenges of urban planning and engagement.

This research has highlighted how public engagement can benefit from incorporating creative and collaborative practices, including co-production, in shaping how environmental initiatives are implemented. This is achieved by nurturing creative environments where individuals not only feel valued but are also empowered to forge more meaningful relationships. The shift from 'user as subject' to 'user as partner' has transformed design education and practice to be more inclusive (Sanders and Stappers, 2008; Cook, 2013). An example of this practice was the collaboration between the council and FoBP that led to the co-production of a Park Management Plan. This strategy considered their tree-planting initiatives, preferred mowing patterns, and the creation of specific areas within the park. The FoBP's contributions in the focus group demonstrates how creative approaches can help to communicate ideas and needs in a more cohesive and clear manner.

Furthermore, the development of the CEF aimed to highlight these areas through which creativity can be more intentionally applied to engagement, underlining the importance of the process of participation and not solely its outcome. It is important to note that creative approaches are not to be used just for the sake of it, but rather as a tool to facilitate deeper connections to people and place (Manzini, 2016). On one hand, conducting a role-playing activity may not be appropriate when there is limited time to complete an action plan. On the other hand, facilitating an open discussion may help to organise thoughts or capture people's desires and may be more useful and just as insightful. Therefore, the experience, existing relationships and context of the organiser should influence the engagement strategy. Ultimately, when faced with challenges, incorporating creative approaches can help to define problems and collectively begin to solve them (Buchanan, 2019).

Creative approaches, by fostering an exchange of collective experiences from diverse perspectives, facilitate improved understanding between decision-makers and those who take environmental action. This research highlights how creative engagement such as co-production can improve, inspire and integrate

understanding toward UGS stewardship and nurture human-nature connections.

**OBJECTIVE 4 - To bridge the gap between decision-makers and those taking action, enabling a framework to increase creative engagement in UGS.**

Bringing together the findings from the interviewed experts and those on the ground taking environmental action, a narrative detailed the state of public engagement across four case studies in Manchester from 2019 to 2023. The CEF, informed by practical insights from the data, offers strategic guidance on implementing creative approaches effectively. By pinpointing the critical drivers of engagement, a set of guiding principles was developed that help to enhance engagement in environmental action through the incorporation of creative approaches. This investigation not only unveils actionable strategies for individuals and organisations to refine their engagement tactics but also establishes a benchmark for assessing successful engagement outcomes. Thus, the framework emerges as a vital tool for achieving more cohesion between decision-makers and action-takers. Frameworks therefore challenge traditional governance models enabling valuable and more effective decision-making in UGS (Freiwirth, 2013; Domaradzka et al., 2022).

This investigation revealed that creative engagement can influence the sustainability of participation for individuals and organisations. Results showed that the facilitator plays a pivotal role in enabling a welcoming environment, demonstrating enthusiasm towards the people and activities involved along with providing support to those taking environmental action. This resonates with Moore's assertion that expertise is necessary within planning processes (2010). However, the notion of expertise is questioned through collaborative practices as it champions participants or users are experts of their own experiences (see Cottam and Leadbeater, 2004; Steen, Manschot and De Koning, 2011).

Using the CEF, a facilitator can develop more meaningful interaction and informed decision-making based on the identified MASCO drivers for engagement. Where projects have considered these factors, whether subconsciously or intentionally, the results indicated that more quality engagement was achieved. As there is so much variation in approaches to engagement, it is difficult to suggest a definitive answer to prescribe to these issues. However, when used appropriately and thoughtfully, creative engagement can encourage more action in UGS and help to nurture relationships between people and policy.

### *6.1.iii Discussion*

The research findings indicate that all objectives and research questions were addressed, yet some aspects require additional investigation. Specifically, more evidence is needed to improve the relationship between people and policy for improved decision-making. While the research has introduced tools and methods to facilitate this, the effectiveness of these approaches demands further validation. Thus, the framework serves as a guide for achieving quality engagement, acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all strategy for replicable outcomes is not always possible.

## **6.2 Contribution to knowledge**

This thesis aimed to embed design-thinking into urban planning and public engagement to understand what motivates the individual and collective to take environmental action, and stewardship of, UGS. This is particularly important for those in urban areas, where they are intrinsic to people's and wildlife's health and well-being. The motivation of this research was a response to a gap in academic literature with regards to design-thinking in urban planning practices.

Adopting a Research through Design approach (Lenzholzer, Duchhart and Koh, 2013; Klemm, Lenzholzer and van den Brink, 2017), this research unravelled a narrative of environmental action taking place across Manchester and sought to create something novel that would help increase sustainable engagement in such action. The contribution of this research is therefore the development of this approach within the intersecting fields of design and human geography as well as the production of the CEF to enhance engagement in environmental action through the incorporation of creative activities.

### *6.2.i Contribution to the field(s)*

This interdisciplinary investigation used design-based methodologies to understand the complexities of public engagement and urban planning governance. In doing so, it enables a new perspective on existing issues. Literature reviewed in human geography as part of this thesis identified key issues with participation and co-production in decision-making. In design literature, approaches were identified with respect to collaboration and the benefits of iterative processes (see Chapter 2). Combining these disciplines allowed for a comprehensive overview of how to address participation issues and begin to develop a novel take on improving engagement.

### *6.2.ii The Creative Engagement Framework (CEF)*

The CEF was developed based on the data and literature-driven findings which included the key dependents of engagement: Knowledge, Capacity and Resource, and the key drivers: the MASCO themes. The interviews provided

the basis for the development of these themes and the case study participants helped to co-produce and validate its application. The framework was designed for both individuals and organisations involved in environmental action. This included volunteers, environmental charities, community groups, institutions and others striving to enhance their engagement in environmental initiatives.

The framework facilitates a systematic approach to assessing and improving engagement in environmental action. It aims to empower users to understand their current quality of engagement, identify areas for improvement, and plan meaningful activities based on recommendations. Therefore, through fostering relationships and trust, it enhances the overall impact of environmental action.

A comprehensive look at existing frameworks enabled the development of a model that is more dynamic and adaptable to users. Reflecting on a contemporary understanding of engagement in environmental action, the CEF emphasises inclusivity, transparency, and adaptability, acknowledging the diverse nature of environmental projects. It does this, not by imposing a rigid checklist, but rather offering a flexible, multifaceted approach, that aligns with the complexities of community engagement.

The key findings from this investigation were that:

- The disjointed nature of engagement in environmental action, emphasises the need for a more cohesive and consistent approach to help sustain motivation.
- Effective planning is crucial to encourage environmental action. Considering the MASCO drivers helps to develop a culture of engagement that values and recognises that even small acts can contribute significantly.
- Who is organising engagement matters: funding can help facilitate but not necessarily guarantee high engagement. Factors such as knowledge, capacity and resource are therefore crucial factors to consider when planning engagement.

### ***6.2.iii Beneficiaries***

This research intended to provide robust theoretical and practical insight into how the quality of engagement in UGS can be improved by incorporating creative activities. The anticipated beneficiaries of this research are those interested in applying design-thinking to urban planning governance and increasing the quality of engagement within their group or organisation. Furthermore, other beneficiaries may include those involved in community engagement practices or organising collective environmental action.

*Beneficiaries of the framework:*

- **Volunteer groups** will benefit from suggested activities within the framework. Even if the self-assessment is not necessarily used, volunteers can gain insights from the recommendations in the framework which they can use to increase engagement.
- **Social enterprises** can take from the framework ideas to enhance their engagement. A self-assessment of their organisation would be beneficial to articulate future projects for prospective funders.
- **Councils** will be able to use the framework to identify key gaps in their engagement strategy and co-production activities that help to develop relationships with the communities they serve.
- **Organisations** can use this framework to plan community engagement more effectively and reflect on their practices. They are also able to refer to this tool's empirical data and evidence base to justify their approaches to future funders.
- **Institutions** can benefit from the evidence base developed to support this type of engagement. They will be able to reflect on their impact and develop strategies to enhance their quality of engagement.
- **Engagement facilitators** will be able to use this tool to try new activities and co-develop engagement delivery with community groups and partners.
- **The author** benefits from this framework as it helped the development of empirical evidence to support my assumptions and personal experiences.

*Beneficiaries in research:*

- **Academics** interested in design studies, community engagement, urban planning, and governance may benefit from the research as it demonstrates new relationships between interdisciplinary theory and practice.
- **Researchers** looking to understand how design overlaps with human geography and how it can be applied to wider problems outside of traditional design projects. This could also inform practice-based research as the framework offers a practical application of the findings.

*Beneficiaries in the third sector:*

- **Charities, Organisations and Volunteer groups** can be provided with tools to facilitate a higher quality of engagement based on empirical evidence gathered throughout this investigation. This could be beneficial as it may enable a network of environmental action that is co-produced, well-planned, monitored and evaluated through disrupting leadership and extending engagement in decision-making processes (Ansell and Torfing, 2021).

## 6.3 Limitations

This section outlines six limitations of this investigation. It discusses how they have affected the research findings and the extent to which the results can be generalised.

### 1. Online Tools

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent reliance on online tools notably impacted the methodology of this project. Initially, planned in-person activities within UGS were shifted online, a necessary adjustment to continue the research amidst the pandemic's uncertainties. This change not only limited the study's outreach by relying heavily on pre-established contacts for further insights but also aligned with the snowballing approach outlined in the research design, offering a unique opportunity for more holistic research on environmental action in Manchester.

On top of the many challenges that came with the pandemic, the pivot to online tools introduced specific limitations, especially concerning research related to UGS. Issues of digital literacy among participants affected some engagement levels. Nonetheless, the widespread shift towards digital platforms during the pandemic also somewhat facilitated this transition in the research, with participants showing a willingness to contribute. Despite the possibility of conducting more activities and interviews in-person once regulations relaxed, the research had already advanced significantly and analysis had begun, making further in-person engagement impractical.

### 2. Sample size

The total number of interviews conducted with professional/knowledgeable people working within UGS engagement was relatively small, limited to only 13 individuals who were all Manchester-based. This was an intentional decision to ensure a picture of the city was as developed as possible.

Further insight was derived through case study development where focus groups with ten people took place. Additionally, within the case studies, a further eight people were interviewed along with the environmental volunteering survey which received 148 responses.

Validation interviews regarding the first version of the framework were conducted with eight people. The second version of the framework

gained three more responses and insights for the final iteration. If time permitted, further validation would have been preferable, especially to improve the framework use for volunteers and smaller groups.

### **3. Case study replication**

Given the nature of case study development and the adoption of a Research through Design (RtD) approach, the case studies operated as independent projects. They work as integrated examples of environmental action spanning diverse societal levels, from volunteers to institutions. This approach intentionally diverged from following a strict set of methods, allowing for rigorous comparable data (Yin, 2018), such that they facilitated the evaluation and validity of identified themes through interviews that could be tested and validated.

This resulted in a narrative evidence base which provided an in-depth understanding of what environmental action takes place across Manchester. Further research is necessary to test if the framework could be useful across other projects.

### **4. Coding data**

Certain coding decisions in this thesis were influenced by prior experiences and tacit knowledge. Coding is inherently subjective, with unconscious biases potentially influencing the conclusions. Academics have extensively debated the difficulty of separating the researcher from the research, deeming it practically unattainable (Evans, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Robson and McCartan, 2016; Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Gibbs, 2018). To mitigate this concern, this research incorporated validation activities, gaining insights from others knowledgeable in the field during the iterative testing of the CEF. This aimed to provide impartial perspectives on the research and check against any potential biases.

### **5. Framework usability**

The validation of the CEF demonstrated its utility within the realm of community engagement in UGS, although the extent of its contribution exhibited some variability among contributors. Notably, Groundwork GM and Manchester Museum found the framework to be a valuable resource, offering insightful perspectives and serving as a welcome tool which they were eager to incorporate into their practices. In contrast, MUD and FoBP encountered challenges related to the usability of the

framework, citing issues with the volume and density of information, as well as its applicability to their diverse projects.

The differing perspectives may, in part, stem from an unconscious bias related to my positionality. Having been part of an institution for several years and concurrently working in the environmental charity sector for two years, personal experiences undoubtedly played a role in shaping the framework. Additionally, although I have been an active member of FoBP for five years, overall contact time with them has been considerably less. However, this still helped to shape the framework, with their critical feedback highlighting the need to refine the tool to cater to the diverse needs of all those interested in enhancing engagement. This suggests that the CEF in its current iteration is more applicable to organisations rather than individuals. Addressing this challenge will be crucial to ensure the broader applicability and effectiveness of the framework across various community engagement contexts.

#### **6. Taking a Design Management approach – Application of Framework**

Findings within this research highlight opportunities to apply the framework more strategically within how engagement is managed. This iteration of the framework has limited implications for policy and instead forms guidelines for practice. A design management (DM) approach (as outlined in Section 2.4.iii) could be used or developed to implement the framework into organisational structures and processes to further provide insight into its application (Cooper, Junginger and Lockwood, 2013). Due to the nature of this research, focussing on grassroots to institutional level environmental action, a DM process was not used as the more informal processes of voluntary groups and small enterprises mean that there are limited formal structures in place to apply DM effectively.

While acknowledging the six limitations in this study, it is important to emphasise that there is no significant argument to suggest these limitations intrinsically impacted the research findings. An underpinning strength of the thesis was the ability to cultivate an extensive understanding of numerous approaches employed by facilitators of environmental action and more broadly engagement in UGS. Consequently, it is hoped that this thesis provides a valuable contribution and offers an alternative approach for beneficiaries when considering improvements to the quality of engagement within environmental action.



### *6.3.i Generalisability of research*

Within quantitative research, the reliability and validity of investigations are important factors to be considered (Evans, 2010; Silverman, 2013). This is due to a limited guarantee that data is a true reflection of everyday situations (Daymon and Holloway, 2010). Trafford and Leshem (2008) argue that a deductive research methodology results in high-reliability but low-validity conclusions. Conversely, opting for an inductive approach would produce highly valid but less reliable conclusions. They further discussed that generalising from conclusions becomes more challenging in the case of a theory-building approach (inductive) compared to a theory-testing approach (deductive) (Trafford and Leshem, 2008).

This thesis adopted both research types to test and generate theory. This involved multiple participants to generate insights and validate the findings of the CEF. This aimed to enhance the quality of engagement of those taking environmental action on a conceptual level. The intention was therefore to provide generic guidance to users to improve public participation such that it helps to provide generalisable results.

However, as the framework's applicability was specifically assessed within the context of these cases, the potential for its utility across other projects remains a subject for future investigation. Future research endeavours may explore further generalisability and adaptability of the CEF in diverse environmental action contexts, contributing to its broader applicability and effectiveness.

## **6.4 Further work**

It is inevitable that during a doctoral study, time limitations, and restrictions to originally chosen opportunities arise. Hence certain topics, if not covered will require further investigations. Despite any omissions stemming from these constraints, the overarching aim of this thesis has been to investigate how creative engagement can encourage sustainable environmental action and enhance informed decision-making within UGS. In addressing this aim, this research has been able to assess how the quality of public engagement can begin to influence UGS governance and decision-making. Additional research to enhance the robustness of these initial findings are outlined below:

- The development of further studies employing the MASCO drivers to assess engagement in UGS are necessary. This will provide deeper insights into how different factors influence public engagement in these spaces.
- Further refinement and validation of the CEF would contribute crucial insights into the effectiveness of recommended activities within prospective projects. Using the framework at the onset of a project for consistent monitoring and evaluation would provide an important step

in further validating its overall effectiveness. Addressing the intricacies of the framework development with volunteers and individuals is crucial to ensuring optimal functionality.

- Revisiting the latter stages of the framework, scrutinising its successes and weaknesses, and conducting a longitudinal study on its integration with environmental action projects. This could reveal further evidence to demonstrate how informed decision-making practices, as influenced by this research, can impact policymaking.
- Digitalising the framework (similar to the online Mayer-Briggs test) would offer a more seamless and user-friendly experience to assess engagement quality and help to mitigate the usability issues highlighted by participants.
- Exploring the links between design-thinking and urban planning presents an opportunity for future projects. For example, research could investigate the application of design-thinking in studies related to the physical impacts of climate change and consequent policy. This approach may extend to encompass issues in public health and well-being, aiming to forge connections between creative approaches in design-thinking and the complexities of public realm challenges.
- Integrating the framework into design management concerning socio-environmental change would be the next step toward influencing policy and for engagement to be more strategic at a higher organisational level. Although this research spoke to current policy within urban planning, there is more work to be done to ensure its application for future projects. Specifically, when designing UGS, planning for a city's climate resilience or addressing urban health and well-being. In this sense, further research could refine the CEF within other contexts such as education, health care and other policy-making practices.

The development of research in these areas would provide insight into how interdisciplinary investigation can help to creatively address complex and interlinked issues revolving around informed and collaborative decision-making.

## 6.5 Concluding Remarks

This research has applied design thinking to determine ways to enhance public engagement in UGS across Manchester. It contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexity of public engagement and delineates the benefits of incorporating creative approaches to address the wide-ranging issues in UGS. The research has highlighted the need to consider key drivers of engagement: Motivation, Access, Support, Communication and Openness (MASCO) to ensure meaningful relationships are forged and sustained. For this

reason, a consideration of these MASCO drivers helps to enable sustainable engagement and stewardship of UGS.

Understanding the process of decision-making in terms of the environment is important for people living in cities. Too often, those affected by decisions made have little to no involvement (O'Hare, 2021; Perry et al., 2019). As participation becomes more institutionalised, it is vital to develop networks and creative opportunities to engage in decision-making processes (Ansell and Torfing, 2021). This effort aims to create more open and equitable arenas for such decisions to be made (Cornwall, 2017).

By integrating a Research through Design approach, this research created a CEF that enhances public engagement in UGS. By bridging the gap between voluntary public engagement and professional sectors, this research sought to develop outcomes that are both inclusive and transparent. The intention, therefore, has been to co-produce a CEF that benefits both the public and decision-makers whilst championing the importance of self-sustaining stewardship in UGS.

This research provides a platform for critical reflection on environmental action and decision-making practices within UGS. The framework offers guidance to creatively re-imagine strategies which enhance the quality of engagement through innovative design approaches. This facilitates improved connections and stewardship towards these spaces, asserting that decision-making processes benefit from the reinforcement of integrated design practices (Papanek, 2019). This approach underscores the importance of a collaborative understanding of all factors and modulations to optimise the effectiveness of these processes. Developing a bespoke engagement plan that incorporates creative activities, therefore, offers an opportunity to strengthen connections between people and place.

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## Appendices

- A.1 Interview guide for semi-structured interviews
- A.2 Consent Form
- A.3: Participant Information Sheet
- A.4: Ethical Protocol
- A.5: Interview Codebook
- A.6: Creative Engagement Framework

## A.1: Interview guide

Interview Guide for practitioners,  
experts, organisations or decision-makers

Time: 45-60mins

Mode: Online /  
Face-to-Face

Semi Structured Interview Questions
<p><b>Initial Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was/is your job/role?</li> <li>• How long have you been doing this job/role?</li> <li>• What do you like about your job/role?</li> <li>• What motivated you to work in this profession?</li> <li>• What do you hope to achieve in this job/role?</li> <li>• Would you change anything about your job/role?</li> <li>• What does your typical week/project look like?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outline Questions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your views on public participation? Why?</li> <li>2. What is the role of public participation in city planning/policies?</li> <li>3. Do we need public participation? In what ways?</li> <li>4. Do you engage the public within your work? if so how and why?</li> <li>5. Are there any barriers of public participation in general and for you specifically? If so why</li> <li>6. Is working with volunteers important to your org - why or what and in what way?</li> <li>7. What do you think maintains public participation for the [organisation] and individual?</li> <li>8. What public participation practices work well for you?</li> <li>9. How much does your [org]/you work or engage with volunteers?</li> <li>10. What approaches do you take to ensure continued public participation</li> <li>11. How would you involve more people within your work</li> <li>12. What practices do you do to involve more people?</li> <li>13. Would you consider any of these practices to be creative?</li> <li>14. Is a creative approach important/are there barriers/ frame in response to other answers?</li> <li>15. Would you consider any part of your work with public participation to be creative?</li> </ol>



16. What role do you think creativity plays within decision-making in public participation?

17. How would you describe creative public participation?

**Final Questions:**

- Is there anything or anybody to meet next or to add - personal recommendation?
- Is there anything you want to add or ask me?



## A.3: Participant Information Sheet



***Sustainable by action, encouraging communities to engage with urban greenspaces through the use of creative participatory practices.***

**Participant Information Sheet - Interviews**

**1. Invitation to research**

You are invited to take part in this research study. My name is Sarah Walker and I am a PhD student at Manchester Metropolitan University. This research project is in partnership with the Woodland Trust to understand how people engage with greenspaces in cities and nature in your local area. It is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read through the following information.

If anything is unclear or you would like more information, please contact the principle investigator, Sarah Walker ([sarah.k.walker@stu.mmu.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.k.walker@stu.mmu.ac.uk)).

**2. Why have I been invited?**

You have been chosen to take part in this study, in the form of an interview or focus group, as you either:

- Live within 5 kilometres from a chosen urban greenspace
- You regularly use or are involved with a group in a selected urban greenspace
- You are knowledgeable about the topic area
- Or, you oversee public engagement as part of an organisation, institution or decision-maker

It is important for this research to capture the opinions of a wide range of people within a community. Within this study there will be 10-20 people taking part.

**3. Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide. I will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which I will give to you. I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any point, without giving a reason. You can notify me of your withdrawal in person or via email.



At the point you withdraw, your data shall be destroyed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). However, once I have started data analysis, it may be difficult for me to remove all your data, but anonymity will be maintained. Therefore, should you withdraw after the data analysis, your personally identifiable data will be destroyed.

#### **4. What will I be asked to do?**

This study will be developed over two years, however, your involvement will be spread across this time with a **semi-structured interview**.

Here is a summary of everything that will be asked of you:

You will be interviewed for up to an hour about public outreach or engagement as part of an organisation, institution or decision-maker. You will be asked to meet at a suitable location either on university grounds, or at your work location (this will be arranged with you prior to the interview). These interviews will be semi-structured with questions covering topics such as, your work and ongoing or completed projects related to urban greenspace, public engagement and whether any of these topics use 'creativity' or 'creative approaches' to increase participation.

After the interview, no more action will be required on your part.

#### **5. What data will be collected?**

Audio recordings will be taken during the interview, these will be transcribed, and if consent is granted quotes will be used within the final thesis. After transcription the audio files will be destroyed, and any quotes used will be anonymised unless you opt to be a named participant. If you consent, photographs may be taken during the interview to demonstrate any processes or information that is inaudible.

I may take some notes during the interview, if you would like, I can show these to you at the end for the purpose of transparency. Should you have any concerns, please raise this with me prior to us conducting the interview.

#### **6. Are there any risks if I participate?**

There will be no known risks for taking part in this research. Due to part of the study being outdoor-based, and if the interview takes place outdoors (this will be agreed upon prior to the interview), it is important to wear suitable clothing dependant on the weather.

#### **7. What are the advantages for participating?**

Taking part in this research will help provide evidence for local authorities and organisations to increase community participation and co-production in decision making. Your contribution to this research will help to highlight the importance of inclusion and belonging within



community greenspaces. Unfortunately, I cannot provide any expenses or payment for your participation.

#### **8. What will happen with the data I provide?**

When you agree to participate in this research, we will collect from you personally-identifiable information.

The Manchester Metropolitan University ('the University') is the Data Controller in respect of this research and any personal data that you provide as a research participant. The University is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), and manages personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's Data Protection Policy.

We collect personal data as part of this research (such as name, telephone numbers or age). As a public authority acting in the public interest we rely upon the 'public task' lawful basis. When we collect special category data (such as medical information or ethnicity) we rely upon the research and archiving purposes in the public interest lawful basis.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained.

We will share your personal data with the Woodland Trust in order to fulfil the purposes set out above.

If your data is shared this will be under the terms of a Research Collaboration Agreement which defines use and agrees confidentiality and information security provisions. It is the University's policy to only publish anonymised data unless you have given your explicit written consent to be identified in the research. **The University never sells personal data to third parties.**

We will only retain your personal data for as long as is necessary to achieve the research purpose. All personal information will be anonymous and recordings will be destroyed after transcription has taken place.

For further information about use of your personal data and your data protection rights please see the [University's Data Protection Pages](#).

#### **9. What will happen to the results of the research study?**

Information gathered through this study will be supplemented into the final thesis. Only anonymised data will be published unless you have given explicit written consent to be identified through photographs or quotes.



The results of the study will be used to inform the thesis. The thesis will be published on e-space: the University's 'open access' research repository, which you can access. If consent is agreed upon, participants will be informed when the study is published, I will send this to you shortly after the thesis has been published on e-space. I may submit the thesis for book publication, and elements of the thesis could be used to inform future published works.

**10. Who has reviewed this research project?**

This study is reviewed by my supervisory team, two scrutineers and the Universities ethics committee and the Woodland Trust.

**11. Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study or I wish to complain?**

There are four points of contact available to you if you wish to discuss your involvement in this study: the researcher - for general questions about the project, the supervisor for any concerns you may have, the Faculty ethics contact for concerns or complaints about the project, and the DPO & ICO for complaints about data. Please see table on the next page.

<p>Researcher: <b>Sarah Walker</b>  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:sarah.k.walker@stu.mmu.ac.uk">sarah.k.walker@stu.mmu.ac.uk</a>  <b>Postal address:</b> Chatham Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH</p>
<p>Supervisor: Martyn Evans  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:martyn.evans@mmu.ac.uk">martyn.evans@mmu.ac.uk</a>  <b>Postal address:</b> Chatham Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH</p>
<p>Faculty Head of Research Ethics and Governance: <b>Professor Susan Baines</b>  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:artsandhumanitiesethics@mmu.ac.uk">artsandhumanitiesethics@mmu.ac.uk</a>  <b>Postal address:</b> Faculty of Arts and Humanities, All Saints Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH</p>
<p>If you have any concerns regarding the personal data collected from you, our Data Protection Officer can be contacted using the <a href="mailto:legal@mmu.ac.uk">legal@mmu.ac.uk</a> e-mail address, by calling <b>0161 247 3331</b> or in writing to: Data Protection Officer, Legal Services, All Saints Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH. You also have a right to lodge a complaint in respect of the processing of your personal data with the Information Commissioner's Office as the supervisory authority. Please see: <a href="https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/">https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/</a></p>

**THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT**



## A.4: Ethical Protocol

**Sustainable by action**

encouraging communities to engage with urban  
greenspaces through the use of creative participatory  
practices.

Version 1 - 01/03/2019

MAIN SPONSOR: Manchester Metropolitan University  
STUDY COORDINATION CENTRE: School of Art

Protocol authorised by:		
Name & Role	Date	Signature

**Study Management Group**

Chief Investigator: Sarah Walker

Study Management: Ramona Statache, Martyn Evans, Edward Fox and Paul O'Hare

For general queries, supply of study documentation, and collection of data, please contact:

Study Coordinators and Supervisory Team: Martyn Evans, Edward Fox and Paul O'Hare

Address: Manchester School of Art, All Saints Campus, Manchester M15 6BH

E-mail: [Martyn.Evans@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:Martyn.Evans@mmu.ac.uk) [E.Fox@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:E.Fox@mmu.ac.uk) [Paul.A.OHare@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:Paul.A.OHare@mmu.ac.uk)

**Sponsor**

Manchester Metropolitan University is the main research Sponsor for this study. For further information regarding the sponsorship conditions, please contact:

Research Governance and Ethics Manager

RKE Office

Manchester Metropolitan University

Ormond Building

Tel: 0161 247 0189

This protocol describes the study and provides information about procedures for entering participants. Every care was taken in its drafting, but corrections or amendments may be necessary. These will be circulated to investigators in the study. Problems relating to this study should be referred, in the first instance, to the Chief Investigator.

It will be conducted in compliance with the protocol, the Data Protection Act and other regulatory requirements as appropriate.



## Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	4
1.1	Background.....	4
1.2	Rationale.....	4
2	STUDY OBJECTIVES.....	4
2.1	Primary Objective.....	4
2.2	Primary endpoint/outcome.....	4
3	STUDY DESIGN.....	4
4	STUDY SETTING.....	4
5	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.....	5
5.1	Inclusion Criteria.....	5
5.2	Exclusion Criteria.....	5
5.3	Withdrawal Criteria.....	5
6	STUDY PROCEDURES.....	5
6.1	Recruitment.....	5
6.1.1	Participant Identification.....	5
6.2	Consent.....	5
7	INCIDENT REPORTING.....	6
8	DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA HANDLING.....	6
8.1	Sample size calculation.....	6
8.2	Planned recruitment rate.....	6
8.3	Data collection tools and source document identification.....	6
8.4	Data handling and record keeping.....	6
8.5	Access to Data.....	6
9	MONITORING, AUDIT & INSPECTION.....	6
10	REGULATORY ISSUES.....	7
10.1	Ethics Approval.....	7
10.2	Public involvement.....	7
10.3	Regulatory Compliance.....	7
10.4	Data protection and confidentiality.....	7
10.5	Conflicts of Interest.....	7
10.6	Indemnity.....	7
11	DISSEMINATION POLICY.....	7

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

This research is in partnership with the Woodland Trust and Manchester Metropolitan university to analyse how creative community participation can influence the sustainability of urban greenspaces. Urban greenspaces are defined here as a publicly accessible space with a majority of natural elements (e.g. grass, trees or shrubs). This will involve interviewing community members within proximity to selected sites and experts dealing with urban greenspaces (e.g. policy makers, local authority and Woodland Trust staff). There is increasing amounts of pressure toward urban greenspaces for redevelopment as well as often being an after-thought in city planning. Current studies remark that more consideration of collaborative practices can enhance and inform policy. Many studies have investigated public opinion of 'nature' through photography but lack the physicality of working or collaborating with people outdoors.

### 1.2 Rationale

The research question: How can creative participatory practices (CPP) encourage communities to foster sustainable action and stewardship within urban greenspaces (UGS)?

- What factors influence a sense of community and ownership?
- How much do cities rely on voluntary work in UGS?
- Do creative practices develop stakeholder consciousness toward care of UGS?

These questions are important for understanding how creative participatory practices can influence policy. The impact of this research has the opportunity to benefit different segments of society and the environment.

## 2 STUDY OBJECTIVES

To enhance connections to, and stewardship of, urban greenspace by developing a framework for creative participatory practices.

### 2.1 Primary Objective

To conduct multiple case studies on a maximum of 4 selected sites evaluating community members (within 5km proximity) and expert perceptions, engagement level (community and other users) and accessibility to urban greenspaces. These will then be analysed thematically to make comparisons that will feed into the development of a framework for suggested use of creative participatory practices in urban greenspaces that promotes sustainability.

### 2.2 Primary endpoint/outcome

The endpoint for the primary outcome in this project will conclude after all interviews and focus groups are completed which I estimate to be January 2021. Completion of the study will be October 2021.

## 3 STUDY DESIGN

All interaction with my participants will be planned in advance. Focus groups and interviews will be semi-structured with decided questions by me and supervisors. All forms of interview or conversation with my participants will be designed to allow all participants to contribute to a conversation and express their opinion or thoughts about urban greenspaces and the use of creative practices. Their contributions will inform further research and influence the framework for suggestive practices in policy or planning.

## 4 STUDY SETTING

The participant research methods will take place in public spaces, either on a selected greenspace in their local area or a familiar setting. The research sites will be decided upon between the chief investigator, the supervisors and the Woodland Trust partners. The supervisory team will have full

knowledge of where and when focus groups and interviews will take place to ensure safety of all parties. Interviews will abide by the university's lone worker policy and buddy system.

## **5 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Participants are eligible for the study if they live within 5km proximity to a selected site or consider themselves knowledgeable in the field of urban greenspace, whether it be local authority, Woodland Trust staff or professionals. Only those above the age of 18 will be eligible for this study. Participants must be able to give informed consent and able to express their opinion in English.

### **5.1 Inclusion Criteria**

Any gender identification will be eligible for this study. Participants must be able to give informed consent, be over 18 and able to express their opinion in English, this is for the ease of communication with the chief investigator.

### **5.2 Exclusion Criteria**

Anyone under 18 or individuals from vulnerable groups. This is due to the nature of the research, going outside and traveling around greenspaces.

### **5.3 Withdrawal Criteria**

If any participant wishes to withdraw from the study they must contact the chief investigator. Before the study starts, their name can be simply removed from a created list of participants. During the investigation process (in interviews, focus groups and observations), withdrawal will involve any recording, photographs and written contribution being destroyed immediately and the participant will be removed from the list. After the research has taken place, participants will have up to FOUR WEEKS to ask to be removed from the study. Information collected will be made anonymous therefore, efforts will be made to identify the participants. Once the thesis has been completed and handed in it will be impossible for participants to withdraw, this information will be included in the participant information sheet.

## **6 STUDY PROCEDURES**

### **6.1 Recruitment**

Participants will be recruited by the chief investigator. Other methods will include publishing flyers to community or community centres and emailing existing contacts. A gatekeeper email will be sent wherever needed to interview staff from the Woodland Trust or local authority. Additional individuals will be recruited online through public profile contact details.

#### **6.1.1 Participant Identification**

Participants will be identified by myself, my supervisory team and my partners in the Woodland Trust. Members of the public will be approached due to their pre-established involvement within a selected site, if they are frequent users of the space (determined through observational study) and if they live within 5km of the site - this will be found by sending out flyers to seek out interest. Public facing social media accounts may also be used to recruit professionals such as twitter, organisational or institutional websites. Flyers, posters and promotion of social media will also be used to recruit. No payment or incentive will be offered for participation in this research.

### **6.2 Consent**

The chief investigator will operate with informed consent at all times during this study. This will be done by providing every participant with a participant information sheet and a consent form. The participant information sheet will set out in plain English what is expected from them, the withdrawal protocol and how the data will be collected and used. It will also include details about

the study, the process for dealing with any concerns or problems with the study and a breakdown of what their participation will involve. The consent form will give the participant the opportunity to agree to all elements of the study. Both sheets will clearly state that participants can ask questions or express any issues at any stage of the study and are not forced into contributing in any activity. Consent forms will be signed on a face-to-face basis in order to talk through the process to the participants.

## **7 INCIDENT REPORTING**

Any incidents including loss of personal data or any breach of GDPR will be reported to the supervisory team and the ethics committee in the first instance. This study will not deviate from the protocol, any amendments to the protocol will be through EthOS and the university's ethics committee. Any participant complaints about the study will be informed to contact the supervisory team.

## **8 DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA HANDLING**

### **8.1 Sample size calculation**

A sample size 10-20 participants in the interview and focus group stage has been decided on due to time constraints of the project. Online survey will collect up to 500 people – this is due to the high number of Woodland Trust members expected to potentially partake.

### **8.2 Planned recruitment rate**

The planned recruitment rate is anticipated to be steady after site selection. Participants will be recruited from August 2019 – June 2020 to maintain a reasonable work load throughout.

### **8.3 Data collection tools and source document identification**

Data from the interviews and focus groups will be conducted through audio recordings, video recordings and photographs. Audio will be transcribed by myself and video will be used for viewing by myself and my supervisory team. After transcription the audio files and the videos after notes are taken will be destroyed. Paper consent forms will be securely kept in the university with a PIS form. The participant code sheet will be kept separately in a locked draw in my supervisor's office. Copies of the anonymised data will also be separately stored on a secure database in accordance with MMU's data protection and GDPR policy.

### **8.4 Data handling and record keeping**

Data entry will be done through NVivo, I will be responsible for data entry, quality and data analysis. Cross validation will occur with my supervisory team to check filing accuracy. Pseudonymised data will be backed up on the universities H: Drive and an external hard drive.

### **8.5 Access to Data**

Myself and my supervisory team will have access to collected data. Direct access will be granted to authorised representatives from the Sponsor, host institution and the regulatory authorities to permit study-related monitoring, audits and inspections. My supervisory team will keep personal identifiable data for 10 years and then destroyed. Archiving of study documentation will be authorised by the sponsor following this period.

## **9 MONITORING, AUDIT & INSPECTION**

Monitoring will be done through the RD1 and RD2 process as well as through my supervisory team. Audit and inspection can be arranged at any point during this study by the university.



## 10 REGULATORY ISSUES

### 10.1 Ethics Approval

The EthOS number of this project is: 5896. Ethical approval will be approved by the Faculty Research Ethics and Governance Committee. The Chief Investigator has obtained approval from the 2018 Research Ethics Committee.

### 10.2 Public involvement

Observational studies will involve note taking of the public anonymously. Any interaction with the public for use in the study will follow the participant protocol, operating with informed consent at all times.

### 10.3 Regulatory Compliance

There is no known issues that would cause an issue of compliance with regulators.

### 10.4 Data protection and confidentiality

All investigators and study site staff must comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR with regards to the collection, storage, processing and disclosure of personal information and will uphold the Act's core principles.

Information will be collected via video, photographs and audio recording and then annotated and transcribed. Recordings will be kept safe on a secure MMU server and a back-up will be on an external hard drive under password protected files in a locked drawer or cabinet in my supervisor's office. After transcription the audio recordings will be destroyed. The photographs may be used in the final thesis with informed consent of my participants. Once insights are noted the videos will be destroyed. Identifying information of participants will be removed and replaced by a pseudonym. The individuals who will have access to this data will be chief investigator and the supervisory team. The data will be stored for 10 years before being destroyed. Data custodian is the chief investigator during the length of the thesis, after this point the data custodian will be the Director of Studies Prof Martyn Evans.

### 10.5 Conflicts of Interest

There are no known conflicts of interest in this study. There is a pre-existing relationship with the Woodland Trust through voluntary work. Their involvement is purely for knowledge exchange. This will be made clear to the participants on the information sheet.

### 10.6 Indemnity

Manchester Metropolitan University holds insurance that provides cover for harm arising from the design, conduct and management of the research.

## 11 DISSEMINATION POLICY

Data produced by the photographs, interviews and focus groups is owned by the chief investigator. On completion of the thesis the study data will be available online at e-space. The chief investigator has the right to attempt publication of the thesis and the data within after completion. On completion I will recontact the participants that have agreed on the consent form to inform them that the study is complete and they can access it on e-space. Dissemination may also occur in journal articles, conferences and reports.

A:5 Interview Codebook

Primary Codes	Definition	Secondary Code	Definition	Code Type	Transcript Code	Evidence (Direct Quotes)
UGS	Relates to an open accessible space with a majority of vegetation (e.g. a park)	Access	Relates to how people physically enter and move around the space	Emic	8,9,10	<p>I think this is the problem for some of the participatory stuff, is that yeah, I mean, obviously, at some point, you do have to compromise on some of this. And, you know, I think that really is one of the biggest challenges, even in the natural environment, where you've got much more scope really for it to provide multi-functions and to satisfy a whole range of different people, you still do get these conflicts, for example, you know, people talking about wanting mobility and access and other people wanting wild and free and untamed natural environments. So, while I'm sure that those things can be accommodated, sometimes done in individual spaces and places, sometimes in local community areas, you know, I think that's one of the areas that can be kind of problematic for the creative participatory process, because you're going to end up and we like to think that people will negotiate their way through this and come to an agreed solution, but the reality is, some people they won't reach that amicable area. So, you need to think, about those sorts of circumstances and about the fact that some people have got louder voices than others and so on [8 repeated]. I think one thing that is really important as well, is that and if we are trying to encourage creativity in sort of urban natural environment, then you're not going to get that sort of creativity if people are living in places where there is no green space. So you're not going to get the idea to throw seed bomb out your window if it's going to hit the pavement and that's it sort of thing! And there's not going to be those sorts of activities and those social elements that might attract people as well. So it all really comes down to those areas being there in the first place... it's the</p>

availability, it's the accessibility. And then it's kind of even, you know, the visibility, you know, do you ever see any areas of green space? I mean, there will be kids growing up, who, you know, we hear stories about children not knowing what sheep are and this is the reality for some kids that have grown up in very, very densely urbanised areas in it, even in the UK. So you know, they're just going to get more and more disassociated to the natural world and less and less likely to be able to think about creativity from that context. [8]. at this point I wish I was researching [this] because, you know, my [redacted] lives in [redacted], in a council state and over the park are all these fields that used to be coal mines. And I haven't seen anybody out there for years. And now all these families are going for walks round the back. And they'll be people cycling across the field. You know, because of the lockdown, they're allowed to go for a walk, they're going out for a walk and they're going into these few fields at the back. You know, their experience of family is completely different. I'd love to know how that experience has changed the dynamics of the family and where they live, because I know that some of them will have lived there for ages and never been down the back... and whether it's made people appreciate more the green spaces around where they are [9]. with disadvantaged groups, they are in the worst environments with the least green space, so that's a real issue. You say you want people to access greenery and so on but they have to have the space and access it. Unless you begin to transform places like streets, at the moment, because of the virus they are thinking of shutting down streets in order to, to increase cycling and walking. So now that's a big opportunity for the shutdown streets can be transformed... people assume that they need to park their car in front of their houses and all this stuff. But it could be re-designed in such a way that certain number of streets got shut down. They turned into a space where you relate to green not entirely

						green space, but the way you configured it can give you a sense of content of nature. That's one possibility. Because at the moment, the best green spaces are where all the rich people are [10].
		Stewardship	Relates to caring for the space	Etic	1,3, 10	So, I think, and I keep saying giving everything we're going through now! But I think it's really going to affect and re-prioritised people, I mean we've been so reliant on older people and I say this, I say like those who are semiretired from 50+ to care for these green spaces the urban green... do more people then go to the spaces to try and get their daily dose of nature and activity and then are they happy to take that risk of being you know, in close proximity of others doing the same or they are just left under-used and unkept more so spaces and be told you know to potentially then self-isolate and be told I'm sorry you can't kind of come out and socially engage with one another then what does this mean for the future of the spaces you know [3]. whilst green spaces provide an awful lot of health and well-being influences.. positive influences. What were actually creating is that with the risk or the fear of loss of these spaces is also, you know, a negative factor, a negative influence on health and well-being so we've got to kind of manage that really carefully and the reason we found that out was because we opened up a lot of face-to-face interaction, a lot of conversation. We had a lot of dialogue, we also invited people to express themselves creatively [3]. [public participation is] really good, especially, you know, in the current time, where, you know, through this period of austerity that we've been having that, you know, there hasn't been a local authorities haven't had the capacity to do some of the things that are necessary in the sort of urban environmental realm, and there's been groups like, you know, the Friends of groups and so on, and older participants who have had a really important role in maintaining areas, improving areas, and also for bridging to other people to participate in those



					<p>areas as well. So I think, you know, from, from that point of view, that sort of participatory to the element is, is really important [8]. how do you get people to be creative in a green space and 80% of the UK's population is in urban areas. So it's not just minorities but everybody. So how can you get, you know, people who actually either own or manage these spaces to begin to create that creative atmosphere? The first basic thing is, do you talk to your local community? You do you ever see park managers hanging around talking to people in the space rather than sitting in their office? [10]. I have this thing of over 30 years of participation, I can collapse the whole process into two phrases: we love what we enjoy, and we protect what we love [10]. I would love that every community we work with to enable them to be that self-sufficient to be that empowered. I know that when dealing with ■■■ there are certain things there, I mean there it's very physical, the parks there but to get people engaged in shaping that park you know that's got to have a tremendous amount of job satisfaction for yourself and knowing that engagement that were taking place is going to carry that on [1].</p>	
		Well-being	Relates to the benefits of UGS to people's health	Emic	3, 9	<p>social connection has been researched quite rigorously over the past 10 years in relation to health and well-being certainly to enable population, people who are you know getting older and living longer you know it's been proven social connection is up there in the top 10 well-being dimensions we use to measure non-monetary value of space and what green space means [3]. I have a beech tree in my back garden and I heard a cuckoo and I hadn't heard a cuckoo for 30-40 years in the back garden, I just thought it had gone but of course with no traffic and no people, it was still there and that moment of hearing the cuckoo, it felt... it really did generally give me a boost to how I was going to cope with all</p>

					<p>this, you know full time care of my mum and everything so yeah connecting with nature can be very powerful [9].</p>	
		Sustainability	Relates to the longevity of using, caring and improving the space	Etic	1, 13	<p>I mean, maintenance is a really important element because you can be as aspirational as you want with a landscape design. But you have to bear in mind it's you can maintain it. So you know, there's no point, putting it in a beautiful boating Lake, if actually that's going to sort of silt up and look like a swamp in a few years time. You got to think about the practicalities of it [13]. I would love that every community we work with to enable them to be that self-sufficient to be that empowered. I know that when dealing with ■■■ there are certain things there, I mean there it's very physical, the parks there but to get people engaged in shaping that park you know that's got to have a tremendous amount of job satisfaction for yourself and knowing that engagement that were taking place is going to carry that on [1]. I think it's [covid] really going to affect and re-prioritised people, I mean we've been so reliant on older people and I say this, I say like those who are semiretired from 50+ to care for these green spaces the urban green [3].</p>
		Inter-connectivity	Relates to how all living things interact with one another (e.g. improvement)	Etic	9	<p>I'm a creative in residence at ■■■, so I've got this creative space so people come and use it and it is the most inner city, non-green space you would think, but the themes, so people just come and write poetry or draw pictures or just leave messages. And the number of times it's about things to do with trees, the planet, spaces near them that mean something to them. It's a place where, even though there's not a blade of grass around, there's so much to do with connecting with nature and particular urban nature in that space in terms of art work and</p>

			ts made to increase biodiversity)			poetry... I really wasn't expecting it, you know, I haven't done it, it's just what people have done [9].
		Engagement	Relates to the level of engagement, through activities, play, or use people have to the space	Emic	6, 9, 10	if you're looking at a specific park you know, you'd have different sections and maybe you could put up some flower beds or you know anything that brings a splash of colour and then you can look at something and it could spring ideas in people's minds to be able to do these things... Creativity is all sort of individual to each and every one of us so it depends on how to get that one person or to get a few people involved in these things really [6]. So I did, I spent a lot of time in .█████ Park, engaging with people and talking to them about their firsts, what was the first thing they saw at the cinema, the first day of work, the first whatever. And it was just using because asking people while they're in the park was so different than doing it where I was doing in the city centre or somewhere else. And that has really I don't like the word 'informed', but it's affected the way in which I interact with people and get them to interact with their places that their in [9]. if you're getting people involved in, an urban green space, it's completely different in the morning as it is in the dinnertime and in an evening or in winter and in summer, so you know, you can't just go for one you have to work it differently for different people, you know, the dog walkers might have a different view to the people walking their kids to school you know or something like that... So the barrier to actually engaging, so you've got to get that right first. Then once people do engage even in the smallest way, it's really got to be a win-win win for everybody [9]. everything we did with the environmental sector, and personally I found it very strange, because in 1987, people were just look pure

					<p>conservationists. And we talk about people they find it very strange and what's that got to do people, you know, unless they want to volunteer and work, do a thing for nature. They never saw it benefiting people and so on, so they were not even interested in white people that didn't volunteer for nature. And when BEN finally established what was the ethos and the experience within the environmental sector, for involving minorities, they then for example, begin to wake up to the fact that many people in the white population also had the same issues you know, they never contact nature. The poorer people with no parks and gardens in their areas, you know really divorced from nature. And so they began to use it, then develop model projects to begin to involve all kinds of disadvantaged white groups. So it's been an interesting journey, in that way that we brought something into the sector, about people and how creativity played a great role in that involvement. And also, when you involve people creatively, then you begin to see the different ways of getting people connected to nature, inspired by nature, and then ultimately, contributing to nature. By allowing their creativity to show you what can be done, and how it can be done, and how you can design things [10].</p>
		Enhancement	Relates to enhancing green spaces in urban areas	13	<p>I suppose, very simplistically put is trying to move away from having traditional drainage systems and let's say, a city like Manchester, and seeing what alternatives are in terms of if we increase our green space that we can sort of redirect some of our rainfall runoff into parks, and just take the pressure off the drainage systems, it just can't cope with, you know, climate change, increased rain, and kind of old failing drainage pipes from the Victorian era that no, hence we're getting on this flooding [13].</p>

Creativity	A process of including new/ different ways of thinking/ doing/ adapting	Flexibility	Relates to an iterative process of sharing thoughts / ideas	Emic	1,2, 6, 8, 9, 14	<p>[to engage people:] I just think you've got to be a chameleon... When I go to Brinnington I am an honorary Brinningtonian, when I go Irlam, I'm an honorary Irlamonian [1]. You have to be able to switch yourself and be very chameleonlike in your approach. That doesn't mean that you lose sight of who you are, but it means that you can align yourself more and if you understand what motivates that community, what motivates those people, what's going to inspire them? You're halfway there. And I always think about it, it's like managing people if you know what makes people tick, you know the pressure points, you know to trigger points. You should be able to manage those people and still inspire those people [1]. it's like every community, every group of people is different, so you've got to be able to do everything bespoke to those people, so creativity is hugely important to any of the decision making around a project. we're all unique individuals! in unique little areas.... [so] it's all about co-design and getting ideas from them and getting creative [2]. I did a bird walk around Whitworth Art gallery at the beginning of the year [2020], it's just getting people to come into the park and then look at different ways you can identify birds and I think, like looking at a piece of paper, everyone learns different as well, whether you're learning in terms of you can read a book and then you know how to identify these birds or whether you need to be physically out there and looking at them, and I think in terms of creativity it can be quite difficult because everyone is sort of creative in their own way as well. so personally for me, I'm more of a doer, I do things to teach myself how to do things and yeah I reckon it's a difficult one because unless you give people the opportunity to be able to be creative, I think a lot of people would kind of struggle, say if they're not creatively inclined in terms of looking at things differently [6]. What stifles creativity? I suppose over adherence to rules and norms but, I don't think necessarily that the rules or norms need to</p>
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					<p>stifle it completely, you can think about it guiding rather than stifling. But I suppose some people would feel stifled and therefore turn away from it... I guess, time and resource to be able to have the luxury to be involved in it... ...maybe social expectations as well. Like some people probably don't feel that, you know, especially I'm thinking again where I live. And if I think about the people on my street, we have a very varied groups of people on our street, and maybe some people would associate creativity with some of the people on the street, but they wouldn't necessarily put themselves in the same group. And maybe that sort of association will put people off being creative because they think it's associated with hippies... I think it's this idea of what is that creative process, because it's obviously got a process associated with it, so if that process is being designed in a way that is culturally or demographically framed, then that is going to stifle some of that creativity...it's got all of these different dimensions and it's not necessarily all about the individuals personality and characteristics, there are all these different levels where engagement can be either encouraged or you can be shut down or not given that space. [8]. It's trying to have a whole range of things for different people, because then you can thrive. So you might have one person is absolutely fantastic at planting something and doing whatever, sketching flowers. And that's what they do. But that won't be for everybody... So it's letting people thrive at their own pace, and see that they do belong there. And they don't, they don't feel pressured to create something or be something, just give people lots of time to find their own way and on their own feet. And it's often those, the reticent ones that are quiet, that end up being the most amazing [9]. actually we need more spaces where we can just try things, you know, in public spaces, we can just do things, try things, see if it works and that's the thing is actually to allow the flexibility of that [14].</p>
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		Imagination	Relates to creating opportunities to imagine new things	Etic	3,5,6,7	<p>I think there is something really exciting in being encouraged to stretch your imagination to see the world a bit differently through mixed medium, although it might be a luxury it's also I think an incredibly, incredibly necessary tool or method through which we should see the world because if we don't and we fail to do that, or we create no space or no room to do it I think where's the fun, where's the playfulness you know... and where do we get our motivation from then you know we're not all going to sit reading reports in an A4 document and a few pictures. So, I think information can be exchanged and knowledge can be exchanged, and lessons can be learned if we see people's experiences in things rather than just read about them [3]. I don't know, I'm trying to think about how I actually define the word creative because I think asking a really good open question can be an invitation for creativity from the people you're asking the question to, so if you're asking, this is an obvious one, but if you had a magic wand what would you make your community look like? Or describe your vision of your community in ten years times. I suppose it's more about imagination than creativity but they're similar things. It's getting people to imagine how things can be different and then when they answer you being encouraging about the answer that they've given as opposed to saying well obviously we can't do that, you know actually going like oh okay... So, I don't know if that's what you mean when you say creativity being more like arts but I think good engagement or community organising is inherently an imaginative creative process that should encourage that kind of thinking [5]. creativity is so individual... I guess being creative would be trying something new... trying something different within your community... or trying something new to challenge yourself maybe [6]. So we did a sort of natural musical orchestra basically which I thought was absolutely fantastic and everyone really enjoyed it in terms of being able to make some</p>
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						<p>noise and to actually be able to make something... I think that's one thing that I do really love about my job as well, is that I just look online for different ideas and try things out and my desk back at the office is just full of these little prototypes and things that I've tried to do in terms of trying to get people to do things... So that's definitely one of my favourite bits of my job is trying to basically be a child, have that child-like manner of making loads of things and trying them out to see if they work [6]. what I mean by creativity, just being open minded to whatever suggestions people want to make and then exploring that, almost like doing a bit of a brainstorm, and exploring each idea and seeing what's feasible but from a creative point of view, rather than kind of, well, let's go and do this because that organisation over there did this and they have lots of success doing it that way. I'd much rather kind of have that on the top on the table as well, or bringing back to the table after we exhausted the ideas of the people sat in the forum, where you generate ideas [7]. So the things that everyone does, you know, everyone walks everyone eat. Everyone lies on the grass. And then from there, there are creative ways of doing all of that [10].</p>
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		<p>Support/ Facilitating</p>	<p>Relates to supporting people to be creative</p>	<p>Etic/Etic</p>	<p>1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14</p>	<p>it's about delivering, it's about I suppose managing expectations isn't it and being creative wherever we are able via activities, via raising awareness [1]. To me it's about the basics it's about knowing your audience [1] if we've got an idea that we think would work really well in a certain area, then we would maybe try and reach out to these community groups and see if they are interested and if there is an interest there then we can move the project further... I think you do have to be creative in terms of thinking about what people want... In terms of decision making it would obviously depend on the community that you're working with and what they want really and I think that's a lot of the work that we do is we facilitate what the community wants and if we can do it then that's great but if we can't then we will try to get in contact with the council to see whether there is anything in terms of planning permissions or anything permissions that we might need to see whether it would work out, that we would be able to do it [6]. you might have a group of young people who are motivated with a cause. But if you haven't got a youth worker, or an adult, or a group worker or a project worker, who can take them through that process, which I guess would be best described as social action. If you haven't got a worker who can take them through that process, then that creativity is not gonna, it's not gonna happen [7]. provided that you've got the buy in and provided that you've got the skills then you can do it. and I guess the point of what I'm trying to say is you can move mountains with young people but it's got to come through that kind of process, you can steer them into funding, raise their awareness, get them to kind of understand processes, the important bit is to get them to do the bids that they don't want to do, be there to motivate them when things aren't going quite right [7]. the thing that stifles, I'm going to be pretty controversial here and say, the thing that stifles creativity is the worker, it's not the young people, the young</p>
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					<p>people bring the energy and kind of want to do stuff. And quite often those processes aren't completed because the worker or the workers, kind of don't believe in them...it's that bit about just kind of being that conduit between where they are in their starting point, and helping them or enabling them to grow so that they can develop and get to whatever that endpoint is [7]. giving people time and permission to, you know, to not be pressured. I mean, you get so much out [9]. if [participation] is led by a practitioner, so many people are not genuine, they're doing it as a job or research... you know their reason for doing it isn't something that would resonate with the people who they are wanting to get involved. So there's got to be a good match [9]. It's about attitude and going with people who are already there from where they are. Going alongside them. And you know, being prepared to change yourself [9]. [CPP] It is vibrant engagement that involves the driving force of people's wishes and needs [10]. You'll find that when you're creative and open and connect with people, people will tell you things that are so wonderful and remarkable, stories and your own role. You know, as a person is expanded [10]. [artists] wanted to know how I ran my workshops and how I designed them and how I did it. It was a bit, it was quite hard to work out what I was going to tell them, but I've just run three, one and a half hour long workshops on Creative structured facilitation, which is what I decided to call it [11]. We did borrow a person which was quite cool, where we were working with libraries to identify people. So the idea was we wanted to try to look at how, we had our resident survey that was done on the phone each year. And one of them was trying to improve perceptions how people viewed people from different backgrounds. So a number of libraries we set up things where people could buy or rent out themselves so like, firefighter, nurse, schizophrenic... so people could borrow a person, spend time with someone</p>
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					<p>from a different background to try to look at how their experiencing life that was quite, I think that was pretty cool [12]. I think creativity does in the mix of all of this in terms of research and participation is it basically gives you a much broader toolbox, it gives you a different way of emphasising, I think creativity or creative thinking as well allows you to feel comfortable with stuff that is unknown, or uncertainty [14]. So you get a space of creativity, or creative public participation, that has a kind of structure to it. and what you get out of having a structure actually can be incredibly rich, and that and that's something actually that I've, I've shifted slightly, because when it when I first started doing this work, I was I was very much of the opinion, like all people have to be, you know, they have to decide what they want to do and this and that, but actually, if you put a whole load of people together in a space and say, hey, go and do something, everyone would just sit around and look at each other. And go, what do you mean, you know, so I think there is something about valuing artists, creative practitioners and facilitators in that process and actually enabling those kinds of people, you know, with those skill sets actually to be able to work with people in and around places and spaces [14]. the lack of awareness within the individual staff members, or the nervousness within the staff members of realising, when you invite people in to do participation in your space, you then have to either really clearly set the rules of engagement, and people know what they're working within. Or you have to step away completely and allow people to run with how they imagined something to evolve, you know, the kind of half hearted, well, we'd sort of want you to do something, but kind of do it in a really safe, boring sort of way... when an organisation says that it wants to be participating in socially engaged activists, and then you go, Well, actually, these are our ideas. And then they go, Oh, no, that's too scary. No, we didn't mean that. We just we</p>
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					<p>meant this... I think both me and [my colleague] felt quite frustrated, actually, by the end of it, which is ironic, because it's our own institution... I've worked with this [redacted] for like, over 15 years, so it's kind of like, Come on, guys. This is me, you know, I've worked with you know, but yeah, yeah, it's power struggles. [14].</p>	
		Curiosity	Relates to following leads and insights, hunches or questioning/challenging perceptions	Emic	7,8, 10	<p>Now what is really easy is to turn up at a youth project task with a flashy camera, or with a flashy bit of music gear put it on the table. And have 8 young people around you being really, really curious. What's really hard is to have 8 young people around you eight weeks later, with that same piece of equipment. And that's the kind of thing for me, that's the bit that's really, really important [7]. even though I struggled from an academic point of view, given my training, to engage in the creative process as a field of study initially, I was very receptive to it.... I like to think that I was perhaps more open than other people, in my particular field would be to the full spectrum of what this might involve... I had to sort of train yourself to do that, but I was open to it, I suppose that sort of say it. Yeah, I am interested and curious about what [creativity] could bring [8]. Beuys says that the best scientists are creative. And the best scientists are like poets, because they have to imagine something that didn't exist before. Although they then have to pin it down. The imagination part of it is what takes it into new territory. So he says, unless you have that you will have nothing new [10]. So you</p>

						can paint the whole street if you wanted to. You might not have flower beds. So you paint the whole street as if it's got flower beds and trees [10].
		Expression	Relates to ideas/ outputs addressing a given issue	Emic	2, 3, 6, 10	We did things like we had a values walk, so people would rank themselves on scale from like really positive to really negative on how they felt different things... But a way for people to talk about it so it's like an open discussion and then people would put themselves on different places on the scale. And then you try and get one person to convince the other people to move and make it more of a kind of debate. So, you physically like get them to move so you have a ranking, so yeah, giving a chance for people to talk, I think that worked really well [2]. while some people might put their hand up and say yes I'm a creative practitioner others might not... but in my mind I think creativity exists within everybody and I do think that I get the most excitement out of working with people who wouldn't necessarily see themselves as creative artists [3]. actually what we wanted to represent was that people, we do want real-life green things there, we want real life urban nature so the hardest thing to prototype with is living things. You know, you're not going to get a load of bees to swarm the areas, so yeah that can't be represented there. Which is why we need creative methods in which to represent it [3]. Whereas you kind of, I suppose going back to the people's pop-up Park as an idea, whereas you give people a blank canvas like that and you say ultimately want the space to be a park, so you want to come and pretend it is for a day. You know, you're role-playing, you're actually being invited to be highly creative, you're actually being invited to come and express yourself in a way that, you can express yourself in the way you most feel comfortable and that's really refreshing, that's what's going to get us moving from those places of paralysis where we think we know what people want and therefore we're going to design for them and for urban nature but we're not really prioritising urban nature

						<p>because we seeing that as belittling to us, it's different to us and we'll plant trees directly under buildings that get no lighting and can't actually grow properly or we'll make just really ridiculous decisions about travel or you know, and those decisions are being made because we're thinking in terms of boxes and noughts and crosses, tick boxes [3]. I did a bird walk around Whitworth Art gallery at the beginning of the year [2020], it's just getting people to come into the park and then look at different ways you can identify birds and I think, like looking at a piece of paper, everyone learns different as well, whether you're learning in terms of you can read a book and then you know how to identify these birds or whether you need to be physically out there and looking at them, and I think in terms of creativity it can be quite difficult because everyone is sort of creative in their own way as well. so personally for me, I'm more of a doer, I do things to teach myself how to do things and yeah I reckon it's a difficult one because unless you give people the opportunity to be able to be creative, I think a lot of people would kind of struggle, say if they're not creatively inclined in terms of looking at things differently [6 repeated]. if you're lucky enough to have a fruit tree in your garden or anywhere then that could be another side of creativity, you know when you're looking at a fruit tree and you're thinking oh I'll prune this branch off, maybe the person whose next to you would say oh maybe I wouldn't do that, I would do this. that is again even though with some people, you think logically to prune a fruit tree, others people will maybe want a different crown shape or they'd want more apples on one side of the tree than the other - you never know! And even though you might think of it as logic where you cut one branch off and leave the other branch but then again it can be creative to think oh you know if I cut this branch off then this one might grow a certain way.. so I guess you can in terms of, when you are cutting a branch down you are</p>
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						<p>technically being creative at the same time [6]. when I came to my commitment, social commitment in the my 30s, and poured all my energies into the environment, my creativity was poured into it too, a lot of people were very surprised as to how can you stop doing all this and, and suddenly do [the] environment. And I said that I myself never had the contradiction, because I did not see creativity just as a product to sell... I always thought of creativity as in continuity with ordinary life, and that there's creativity in everything, whether you design the environment, or whether you create the process or participation, all of that can be done creatively [10].</p>
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		Openness/ open- mindedness	Relates to being open to suggestion, trying different things and not having an strict agenda	Emic	3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14	<p>I would say rather than define creativity I would look at how perspective/story telling is used maybe? Because that may give you a bit more freedom, because people get locked in to, as you say, into this kind thinking, or being in denial that they're creative. So as soon as you start trying to define creativity, people start saying oh no I'm not that, I don't do that... whereas what you're trying to explain is that creativity is a fundamental human, I don't know, like principle it's like a thing that you have, even if you might be unaware of it [3]. the community organising model is based around listening so the idea is to try and have as little agenda as possible but I guess also be upfront about what your agenda is - because everyone's got an agenda. With the work I've done around CO coproduction and stuff like that... sometimes people talk about how there's a blank sheet, and to start with no agenda but that's rarely possible. It's more about setting the lines of whatever it is that you're trying to do. Making that clear to people and then, from then on being as open and responsive and asking questions and listening to people's answers and working together with people to come up with solutions that work for everyone [5]. [creativity in decision making] it's hard because in my head as soon as we get to decide on a decision, that isn't creative anymore. because you are shutting things down as opposed to opening things up [5]. Diamond of participation, the way it starts with divergent and ends with convergent and how convergence is when you say right, we've made a decision now. and now we're going to act on it whereas divergent is, that's the bit that I see as being the creative bit because it's like anything is possible, you're just asking really open-ended questions and that question might be take pictures of things that are important to you and your community or it might literally be a question so that's the bit where you're opening up, which I do see as part of the decision making process but it's not the point that the decision is actually made</p>
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						<p>[5]. I think [CPP is about] inviting people to participate in whatever the thing is in a way that opens up possibilities and allows for people's ideas to be properly heard. I think it's about being accepting and open and inclusive and all those words but actually just not shutting people down at that point, letting things be open, open to possibility. and I suppose observing what already happened as well. Because it's not just about inviting people into whatever you're doing over there but actually looking at it properly and looking and listening to what's going on and seeing where the connections are [5]. I think for me, when I talk about creativity, I kind of I guess I'm talking about people being really open minded about the processes that you use. So when I go into a room with a group of young people, and I kind of say, Well, how do you think we should approach that, I am really looking for them to give me an answer, I've not got an answer on the back of my head, that I'm kind of wanting them the align with. It's about what they want to do. Now. Unfortunately, for them and for me, they know that I do a lot of arts-based stuff, and a lot of multimedia stuff, so quite often, they will feed into some of that. But it is for me creativity in this context means being open minded about what people want to do and people's ideas, not dismissing stuff, just kind of, I guess, at the end of the day running with everything, as long as it's feasible and within the realms of what you can deliver...So you're as good as the people in the room [7]. I think the thing that stifles creativity in my view is starting off from a position of it's not gonna work. So having that preconceived idea that, well, let's not do anything because it's not going to make a difference anyway. I think that's, for me, the biggest thing that I've come across, that people don't try because they already thought it through. And decided that it's gonna fail without actually trying the thing that they're going do... somehow you need to, with young people get young people from a position of, I don't really care</p>
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					<p>about that to owning that. So whatever the issue is, if you want them to make a difference in their local park, their starting position could be, I don't care less. So the skill is in, taking them from, I couldn't care less to, I care a lot about that. Now, for me, and quite often, that is just a good youth working process but it can be social action process. [7]. Joseph Beuys coined the phrase that everybody... everyone is an artist and what he meant was this essence of creativity in continuity, and that if you give a conscious place for it in your life, then it comes out. Whereas if you say, all creativity is not for me, then you suppress it and it doesn't come out. So it was encouraging that everybody actually allowed their creativity to come on. That's my part of my philosophy, that everyone is an artist in that sense, that the essence of everything can have creativity in it [10]. I have this thing of over 30 years of participation, I can collapse the whole process into two phrases. Yeah, we love what we enjoy, and we protect what we love. The first part is about access, because you can enjoy something if you haven't got it. So the provision is important. And then beyond the vision is access, even if you provide the part you need to build the access, and the type of access you actually provide. And the creative way of involving people is part of that access. So when you do create, and you create access, those two things enable you to do it in a way that's appropriate to the person. And when it's appropriate to the person, the former relationship with you, with the staff with the people around them with this space, they own it, if they own it they want to contribute, when they want to contribute. They're open to education and learning and experience. And you can deepen that learning experience over the years, because you need to drip feed with the general public, you can't just sit them down and educate [10]. When you're creative and when people know you are open, they act completely differently... [for their project] because of our open way of creatively engaging</p>
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						<p>with ethnic minorities, when it came to plant trees, they talked to us. In [REDACTED], the group of refugees and asylum seekers says, Yes, we'd like to plant trees, when we plant them, we would like to each of us create our own ceremony to remember those we have lost and those who have moved or left behind. So, it was a very emotional thing. Some of them were religious, some of them did personal rituals, and so on. And everybody did their own thing, watching each other, and so on. And by the time they finished a tree planting, when I thought about it weeks afterwards, I thought to myself, my God, you know, we did plant a patch of trees, and you can't see anything after they've left. It's just a patch of trees, before that group of people. And if you really want to acknowledge it, it's a war memorial... That's what happens when there's a two-way street of relationships set up, I would never thought of doing that with the trees, they did [10]. You'll find that when you're creative and open and connect with people, people will tell you things that are so wonderful and remarkable, stories and your own role. You know, as a person is expanded [10]. So basically, first of all, I, we thought about what creativity is. And some people have a lot of negative associations with the word creative. And some people have a lot of positive and I think that those are quite actually, often quite just, the flip side of a coin in a way. Like some people say, oh, Arty people are really chaotic, and they can't make any decisions. And but at the same time, those type of people often are the ones with the most fantastic imaginations and original ideas. Yeah, okay, so they might be a chaotic and a bit messy... actually taking risks and divergent thinking is essential to innovation. Otherwise, we will be stuck with the nightmare world that we live in, if we don't embrace some of these ways of being so I don't see these things, they're not necessarily a problem or more positive. There's just a way that creativity can help us and I think there the word creative, it means different</p>
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					<p>things to different people. And I am quite interested in the idea of creative characteristics that we all have. I mean, obviously, some of us more than others, perhaps, but I think you can learn to be creative. And I think pretty much all children are creative. It just kind of gets bashed out of you [11]. I think [CPP] has to include people being allowed to come up with their own answers, you know, to whatever that theme or topic or activity is. It's not creative if people aren't of being asked to genuinely suggest what they personally think. and therefore, whoever is running this session or whatever it is, you know, it's gathering viewpoints, or perspectives from all sorts of different people. I think it's important that people are being asked to address something specific, like what is the issue or the problem that needs to be solved? What are they being asked... I think people have got a lot to offer. I think all the answers are out there. I just think that we're not always very good at framing the right question to get people to want to comment on it. And sometimes you have to take people on a journey [11]. if I was giving someone advice about that it's trying to not have too many boundaries to say you know the world is your oyster, just blue sky thinking just go mad, chucking as many ideas as you think are feasible or that you want not even feasible, just your dream wish list and then stepping away from that in terms of know, what's practical, what's affordable, what's maintainable in the future? [13]. I think communication, like I said, at the beginning really is important to design these spaces, kind of from the ground up, don't go kind of marching as a designer, with this attitude that it should be done this way. This is the only way. You should be open to sort of people's suggestions and ideas [13]. we're not going to predict where this relationship is going to end up, and what to do, or what opportunities kind of might arise or what rabbit holes, we might end up going down and being prepared for that. And I think when you're doing</p>
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						<p>particularly when you come from a more creative background, or, you're working through sort of creative practices research, specifically. you're kind of comfortable with that. Whereas I think other researchers can get very nervous if they don't know, necessarily, how are people going to be in a focus group? Have you got all of their addresses, and you know, all these kind of crappy bits of information, it's just like, okay, let's just have a conversation first and see where it ends up [14]. I think actually creativity in a more broader sense is actually, not, not necessarily feeling like you've got to lock everything down to a final conclusion... allowing a process to evolve, and to find new things within that, that you've not predicted, but also then allows you to give power to maybe allow space for different people [14]. what stifles creativity, I guess not having not having complete freedom to try something and see where it takes you. And that might be in terms of the transformation of space it might be, and the way in which a particular conversations going or a workshop, And that doesn't mean that you don't have rules in place... you can still have a structure, you can still have a kind of ethical framework, that actually, you do need things in place that mean you're not going to harm people or you're not going to take advantage of people and so on. So that kind of framework is important. But I think, but then even say that when barriers are put in place people, you find the most incredible creativity comes out [14].</p>
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		<p>Different approaches</p>	<p>Relates to using different (creative) approaches to engaging people</p>		<p>12, 14</p>	<p>I'm not sure if they creative but I think the range of approaches from the focus groups to the workshops to the consultation events that you do, where you get out and do something, we did road closure events a lot last year to buy through organised street parties, but at the same time, talk to residents about trying to look at the benefits and how they might want to work around this. So I think more and more I tried to make it participatory out in the community and talk to people at the same time. Now you can tell a lot of the stuff doesn't, it's hard for me for the work we do to be as robust, as you might say, as a research programme... So I'm not sure if that's creative, but that's trying to get a more robust evidence base to it, as well, which previous I haven't done as much... it's hard work because you I have to draw on other people to be able to do it. So I need the universities, I need others, so you're always relying on your networks and relationships to set the stuff up. And also it takes time. And sometimes, time isn't on your side, people want to see things happen. So you've got to balance the long term work with the short term wins, but also reacting like a load of rubbish has been dumped so we've got to get a cleaned up... So we react as well. We're not all planned. We react to all sorts of issues. [12]. I'd like to get more creative in terms of art space things, but you just can't. When I first started at the Council, I had a budget of what was it? Half a million or something over a few years to develop community engagement approaches. So yeah, we just don't have that now... Now that was trying to look at different community engagement and in a more nuanced way to look at the emotions and feelings that people have in an area. [12]. [for me creativity]... is a way of thinking in a way, a way of being or thinking a way of working through problems. And it's not something that, the thing that I get really frustrated about actually with a lot of research that has stated that it involves arts practice, it's a loads of scientists doing lots of</p>
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						stuff, then they'll pass that data to the artist and go, can you make something shiny for me now please that communicates my data? And I'm like, that's not arts practice as research. That's simply using arts as a communication tool, which is totally fine and valid, but it's not arts methods-based practice or creative led practice. So yeah, so it's a way of thinking or way of being and I suppose, I can't really separate them [14].
Participati on	Relates to people getting involved with activities or planning within UGS	Learning	Relates to knowledg e or skills gained through participat ion	Etic	2	making sure whatever you are doing accommodates for all these different types of learning styles and different types of people to make sure your approach is creative in that way, that it's quite varied so then you can engage as many people as possible. And then that means you have more creativity within that group as well if they're all different types of people [2]. see what the park was like before they started and what it looked like after. And we did that on the Saturday morning. And by the Tuesday night when we went out to do our next park based session. It looked like it did on the Saturday morning before we started. That was pretty heartbreaking really. So when you say well, did the communities get it? I don't think they did. And again, on reflection what we said was we would never do what we did, in terms of that litter campaign in that way again. We now on reflection, the mistake we made was going into the park when it was empty and tidying the park up. Because then the perception was that the council had been in or the fairies, either way, have been in and cleaned up the park and it can be messed up again. Now, if we did that project again, we would go in at a peak time in the park and tidy up around people so they can see that it isn't the council that's making this park look better, it's members of their own community that's doing that. and I kind of think that's the kind of way that you make a difference. People need to see things, they need to kind of see and then also what we said was part of that we would have had a leaflet or a brochure of some

					<p>description, where we were could kind of publicise what we were doing and why we're doing it [7R].</p>
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					<p>So I think [PP] is really important, and it's been brilliant to learn from the wealth of knowledge that there is in that [project w/older participants] group as well. So, I think that's something that's kind of underrated really, they're not just providing their labour, they're providing their skills and experience, as well as time. And I say labour, it's, it's so much more than that, it's a richer social experience for everybody and the environment, the social knowledge that they've got and I mean about social history, the ecological knowledge as well, quite a lot of these people have been, you know, living in areas for a long time. And they know about all the local species and know about the social context for those species. So it's been a way of kind, for me personally learning more about that as well. Things I never knew about local areas. So that's been really fascinating [8]. if you are in the green space, and they're not very large, and people come into your territory every day, talk to them, it begins to change the atmosphere completely. And then they begin the same journey that I talked about, by talking to people you find out all kinds of things about their needs, their wishes and their dreams... you change what I call the sense of potential. If ordinary people do not have a sense of potential for change, then they too, don't tell you anything. [10 repeated]. I think it's fundamentally important. I mean, it's really important to design spaces that meet that needs of the community. You know, you want to sort of design from the ground up, not sort of top down and incorporate elements in those designs that the community wants. And, I mean, this one's quite interesting... It's a bit challenging some bits of it, because... some of these nature-based solutions, maybe aren't the most aesthetically standard items that you've seen in a park... So you'd probably walk along and go why's there that kind of channel down the</p>
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					side of that path? Well, it's because there's a function, it's not just there for aesthetics is serving a purpose, which is trying to protect from flooding. [13]. I met with this school, we went in and got them sort of drawing out and sketching stuff and you know, even though it wasn't a park design, just getting them engaged in developing an interest in green stuff, trees, and hedgehogs, and, you know, whatever. So just increasing that awareness [13]. I've always been interested in people and just kind of understanding the complexities of people and what are the kind of scenarios under which you can, you can find out actually what makes people tick or what people's concerns are, or, or what kind of interventions can be undertaken to, to support people but also to not kind of patronise people in what you think they need. And I suppose a big shift at the moment, this idea of, you know, actually allowing communities to shape the discourse, not for particularly academics becoming any kind of dumping discourse on people [14]. in terms of the issues around participation, gosh... it isn't really a black and white scale of success or failure, it's kind of put the grey stuff that happens in the middle, or the unexpected things that come out of participation, that can be really rich, and you can't predict when you kind of go in [14].
		Accountability	Relates to people at all levels being responsible for finishing	5, 12, 14	I'm really interested in how people can move from being a passive audience member to an actively engaged member of that community. That's why we set up the co-op model because that means that people have a stake in the company, but that's also give them that democratic right when it comes to voting on the way that we run our organisation. It makes us accountable [5]. I think [participation] it's always good to show the benefit, just be clear, what's your agenda and why you're doing it? What's actually influenceable in this work, and then to be accountable against that [12]. this is the problem with universities,

			<p>tasks/liable to what they promise</p>			<p>and particularly the Manchester contacts is that I think the community just really tired of us, there's a lot people that are just kind of, yeah, consultation, boredom. And also, as well, a lot of research projects were kind of maybe things have been promised and stuff hasn't happened [14].</p>
		<p>Listening (communication)</p>	<p>Relates to truly taking on board people ideas, thoughts and opinions</p>	<p>Emic</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11</p>	<p>Yeah there's probably like a bit of an apathy for not knowing if your voice will actually be heard or make a difference. Kind of like people not voting. Where it's like, will this actually have an effect? and then they don't believe that it will. Which is often the case because decisions will be made regardless of what they say [2]. I think it's quite important to say that sometimes people can shy away from hearing and listening to those complaints. And sometimes, they can be vexatious so you do have to remove that but most of the time the challenge is having those people involved because they're passionate and we're not all professionally trained to deliver certain pieces of information so they're not sure how to engage with others but sometimes, those people are the best people, because their ideas are actually really good, and sometimes you say, have you got a good point... well actually yes you have, you've got a really relevant point! [1] I think people are also you know currently suffering great fatigue, consultation fatigue because they've all been told to come and participate, publicly put your voice out there for the record it will be listened to you know, and then they think or that they actually find out it's really not listened to and the powers that be have actually made a decision on their behalf [3]. the community organising model is based around listening so the idea is to try and have as little agenda as possible but I guess also be upfront about what your agenda is - because everyone's got an agenda. With the work I've done around CO coproduction and stuff like that... sometimes people talk about how there's a blank sheet, and to</p>

					<p>start with no agenda but that's rarely possible. It's more about setting the lines of whatever it is that you're trying to do. Making that clear to people and then, from then on being as open and responsive and asking questions and listening to people's answers and working together with people to come up with solutions that work for everyone [5 repeated in open-mindedness]. I'll just go in and deliver the workshop but the idea is that it's part of a bigger process that should be ongoing and I think one of the things about community organising as a practice or a processes that it is not actually necessarily about a specific action or a specific goal or a specific issue [because] actually those issues will change... [whoever is involved] can respond to whatever it is that community is facing at the time [5]. when I think about community outreach or engagement or whatever, it usually has a fundamental aspect of listening and that can be done in all different types of potentially creative ways [5]. I think more and more people are acknowledging that a paper survey or an online survey are just not that interesting for people, actually it's not that people don't care it's that they're not being engaged in ways that are like natural for them or even when they are bringing things to spaces and they are just not being listened to, it's just not being received [5]. I think [CPP is about] inviting people to participate in whatever the thing is in a way that opens up possibilities and allows for people's ideas to be properly heard. I think it's about being accepting and open and inclusive and all those words but actually just not shutting people down at that point, letting things be open, open to possibility. and I suppose observing what already happened as well. Because it's not just about inviting people into whatever you're doing over there but actually looking at it properly and looking and listening to what's going on and seeing where the connections are [5]. when we first started as a black environment network, there was no methodology for</p>
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					<p>involving cultural groups, we had to invent it. There was nothing to follow. Yeah. So you actually had to listen to the beneficiaries and you find a way... they also have human needs and desires and dreams. And when you listen to those, you begin to design things... in those days, the environmental sector didn't involve people and think of something for people rather than something for nature. We then listened to people and they longed to see real nature [10]. the reason people have consultation fatigue is because they are pissed off with being asked things and nobody takes any notice of what they've said. So it's really important in an alternative way of doing that to make sure that people can see, even if it's not word for word, but they can feel "Ooh yeah, that thing there, I said something along those lines so they listened to me [11].</p>
		Process	Relates to the whole process around engaging people through to project completion	7, 8, 11, 13, 14	<p>provided that you've got the buy in and provided that you've got the skills then you can do it. and I guess the point of what I'm trying to say is you can move mountains with young people but it's got to come through that kind of process, you can steer them into funding, raise their awareness, get them to kind of understand processes, the important bit is to get them to do the bids that they don't want to do, be there to motivate them when things aren't going quite right [7].we've got all these buzz terms at the moment haven't we co-creation, co-production, co-design, and I guess the reason that we put CO in front of each of those elements is because we are recognising that we need to consider the intended users of particular spaces, when we're going through the process of identifying where they are, when we're thinking about what they should be, when we're thinking about what they should look like, and how they should be designed, and so on, so the creative element involved with all of those aspects,</p>

so being creative about identifying areas. So on that, that might be people noticing a particular area that appears to be unused and literally throwing the seed bomb on it, you know that's a creative element that they've done that is, I suppose, completely independent, but some of it might be more of a social process, deciding to do some sort of intervention in a particular area that a group of people have identified. So for example, the Alleys work in [redacted] [redacted] is a good example of that, because that involves, that requires that community to all do something doesn't it, it's not going to work if someone just throws a seed bomb on it [8]. I think people have got a lot to offer. I think all the answers are out there. I just think that we're not always very good at framing the right question to get people to want to comment on it. And sometimes you have to take people on a journey [11]. A word that I think is a good word iterative. That's kind of really key... do a section of a project, and then have a look at what's happened, and then kind of decide what you're going to do next [11]. I think it's quite hard for a lot of people to understand plans. And that's how I would generally, I have kind of presented my design proposals in the past, they've just been kind of flat plans. And it's probably not until they actually see these things built, until they start walking around the park and kind of see what that is. They might question why that was constructed? [13]. it's ensuring that everyone has a voice. I think that's one thing, that you don't just let one person with the strongest opinion or the loudest voice dominate so it has to be an inclusive design process, you need to make sure that you include as many people from a community as possible. So you know, and a range through different age groups as well. So from you know, primary school children through to OAPs [13]. when I'm talking actually, one of the key issues with my students actually is the thing that I'm really trying to get them to understand is the complexity of community based practice and

					<p>participation. Because there's a lot of demand, I think, now on new students who are going out in the world and doing kind of heritage engagement stuff, to just kind of have the skills to do this sort of thing, and actually, they don't and I don't think a lot of practitioners who are currently employed within the heritage sector necessarily have those skills either, you know, it's, it's something that you kind of develop over time, and you make mistakes you shift your position, you kind of go back in and you carry on [14]. the idea that, you know, 80 interviews is more rigorous than, say, really in depth, rather than, you know, ten really in depth conversations... if you are interested in participation, you're probably interested in social justice models as well, you're probably interested in issues of inequality, and, modes of setting up situations that are beneficial to the participants, as well as yourself as a researcher, you know, that sort of stuff sometimes doesn't creep into other method approaches, you know, they just kind of see the data as, as literally that as numbers and stuff, rather than people sitting behind that data [14].</p>
		Sharing	Relates to knowledge and skills exchange within participation	Etic	<p>1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14</p> <p>what's in it for us? ...Depending on what you doing, what's the benefit and I always think if it features - this is what we're gonna do and this is how it'll benefit you... [you are] going to help them understand what's happening in [their] area [1]. so for the sustainability of the use of space came from people being able to speak and say in that language because they'd identified all the nice and wonderful things that they wanted to keep doing up there so these features of experience were kind of worked into the design of the space [3]. [speaking about a conference] I think it was looking at that set of benefits, so people could kind of join up the dots a little bit more. Because quite a lot of people, you know, will be thinking about it from one perspective. So they might be interested in ecology, and they might be interested in wildflower flower meadows, but hadn't really</p>

					<p>thought about, oh if I structured the planting in this way, it might be helping to do more than one thing [8]. I think it can be quite organic already. it can be like creatively led by somebody, so putting on an impromptu little show somewhere and getting people involved. Or looking at what's already happening, and running with it, but it's about... I mean creativity itself is such a big word. It could be dance it can be craft, it can be anything. For me, I know it can be an individual doing it. But for me, the magic happens when you've got groups of people coming together and perhaps who even didn't know each other before... so doing it on your own is one thing, but like I said, the magic happens when it's a shared experience [9]. the thing about it, Sarah is that I'm now 70. And I know that I will have a number of years with still the same kind of vibrance, I got a lot of experience and, everything in my life. And I'm in a hurry to give it away. Because by the time I'm 80, and so on, it's downhill all the way, Sarah. So in my five remaining years, I want to give it away to as many people as possible... none of us can do it alone. [10]. by thinking about the past you can then shift them and say, Well, you've got an opinion, I think it's really important. Let's think about the future then. but you would have never gone out of their house to think about the future without having done that past stuff [11]. you know young people coming out of university who are very ofay with photoshopping and 3d modelling and the rest of it, which gives you a better idea of what you're getting, but I mean, nothing beats really sitting in a draughty community centre with a cup of really bad coffee and just waiting for the public to come in, and to engage with them and talk to them and talk them through the designs. So you know, that's, there's a lot of benefit. So I think you can be, you can be a bit too clever for your own good. And sometimes stripping it down to basics and just, you know, basic communication, getting an understanding from people in terms of what they</p>
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					<p>want. Yes, that's a really important part of any kind of public space programme [13]. So when we were connecting people across the across the [redacted] project, like different greening groups, there are some green groups and activist groups who are absolutely up chatting to each other, wants to share skills, share tools, and then a couple of groups who were just actually very comfortable in just working on their own little space and didn't really want to get involved with the people in that part of Manchester, you know, again, it's not making assumptions that even when you've got communities of interest, that they've not necessarily got instant connections between people [14].</p>	
		<p>Experience</p>	<p>Relates to either personal or professional experiences or encounters that either worked well/bad to encourage</p>	<p>Etic</p>	<p>1, 3, 7, 14</p>	<p>That's it, you've got to be that Chameleon, but I think creativity by engaging people that way, they tend to remember it more [1]. as we are facing now with regard to socialisation people are going to be able to participate in things from great distances. As opposed to the pre-kind of-digital era where we were having to be physically present to experience that participation and what it meant to be participating [3]. quite often people just, you know, there's a notion, I guess it depends on what you're doing, if you're trying to sell something it might be different. But we found in our experience that people want to stop and talk and really stop and talk as well. And quite often, I guess you and again it might be about where we're doing the work. But sometimes you get the impression that people really want to stop the talk, because quite often, they're not asked their opinion on stuff. So it's kind of tapping into that kind of psyche [7]. for me, there's a huge complexity with participation. And I guess that's the, you know, the top level that I'm always thinking about is that whenever you sort of set out to do a project and you're thinking about participation it never quite goes in the direction of that you previously experienced, there's always another level, that kind of kicks in, in terms of either demographics or, and, or kind of, you know,</p>



		participation			issues around, gender, race class and so on, ability, you know, there's, I mean, there's all these things that if you're, if you're kind of like a well-seasoned sort of practitioner working in a socially engaged way you sort of have in the back of, but not even the back of your mind is at the forefront of your mind actually, or there's a series of things that you know, that you should be considering and engaging with, in a very kind of meaningful way [14].
	Relationships	Relates to connections (both positive or negative) between different people, groups, orgs or institutions	Etic	2	it's definitely about having a regular presence. But then also, rather than say, putting on [our own] big event, I guess I start out by going to their events. And then helping them with putting on an activity at their event, so it's more like, I think they then see you more helping them and supporting them and what they do. And that is what it should be about really. [2]
	Self-Initiate	Relates to people taking it upon themselves	Etic	14	For me campaigns have always been the most natural forms of self-led creative public participation [14]. So that kind of situation [█ Dispensary], again, is a form of creative public participation, but it has a purpose to it. So it has, it has a goal, an end goal, which was to save that thing. Once that campaign ended, and they realise that they've sort of lost the campaign. Actually, the group has sort of

		<p>es to do something in response to improving the UGS</p>				<p>not really continued, in the same way, it's kind of hasn't got the focused thing, that they were trying to transform or fight against, you know, so that was interesting as well, I think if there's something in the mix that everyone is working around or towards, then you find people activate differently together, whereas they haven't got anything to kind of focus on necessarily, or to change or to transform that maybe that means there's something in the middle of people to then be activating that kind of creative public participation. And it might something that is very structured or devised for them, or it might be a campaign which has been activated, you know, by Manchester City Council not doing what it should do for people [14].</p>
		<p>Empowerment (support)</p>	<p>Relates to how people feel empowered to get involved and do things for themselves</p>	<p>Etic</p>	<p>1, 2, 5, 12</p>	<p>We also get involved in a lot of capacity building within communities as well. So that side is very much about the training of volunteers building self-confidence, it's not all about formal training, it's building their self-confidence to participate in activities that will engage the wider community [1] [redacted] has built such good relationships with all the volunteers who then go out and use their time to then speak to people in their community. And obviously coming from the community itself is so much more powerful [2]. It's about empowering you to have those skills to do it yourself [1]. it's got to be about building their confidence and skills so they can go out and do it themselves. Basically, making ourselves redundant! [laughs] that's the aim!! [2] What I liked about that was that it was so simple, and it literally put the power into people's hands to communicate what they wanted to communicate in a really straight forward way. I think stuff like that is good if you can give people something that gives them as much control as possible but it's not very complicated, I think stuff like that is good [5]. It all comes back to the context. So it could be a creative thing, just even just how you got a questionnaire out a different way, you could be looking creatively within things.</p>

						<p>But naturally, I'd go back to things like art-based community engagement, devolving of budgets, you're more pushing out the boundaries and more empowerment of decision making. So I think in terms of public participation we're creative with the community leaders bit to train residents to be stronger, better advocates and community engagement people. I don't think I've not seen many models in the programme and in the country that does that. I think that was greater than trying to look at how we invest in people, not just ourselves to be able to do public participation, or whatever you call it [12].</p>
		Enhancement	Relates to enhancing the process, inputs and outputs of engagement	Emic	1, 5, 10, 11, 14	<p>If you upskill them people, then you are empowering them [1] I'm quite interested in increased civic participation and how more people can get involved... I spend ages of time trying to define what it even means... kind of like civic society, getting people involved in democratic process but traditional and non-traditional forms. I think that's a good endeavour, but it looks completely different dependant on whose doing it and where it's being done [5]. how you get people to think about certain keywords is important. You don't tell them that you're actually doing it and what I mean, and but sometimes definition is also important [10]. you find that there's always commonalities in cultures, because we had a common starting point, or we took it from another culture. So what I call multiculturalism is a recognition is that all cultures demonstrate to us the full range of the human potential. What has not been stimulated, stays dormant. What has been stimulated comes out as culture. So when you meet a person from a different culture, there's always a gift, they stimulate something in you that's already there, that has not been stimulated, it's remained dominant,</p>

					<p>because you're in your culture. So that gift is a gift to you of something you've always had potential for. And that concept links everybody's it's a unifying and not a conflicting concept. So that's what I propose. So I think concepts around keywords is another way of how you begin to be inclusive. Instead of exclusive [10]. I'm aiming to have all my projects as co-designed and co-produced as they can be, but bearing in mind that for me, in terms of co-production, the professionals are not kind of erased in that. So for me, local people have tonnes of expertise because they live locally their life experience they bring, you know, their knowledge of the place of the history of what's going on is as important as some professional coming in with their technical bit of knowledge. But I think you need both things, communities need to be able to invite professionals in to help them to do the things that they want to do [11]. within communities you will have individuals who are kind of the linchpins, historically it would have been maybe a park keeper or it would have been youth workers at the local youth group or what have you, but all those roles have also disappeared as well. So, what you find is the kind of networking or the kind of go betweens, I suppose, that people who are the go between to ensure that people are brought in for conversation, and you know, every community will have those kinds of people and they will crop up, and you know, they can be both a force for good. And also they can be a negative force blocks [14].</p>	
		Reach (access)	Relates to reaching people and reaching	Etic/Emic	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14	<p>[you need to] approach people in the right way [1], It's about reaching people on their level [2], public participation is great if it reaches the right people [1] I think sometimes you can struggle to reach adults in a community and the way to them is through their families and their kids [2]. we were really wanting to explore if, or explore the reality of the situation rather than create an intervention that was kind of not false but was structured you know or constructed by us. We wanted</p>

the right  
people

to see what the social life was doing and how public participation would come to life if we just happened to be there to invite it and then off the back of that we probably met people that would have never have signed up to participate in the research in the first place. So, I think there's something to be said for encouraging the participation of people in the public who wouldn't otherwise [3]. because we only do cover GM there seems to a lot more focus on the local, smaller based charities and I think that's where we tend to excel in terms of getting people in, in a way we haven't really struggled, not from my personal point of view anyway... to get people to our events [6]. what's been brilliant with the lockdown, one of the real positives are, we've contacted these two [young people] who live in [redacted], and they're of our [redacted] group, because we're online, it's that thing where you can reach out wherever you want [7]. I would say the key to our participation of us engaging beyond the project has been to a degree about creativity but the other element of it for me has been about developing partnerships around the area with over organisations...So it's nurturing those partnerships and trying to make those partnerships work so that you're not just reaching out to your clientele or you're reaching out beyond your clientele. And then the key for me is, then, when you're publicising what you're doing, then there's an interest beyond your clientele, there's an interest which kind of extends to other organisations, and people who use them other organisations [7]. it's not just about who you consulted and who you meet on the day, it's about how you publicise that and get other people to engage with it [7]. it's a bit more of a struggle to identify and engage with people who are not really that interested, and they don't really see the benefit... but we've had a chance to talk to some of those people. And sometimes you've managed to persuade them and other times you don't. And, and one of the things that has been really important,

					<p>though, is beyond that kind of, you know, personality thing about whether people are interested or not. There is also it's really important, obviously, to have the gatekeepers there as well. But so. So that might be to do with age, it might be to do with cultural background, it might be to do with ethnicity [8]. over the last 20-30 years or whatever to try and get more people doing sport has reached a sort of [end] their finding that what their campaign and their activities does is it just encourages the people who are already sporty to do even more sport... But it's like what about all the other people will never dream of going for a walk or anything else... Basically, they realise that if you don't include people, you have to talk to the people that you're trying to work with, and ask them, so why is it then that you don't want to do this and how can we find some ways that you might want to do this because it would be better for you [11]. understanding, first of all, who is engaging, and then from that sort of making assumptions, potentially about reasons why others actually weren't engaging? And it's very difficult to, you know, when you're wanting to sort of find out why people aren't engaging in something. How do you start finding that out, because you can't just knock on someone's door and go, Oh, by the way, why aren't you engaging? [14].</p>
	Tools	Relates to the ways in which tools are used to increase/promote	Emic	1, 7, 11, 12, 13	<p>I think there are too many surveys. I always question the value of the information that is collated and what it's used for. I find a lot of the surveys are manipulated to get the outcomes that people want to hear rather than what the public really want to have their say in and to shape them [1]. I think there has to be more alignment with actually talking to people. I don't think we talk to people enough; I think we're surveyed to death and people don't really look at the surveys unless you're in that kind of business or you got that passion [1]. <i>You need a good combination a creative art worker and a facilitator - then you maximise creativity [paraphrasing P7's idea]: if you can bring them two things together, that's when</i></p>

			engagement		<p>you get that maximum amount of participation..., if you've got the right combination, you've got the right artworker and the right youth workers, then with that combination, they can deliver a whole manner of things [7]. [there's] just like a little format that I use with people - 10 creative characteristics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. generating ideas</li> <li>2. generating valuable outcomes. Valuable being important</li> <li>3. questioning</li> <li>4. making connections and by that I mean connections that are not initially obvious,</li> <li>5. being deeply engaged</li> <li>6. taking risks</li> <li>7. using your imagination</li> <li>8. identifying as and holding problems and/or solving problems, those can be separated</li> <li>9. Thinking divergently</li> <li>10. And refining - refining is like an interesting one.</li> </ol> <p>But creativity, for me will include any one of those things is a creative characteristic that that any person can do at some time. I mean, obviously, using their imagination, some people just cannot do that. They find it really hard but that doesn't mean that they're not someone who can be deeply engaged in something, or they might be quite good at generating ideas, even though for some reason they don't use their imagination much. But often these things come together [11]. the issue I found with it [Arnstien's ladder of participation], is that people think hierarchically, they feel that the top of the empowerment one, you've got to always reach that, and not everyone wants to be empowered. So I think she looked at a spectrum at one stage, or someone looked at it. And that's</p>
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					<p>why we went with the pie. The idea was that the slices of the pie would change, depending on who you're working with. what they wanted to do what you want to do, what you could do sometimes legally, you can't devolve out decision making [12]. [the Mohawk tool] It's basically it's, it's an observational tool, really, is that actually going out and looking at people and seeing, you know, do they stop to sort of smell a rose or, you know, it's kind of it's fairly simplistic, but very useful tool, just going out and seeing how people are actually using the green spaces around the city [13].</p>
		Engagement	Relates to people engaging with activity/ space	Emic	<p>1, 9, 10, 12, 13</p> <p>depending on the make-up and demographic of our communities it depends what approach that we use...our role is to consider those approaches and decide which one is going to work to engage those people [1] I assessed what was going to work in that community. I talked to people we did things like what we call the big conversation, the big chat and basically said okay so how would you want us to engage with you, really simply... So, we use those opportunities to make sure we're on track with how we're going to engage with people coming forward and ridiculous as it sounds, the massive way that we found [that works] is food. [1] I think [creative participation/engagement] it's just tapping into things that slightly disrupt and one of the things that always works for me, I just had on this table a type writer and some paper and a sign saying have a go and the next minute you've got, you know, older people explaining that remember them, and young people getting so excited and then they make things. And then you know, just because you've got something to focus on, rather than just having a conversation, there's something to actively do. Whether it is craft or whatever... I don't think there's a magic bullet...I think just avoiding it just being dull you know, just genuinely people telling you stories, genuinely connecting with them and finding funny stories... rather than tell me about this space or what does this</p>



					<p>space mean to you? You don't get the right answers and it doesn't get people to engage at all [9]. [CPP] It is vibrant engagement that involves the driving force of people's wishes and needs... the success of every kind of engagement is who you are doing it for... so I guess, for example, with ethnic minorities, the most important thing was to take them to the countryside to see real nature versus the middle class, they're all seen it. [10]. that's why we do things like the winter and summer festival, because we help groups to apply for funds that we have to put on their own community-based events. So if you build a culture of participation and engagement in your space, I think that's what our job is about. So it's a mixture of trying to do quick wins that are fun and enjoyable, engaging with a bigger perspective in mind [12]. [working with ■■■] I think initially, it was just gathering kind of what you want from your green spaces, that's the sort of the leaflets kind of drop off. Interestingly, initially, they wanted to kind of knock on every door in the community, but not every door in the community wanted to open their doors. So I think they actually struggled to sort of get feedback to start off with. And at one stage, they even included a bit of an incentive, I think, if there was going to be a bit of a competition you know, a kind of a lucky dip kind of thing that if you gave your leaflet back with some feedback that you could win some vouchers for local supermarkets to do a bit of shopping. So you know, there was a few little prizes to get people involved. I'm not sure if that, that was an idea that was muted. I'm not sure if they did go ahead with that in the end or not [13].</p>
	Organisati on	Relates to how participat ion is	Emic	5, 12	[Community organising training] certified training workshops in key areas of community organising so the first one is an introduction into what community organising actually is and then the next three are a breakdown of the three core elements: the first one is, Listening, the second one is Power and the third one is

			organised and managed		<p>Action... the listening training is quite useful for say individuals or groups who have been really active but maybe don't have that wider reach in their community because they are just acting on what they think people want... It's getting them to see that actually community organising isn't just about deciding what you think is best for the community and then doing it, it's actually about getting a picture of the whole community and trying to work together and build relationships. [5]. there so many different words... community engagement, participation, involvement, so it all depends, what you're trying to achieve, who's involved, what they want to achieve, and what success looks like. So it could be you just want to communicate something you're doing and you do that well as in you've been engaged with people say in a street and you've given a message across that something's happening and that works well. Right up to maybe how you devolve decision making or how you do participatory budgeting where we had the events where people voted and decided on how some of the budget would be used. Public participation can be in so many different ways. Because a lot of the time, if you look at Arnstein's ladder of participation, which I think the flawed bit was that people move hierarchically up there, but not everyone wants to have decisions devolved out. They're just okay, sometimes, okay, that's something that bothers me or something I'm interested in, I'd like to contribute to that, so that's their participation, it comes back to the person or people involved and what they want to achieve and you balance that with organisation like a council, or companies, or the private sector, and the counsellors who are elected as representatives to be a voice of the community, but they shouldn't really be the voice so you mix elected representation and participatory democracy [12].</p>
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		Variety	Relates to a range of approaches to participation	Emic	3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13	<p>but I think public participation happens at a variety of scale and it's actually, public participation is social connection, perhaps I'd go far as saying that [3]. I think it's more a general sense of thinking about the best, having a variety of different ways to engage with people and with each other and I suppose being responsive to, observing the way people communicate and give feedback to each other in 'normal' life and trying to respond to that [5]. I think this is the problem for some of the participatory stuff, is that yeah, I mean, obviously, at some point, you do have to compromise on some of this. And, you know, I think that really is one of the biggest challenges, even in the natural environment, where you've got much more scope really for it to provide multi-functions and to satisfy a whole range of different people [8]. It's really giving people a choice. people gravitate to what they want. So there's no sort of set formula, the set formula is to be open to creativity, open to listening. Trying things out are things that people have not tried. So if you had a small programme of activities, and so on, and you create things all sorts of things people do, that are creative, but expressive with the community locally [10]. there will be an element of it that is promoted in a very kind of, hey, come along and get involved in this creative activity. Because some people find that very enticing, but not everybody does. So it's not necessarily a way to engage people. I think you need to be doing more than one thing [11]. the irony you have to do all this consultation around cycle lanes, but then they'll bang a motorway down any old way. So that's why we looked at the pie [within their model] we wanted to try to illustrate one way isn't the best, it really can come back to right down the intersection of two streets, and what those people around that area want. And they might want to be devolved decision making to work with them, cool, but further down the street there's something different. They don't. I think you can't go with one absolute. And that's the issue with</p>
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					<p>Arnstien's thing, I think we naturally think we have to go up the ladder, because that's the best place [12]. giving people different design options or alternatives. And then do you want your part to be a more heavily biodiverse more heavily by diverse rich park? You know, or do you want your part to be a more recreational space park with, you know, so, you know, you can't really have both? Or you could have half and heart let's say you have an area, an area of land? Do you want to maximise that space to be all sports pitches? Or do you want that to be an area that's all covered in tree planting and wildflower Meadows? And it's kind of a kind of meeting a balance between the two. But what the three or the five or whatever the difference are of and design options and influences are within a green space [13].</p>
		Access	Relates to being able to access opportunities to participate	1, 2, 6, 11	<p>if you don't want us to participate. Just don't do it, but if you want us to make it easy! [1] well, you have to try quite hard to actually find consultations, then you go to it and just jargonistic [2] I'm not impressed with the public things that have been coming out at the moment. And when it's, to me, on something really, really important like, infrastructure, green spaces. Everyone should feel allowed to have an input regardless. I mean I look at those, and I straightway think like the communities that we deal with, there's a lot of illiterate people there, who can't read or write and yet we're expecting them to go through a full essay in order to have their say [1]. if you're restricted in your mobility then you can't climb up this giant quarry in Crompton Moore in Oldham where we do a lot of our tree planting things [6]. I think one of the main [barriers] for public participation would definitely be, I would say access to a lot of things, whether that's... a physical disability that you may have or it could be if someone suffers from anxiety that they don't want to do things on their own or whether they feel as if they lack the strength to do these things, or anything like that [6]. I lived in</p>

					for 20 years. And I was seeing build things being built things happening to communities and places and wondering, well, who makes the decisions about that? And how does that happen? And really finding it frustrating that I couldn't work out how to find those kinds of things out. And I had no access point at all. And I thought, well, if I haven't got an access point, then I don't think communities have got much of one either [11].
		Reflection	Relates to an iterative process of participating and being reflexive	1, 7, 13, 14	I think it's challenging actually getting people engaged in the beginning, before joined because the demographic of the people I think personally we didn't approach that the right way initially but that enabled us to get the lessons learned there. Pull it back and sit down and review and say look we've not got the amount of people engaged that we need to do. What's going to be the approach. Let's try something different. So, we did. Then by trialling doing it via activities and engagement and interactions that's when it started to get people engaged [1]. Manchester's youth services video camera, it had one at the time. And as I was walking out with it, I bumped into a guy who said to me, he said, Oh, I've tried that. Meaning I've tried video work, it doesn't work. and that was the only conversation we had, this is probably years and years and years ago. Now I've made my entire career on re-evaluation videos and using video to make films, and it's that thing about just being really, really positive. And just because something didn't work over there, doesn't mean you can't try the same thing, adapt it a little bit, Maybe look why or look at some of the reasons why it hasn't worked and try to go somewhere else. But we tend to be, I'd say in terms of participation, we tend to be quite creative and do it in a creative way. And where people are concerned we always try and bring in an element food you know, pizza. So much so that our evaluations are called pizza evaluation. There not just evaluations anymore [7]. [In X Park] they commissioned, because like there was

					<p>that Heritage Lottery funded project, they wanted it stripped back to its original kind of design, it was in the Victorian era, it's like it was this competition winning design. And they commissioned some really high-end metal urns that will exact replicas of the urns that were in the park back in the Victorian era... And, I was just like oh bloody hell, for a public park, they're probably just going to get trashed or nicked or vandalised, or whatever. But I think actually, in retrospect, it just added that it sort of the cherry on the top of the cake, you know, it was worth it. And it kind of increased, I hope, people's sense of pride and ownership of the park. Like look at this, this is on our doorstep. And it's been beautifully designed, even down to the very last detail, it's something that could have been left off the design it's not an essential part of it. And but in fact, it really added to the sort of high specification, high end kind of feel of the park and open space [13]. the multiplicity of spaces is where we have to always sit, you know, so trying to get a sort of final conclusion, on anything in terms of participation within certain places and spaces is sort of futile which, in a way, it kind of lets us off the hook a little bit, you know, so rather than kind of trying to come to some, resolute understanding of a place, it's actually accepting that you're, in a way, you're never going to come to complete understanding. But here is the interpretation that you present from your positionality, which is informed by x, y, and z views [14].</p>
		Sustainability	Relates to the longevity of participation and	7, 12	<p>So now [digital presence] has become an integral part of what we do. And yet again, we keep coming back to what you're saying, for me the key is about kind of trying to work in a language so that whoever your audience is understands. It's about how these little, short videos, featuring just taking a photograph, an animate photograph and then putting it on Instagram, then we'll have 20 to 25 people looking up that, so underneath it I'll put and don't forget to come to our</p>

			engagement			online section, do you know what I mean. It's about constantly putting material out there and engaging but doing it in a professional way, not just kind of sticking stuff on there and hoping for the best. It's trying to be a bit strategic about that [7]. Because people some people say as a council, it can be it's too conservative with a small C, it doesn't have a history of really good community engagement. But we do have a history historically of doing some quite exciting things. What we tend to do is peak and trough. We do it really innovative stuff, and then we conservatism hits back like that [12].
		Policy	Relates to how legal requirements to engage with the public in decision making		12	[traditionally enviro strategy] do the policy, and we implement it. I slightly disagree in the sense that you can have the Central Council policy, but I can have almost my own policy at local level, I don't need the town hall to give me this policy, because we can do like nature of Hulme, you know, things like that. So bottom line is I want some sort of document that's preferably co-produced with people in some way. That isn't just me writing this down and say, right, we rock on. And then we use that as a remit to try to work with people to make things better. And often it comes back to the smaller the area, the better the impact, because you drill it down [12]. one of the biggest issues with how you do policy. Is it co-produced and collaborative? And what's the evidence base for it? Or do you kind of here's our direction as an organisation, we put it down in a programme, and then we shifted one to fit in with that [12].

		<p>Transparency</p>	<p>Relates to being <b>open</b> and inclusive about the process of participation</p>	<p>Etic</p>	<p>1,2, 3, 12, 13</p>	<p>community engagement - what you need, what you want, this is what we can do. simple... another key word but I can't stress it enough, but you've got be transparent. because people can see through you, can see through it all [1]. if you're not following through then that just makes everyone disillusioned and they won't want to be engaged [2] so public participation I think especially if you're researching it, it's really important to kind of gain an idea of how your present within it and what that presence and that visibility of you waving that research card is doing, how is it affecting that participation perhaps and what does it mean, where is it coming from, where are you coming at it from [3]. I think the benefit is one aspect. The other aspect is understanding what agenda people are coming from and being very open about that. And then being clear and with community engagement work or participation or whatever, what can you influence? And why what's changeable? and why, why are we doing this? What do you want to get out of it? What do we want to get out of it? And that's, where it becomes a bit more nuanced. And their idea was that with the community leaders programme, that would take residents on a training programme over seven months to look at how we improve how they collaborate. Just because you're a resident in area doesn't mean you're not racist, you're not sexist, you know, homophobic, you can collaborate. Sometimes I think we just assume because someone lives in an area, they're a nice person. There's lots of nice people out there a lot of perfectly fine people. I think there's a curve thing that people talk about on the 5% or something are like destructive, 5-10 percent really want to get engaged and rest in between kind of go with the flow [12]. the fundamentals of all that has been accountable and being clear, what is it you are doing? Why are you doing it? And what's the scope of people's participation or involvement or whatever because even those words can mean different things to</p>
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						<p>different people. So for an activist, they might think, well, I participated therefore, I want to be really involved. Someone else says ell, I walked on up pointed to a couple of things on a map and go okay, cool and that's enough. That's my participation. So even it's, it's, I think, there's scope to look at the words we use. I don't know whether there's a solution to that [12]. I think it's quite hard for a lot of people to understand plans. And that's how I would generally, I have kind of presented my design proposals in the past, they've just been kind of flat plans. And it's probably not until they actually see these things built, until they start walking around the park and kind of see what that is. They might question why that was constructed? [13].</p>
<p>Motivation</p>	<p>Relates to the reasons why people get involved and participate</p>	<p>Opportunity</p>	<p>Relates to having options/choice to get involved with UGS</p>	<p>Emic</p>	<p>3, 6, 9, 10</p>	<p>Richard Florida who was starting to talk about where people congregate to participate as well and how people choose their habitat in which they dwell based on their interests and how they want to participate [3]. [the outdoor arts and crafts based events] are usually are based around arts and crafts for the children again but we do also try to do some sort of a lot more wildlife surveys and stuff like that so again trying to get the children involved and one of the things that kids love to do is looking for bugs...it's great, the curiosity that the kids have is wonderful... some children they don't want to be outside which you can't really force them but then if you give them sort of little insights into what they can experience if they go outside so, maybe these arts and crafts sessions ... Just anything that would try and get them to maybe have the courage to kind of step foot outside really, sort have a bit of an explore [6]. we get a lot of people who are currently maybe out of work at the minute and they want to actually be able to do something on a regular basis, and basically they sign up to one of our events and it helps them with their health or well-being or, as I've said if they're out of work it gives them some more skills to do something, to break their week</p>

					<p>up a little bit and yeah there's just so many different reasons I reckon that a lot of people would be coming to our events and coming to more than one [6]. we're only a small charity so there's only so much that we can do, and a lot of people were at one of our bigger events, we had to cap it at a certain amount which is fair enough because we haven't got the capacity to get hundreds and hundreds of people and we we're saying that we can add you to the waiting list, and people, they weren't getting, they were just frustrated I reckon because when you've got your mind on something that you really want to do, something good for the community, then it is really frustrating if someone tells you, you can't come or you can't do it [6 repeated]. I think the more understanding universities and cultural organisations have about how to engage people the more quality engagement can be planned for. But the chance of funding that you might have been able to apply for, to either do research are actually completely disrupted at a time when it's needed more than ever, you know, it's going to be changed landscape incredibly [9]. one off event can have a lot of mileage (because people have the memory and want to come back) [9].so we listened to people their dreams and their wishes and, let them talk about how they experienced nature when they were home, and so... we created the first what we call model projects, the model is a very simple formula, although they were seen as quite revolutionary, taking people into the countryside to enjoy themselves among nature, and allow cultural elements. So, you know, a lot of the time, we'll ask them what they like to do, and things came up, like they would like to sing... they would like to tell children stories about their own culture, about nature. And they wanted to collect things, they wanted to make things. So they did you know, paintings and drawings, and all sorts of things like that [10].</p>
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		Drivers	Relates to what motivate someone to get involved, what has activated their interest	Emic	1, 3, 14	<p>I think making sure right at the very outset that you know what's going to motivate and inspire them... I think by conversations taking place, the trialling and piloting of different activities and then assessing your demographic of why the customers, tenants and residents are actually coming to these things [1] So really I think public participation motivational drivers have perhaps almost become, and this is a massive, generalising sweeping statement but from my experience I wonder whether they've become you know your digital interaction with public participation has somewhat become au fait, it's become almost like the new norm to have a campaign from an institution that wants to encourage people's participation in something and now it's almost like well okay now there's so much out there everybody wants your attention, everybody wants public participation but how do you, you know, streamline, how do you actually get people you really want there [3] the world is exhausted the environmental resources are limited, we're for the first time ever, I think scientists have actually said we are line and at one with nature much more than we ever have been you know. We are as exhausted as the world really. So, it makes sense I think in my head that we start to make more conscious decisions about what we publicly participate in [3] I don't see that public participation is a thing that has to evolve, has to be designed for like mass audiences, I think public participation might just involve you getting up and walking out the door [3]. those groups are fascinating because they are, you know, there's a huge range of people that are important, those kind of groups, those sorts of friends groups are across the political spectrum. Some of them can be incredibly right wing, you know, and others are very hippie and really left, you know, so you kind of get this real clash, actually, well, personalities have different motivations. But essentially, they're all kind of trying to move in one direction to save or protect a certain thing that they value</p>
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					that hasn't been valued, usually by their city council, or by the owner, or developer or what have you. And so yes, there's some really kind of fascinating character characters that you meet, and you and you kind of realise that, that people's their own participation in public discourse, and will be activated through various different motivations [14]. creative public participation like a festival that's happening or something that then draws people to a particular site. So might be to do with you need something to motivate people to, to then be engaging, either, through their own sort of creative interests, or their own creative skills or, you know, approach to something, or it might be that someone else is bringing in creativity from outside and they're responding to or what have you, but there has to be some sort of motivation, I think. Now, even if it's the case of, I don't know, people naturally gathering together, there's usually always something that's going on, you know, either as a celebration or a birthday, or whatever it might be, you know, there's got to be some sort of trigger [14].
	Perception	Relates to either positive/negative preconceptions of a given space and basing your motivation	Etic	9, 10, 11, 12, 14	I had a whole series of bereavements, one after the other, it was a horrific time personally, and I dropped nearly all the projects I was doing. But what I kept doing was, I kept going around this dreadful park, just at different times of the day and just walked around, just in my own thoughts, and it became something you know, I was noticing the beauty of seeing a shopping trolley in the top of a big tree and wondering how someone had got it up there. Or just seeing just taking photographs of... there was a big white line on the ground where somebody had unravelled a toilet roll and it had got wet and in the sky there was a plane and the emissions trail virtually went along with it. So it's just about stopping in the outdoor space and being observant and just letting it have an effect on me. Which was very, very profound to me, it was very unexpected [9]. The image that you will not let people do anything and you're very controlling,

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some parks are like that they will not allow children to play ball, for example. All over the park, instead of saying that's one part where you can play it. It's everywhere? No ball games full stop. There, you immediately create a sense that this is a park that doesn't allow you to do anything. They really control it. And people don't like it [10]. So basically, first of all, I, we thought about what creativity is. And some people have a lot of negative associations with the word creative. And some people have a lot of positive and I think that those are quite actually, often quite just, the flip side of a coin in a way. Like some people say, oh, Arty people are really chaotic, and they can't make any decisions. And but at the same time, those type of people often are the ones with the most fantastic imaginations and original ideas. Yeah, okay, so they might be a chaotic and a bit messy... actually taking risks and divergent thinking is essential to innovation. Otherwise, we will be stuck with the nightmare world that we live in, if we don't embrace some of these ways of being so I don't see these things, they're not necessarily a problem or more positive. They're just a way that creativity can help us and I think there the word creative, it means different things to different people. And I am quite interested in the idea of creative characteristics that we all have. I mean, obviously, some of us more than others, perhaps, but I think you can learn to be creative. And I think pretty much all children are creative. It just kind of gets bashed out of you [11]. The barriers? Oh well, where do you start! it's often boring, people don't see the benefit of it. It uses up people's time. There's a lot of [confusion], again, I came back to the clarity of why you're doing it. So if you do it once people perceive that their view wasn't listening to and they don't go back again [12]. when we were talking about participation, trying to get more people participate. And some sometimes people just don't care the same level that other people do. Will they have other questions? You know, so what

					<p>you'll often find is that even if people aren't participating in the thing that you're interested in, they will be participating in something else, you know, so it's, I suppose it's kind of making or not making assumptions about sort of people's everyday participation in different kinds of activities... I guess in terms of barriers. Again, it depends on the specifics of the thing, you're talking about the demographics you're on about the location. and then you can start to make some kind of top line assumptions about participation... I think there has to be a bit careful about not assuming that because people and seemingly tick a traditional call to reach folks, that they are not already actively involved in something [14]. I think there are some really basic things actually around people's lack of participation that might not even have anything to do with their income, gender, sexuality, race, ability, all these things that we kind of assume are the main barriers. Because when you look at the history of activism, it's always been people actually, who are, who seemingly have the most barriers in life who actually are very radical, very activist very out there. You know, and historically, it's not always been sort of white middle class, who has really pushed boundaries on social activism. It's kind of shifting the narrative a little bit, I think [14]. people feeling like you know, maybe a kind of what's the point nothing happens good. nothing good ever happens. Well, you know, these things are actually true in people's everyday experiences. so I think the perception is as important as fact, in a way, you know, how people are feeling emotionally at a certain time, it might be that you will approach a community group or individuals to be part of that and you've just captured it at the right time. Or it might be that you just come in right, the wrong moment when emotion levels are different. and so then they won't participate, you know, it can just be a timing, as well, you know, so that's the kind of variable which can get in the way [14].</p>
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		Change/ impact	Relates to seeing change/ improve ment to a space as a result of getting involved with an activity	Etic	1, 3, 10, 12	[with projects] when you see it in front of you and feel it... it ignites people's interests more and belief in it [1] I think I'm most engaged in public participation when it is for a purpose, a sense of purpose, a sense of doing something good/changing something for social and/or environmental positivity. I think it has to have some transformational effect. But I think that's... but I'm not saying it has to absolutely change the world [3]. we expanded the range of projects for nature. And we move the paradigm from people for nature to a two way street, people for nature and nature for people. Yeah, it's the paradigm and we have influenced the environmental sector so much that that paradigm is now actually there [10]. if you are in the green space, and they're not very large, and people come into your territory every day, talk to them, it begins to change the atmosphere completely. And then they begin the same journey that I talked about, by talking to people you find out all kinds of things about their needs, their wishes and their dreams... you change what I call the sense of potential. If ordinary people do not have a sense of potential for change, then they too, don't tell you anything. [10 repeated]. motivations for me in terms of green space, be it a little corner of the street or a park, you can see the benefits, it can be really enjoyable, healthy wise, it gets you out. And actually moving and doing any there's also a lot of scope for creativity like taking old tires and painting them and doing things with them or little planters and also organisations like developers who have corporate social responsibility. I think they often quite like it because you can see the input they put in like here's the event and they created these planters or these hanging baskets or these old helmets Well, you know, work people have new one and take old ones and you can create them into plant pots and things and you can see it and they can demonstrate we did this with this
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					number of people and everyone felt good and it looked good on social media. So that's the clear benefits on it [12].	
		Sustainability	Relates to how to retain motivation and increase engagement	Etic	3	I'm not sure there's enough being done on sustaining motivation... I think maybe what I'm saying it's forms of measurement may be, maybe we're not sure how to measure public participation just now in terms of what it means to people [3].
		Value/ recognition	Relates to how people see the value of their involvement what it brings them – also support	Etic	1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14	it's for their self-confidence as well, it's about recognising those skills and talents and recognising that we don't have to, I don't know what the word is, we don't have to keep them in that geographical area or locked, let's share it! If you've got those skills and [redacted] has been really inspired because she is now recognised, [so she may think] do you what I have got the skills and talents. I really have. And somebody else recognises it, so that's inspired her [1]. [older people are] playing an important role, and a lot of people see themselves as you know, they need to be difficult in order to get things done, but I suppose that is a good thing in this context. So yeah, having that that role valued and considered, and also, this idea of going against the sort of narrative of being retired, and you're sort of no longer a productive member of society. So it's also giving them that sense of the value of what they're doing, it's not just a hobby it's actually something really important that they're contributing to through the next phase of their life [8]. I



think the difficulty [with sustaining engagement] is, there's only like a few people that are completely engaged, and they really, you know, actively, publicly are doing and talking and whatever, that actually it's about giving credit to the people who are quietly doing it, who aren't actually, necessarily writing to papers or picking the litter up or whatever but they bring their grandkids and they just spend time in it and value it but sometimes in space like that it tends to become owned by a few vocal, fantastic people. But there's actually this, mass of other people who don't get recognised for it. So in some ways, if they can be, whether it be writing a poem with their words about their space... and put it up in the park of whatever... it's the ordinary as well and some people just take a long, long time to become actively involved anyway. So I'm more interested in the those, the people who are either think it's not for them.

And, you know, I spent a lot of time talking to drug dealers and people whose first language wasn't English and you know, people were so shocked about someone wanting to talk to them about the space they're in [9]. notice what is quite qualitative and precise at the same time... I worked in short term psychotherapy. And when we start with a client, a little chart, one to 10 with lots of space in between the numbers one and two, and so on. And we asked them from one to 10 how are you feeling now? And they're really serious. They look at it. And don't they won't just go for the ones and twos. They're really careful about where they put the point in between the two numbers. And people's feelings are very precise. You know, what's the difference between 3.1 and 3.7 is? You even know the difference between 3.3 and 3.4... so if you ask people, how can we do this, this space, put a mark from one to 10? Think about it be very precise. They will give it to you.... So there's things about emotion is one that are actually precise, rather than woolly. I think some of those descriptions where you

					<p>muddy the waters without numbers and so on, those smiley faces things and all the all saying I feel bad. I feel good. I feel whatever. Those are muddy words. Using numbers is really precise. [10]. I would say, [with CPP] ideally, there's some element of those people being part of that design process, contributing to something and they can look back at it, whenever it is finished, and they can feel that their voice was heard, or their act had some sort of impact, that they can recognise that within it [11]. I would probably say, actually, there's more participation than we realise in many respects, it was a hidden layer thing called all the participation that already isn't really acknowledged so much [14]. in terms of volunteering, you know, these groups actually keep our spaces and places going, really, you know, it's not so much the big, the big paid charities or organisations, its volunteers who actually are kind of the backbone of a lot of spaces and places [14].</p>
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		Fulfilment	Relates to the satisfaction felt for getting involved	Emic	3, 6, 7	<p>Public participation is everywhere... but it's saturated so much now that how you decide, or the way you decide to participate publicly is now very much connected to your professional practice decisions and it's all seems connected to now building reputations and profiles and if you're publicly participating in something you're generally doing it because you're interested in it and you are generally doing it I think because it might also give you something back you know, not just going and doing it because you've got the time necessary to do it [3]. to be able to see the amount of work that you've done and in every event that we run, once everyone's finished you sort stand back and look and see how many trees you've planted and you're thinking, wow that's great! and that person, that fulfils something in them and they've done something good and they've helped, that tree will grow in the next couple of years to a bigger one, it's just something that in their mind they've done something really, really good, and it's that sort of happy thought to bring them [6]. people if they do come along to these events a lot of these sorts of people like to take something away with them. and whether that's a physical thing or actually learning something, so that they can take it back to use in their own place or something like that [6]. we organised a litter picking...and again it's nothing new, it's not a new concept. But what we try to do then is invite the local councillors to come down, invite everybody that had been involved in the initial conversations about what this means to them, and how we it can be improved, you know, and provide refreshments and stuff like that. And that seemed to work really well... So the project that drew in 20-25 adults, also drew in about 30 young people. which is massive for a cold Saturday morning when you're doing a bit of, that was conservation work in the park. So we were just really just improving a small area of the park and everybody just got stuck in and they disappeared when it really rained as well. So for me, it's that thing</p>
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						about just being creative and maybe just go into any situation where we've done this kind of work, entering into it with a really positive frame of mind, kind of feeling, knowing, feeling I supposed it's about a self-fulfilling prophecy really, know that you're going to get the results that you're looking for [7].
Community	Relates to a group(s) of people that either live locally to a UGS or come together to	Interconnectivity	Relates to how different people, organisations, charities and the state work together	Emic	10	you find that there's always commonalities in cultures, because we had a common starting point, or we took it from another culture. So what I call multiculturalism is a recognition is that all cultures demonstrate to us the full range of the human potential. What has not been stimulated, stays dormant. What has been stimulated comes out as culture. So when you meet a person from a different culture, there's always a gift, they stimulate something in you that's already there, that has not been stimulated, it's remained dominant, because you're in your culture. So that gift is a gift to you of something you've always had potential for. And that concept links everybody's it's a unifying and not a conflicting concept. So that's what I propose. So I think concepts around keywords is another way of how you begin to be inclusive. Instead of exclusive [10]. I truly hope against hope that the nations of the world of the virus and so on

	share/work/live together		and interact			will awaken to the basic human necessity for collaboration and work in interconnectedness because without it we are sunk [10].
		Trust	Relates to relationships and trust between the members of a community, council, orgs, etc	Emic	1, 10	<p>█ has actually embedded herself in that community. So, people are aware of who █ is which you know is better to start a conversation anyway and to get others engaged [1]. there are all sorts of levels of meaning, but the first thing I named was creativity, but creativity is born out of an atmosphere of allowance, and trust, being able to tell you what I really want to do [10].</p>
		Belonging	Relates to feeling pride or ownership over their community spaces and places	Etic	10	<p>more day to day things are really important what you're allowed to do, and being encouraged to come in to develop a sense of belonging. And to be able to do things even on your own, in private sitting under a tree and doing a drawing or having spaces that are designed to be quite quiet and sheltered so that even a lot of parks you see these benches, they're just along the path in the role facing one way. Yeah. Now thinking of circular benches [10].</p>

Barriers	Relates to the challenges faced by stakeholders regarding urban greenspace and participation	Resources	Relates to availability and use of funding for projects regarding communities and UGS	Emic	1,5,6,12,13	<p>I want to do what we're doing in Brinnington and I want to do what we're doing in West Gorton and do what we doing in Hattersley and do that with other communities in Greater Manchester. We just need the blooming money to do it! We need the funding to enable that to take place [1]. I think there's practical stuff like time and money and resources... so feeling like pressure to deliver something with limited resources, I think is one of the biggest contexts that makes it hard to be more creative, or more imaginative [5]. thing I've been interested in doing is getting people to do wildlife surveys around the park as well just so people know what to look for and again it's that whole connection and engagement with their outdoor environment and Whitworth park is just one of my favourite parks I would say in GM really and we're just really lucky to have that kind of art gallery side of things there as well so if it does rain we've got an indoor section that we can use and then you've got the cafe and the toilets that are available as well [6]. money, you need to fund most people's time, there's been a lot of cuts in the council 40% budget cuts since 2010. And you've lost about 30% of the staff. You've lost experience and that knowledge you lost there a lot of that the council's priorities changed. I mean, the ethos of the Council. Some councils are more progressive than others that stifles it and it really comes back to time and money and knowledge [12]. So I could get all creative as much as I want with, you know, African drumming sessions and all sorts of stuff back in 2000 when I first came here, and all new Labour's regeneration Project, were there because you're under pressure to spend money, they said spend it, you have to spend it. Then when the cuts came in from 2009, it's just so fast, and you've lost every- your abilities are so much harder to do things... Like I said, I used to have half a million. You just can't make that sort of thing up. And you can't replace that then the resources and also the infrastructure as in terms of</p>
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					<p>people and knowledge... people don't look at creative participation engagement in the same way anymore. Because resources are tight. So it's like we all have to do it more formally. You've got to do this legally. You can't talk about feelings and emotions because how do you measure that? how can you get the numbers of people who say they agree with us or they don't agree with it. So you've got the two aspects there, the sort of emotional and feeling engagement thing which can be harder to measure versus the numbers we need to say we engage with this number, or we just need to tell people we went and did this, this, this and this and this, and if people didn't engage well tough [12]. if you were doing your [research] back in 2005, you'd have a very different picture to look at to the one in 2020. And I think that's going to be the same because if we've got 30 million pounds from the government in Manchester to deal with the COVID-19 response. But our losses are 160 million. So that gives us 130 million shortfall. That's in addition to 10 years of austerity, which ended up in cuts of 50 million, 60 million, whatever it was and a lot of our money came in from a dividend in the airport, and at the moment the airport isn't running. You can't slice that up in any other way in the end, something's got to give [12]. I'm not sure local government will be around in the same way, by the time I retire. That sounds very pessimistic. But I'm not I think overall game of government was always to cut local government right back and have like the USA system... They want the private sector doing things like corporate social value, they want rich people putting in money and the council itself to be cut right back to basic core services. [12]. also budget, that would be another factor, that just you don't have enough money to do these extra things, you know, maybe there just isn't the funding there [13].</p>
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		Power	Relates to dynamics within groups, councils or orgs	Etic	3,6,10,12, 13,14	<p>I guess in the early noughties with the rise of digital, start to infiltrate institutions that had otherwise institutionalise how people participate [3] I think with certainly with green spaces in urban development, public participation can be really, again can try to I suppose... be controlled. So, a great example of this is when you know they put forward a call to responses to consultations and yet actually the decisions have perhaps already been made [3]. the terms public participation, engagement, consultation is all kind of wrapped up isn't it in the language that is a box ticking exercise for a lot of property developers and governing bodies, even local authorities to some extent, but then saying that there are good people in this world that genuinely care about public participation [3]. we do try and be in all the districts, there are some districts in GM that we probably don't do as much work in but again it does in a way it does depend on the land and we have to try and find landowners. so if the landowners themselves don't communicate or cooperate or anything then there's nothing much that we can really do so i guess we do have little hotspots where we do a lot of work [6 repeated]. The image that you will not let people do anything and you're very controlling, some parks are like that they will not allow children to play ball, for example. All over the park, instead of saying that's one part where you can play it. It's everywhere? No ball games full stop. There, you immediately create a sense that this is a park that doesn't allow you to do anything. They really control it. And people don't like it... atmosphere is a driving force. it's very powerful. [10]. And for me, I always say that policy makers need to remember that ultimately, policy is about people. It's about what happens to people. And for me, policy should be about acting for the love of people... I think in the end you also think of society, like a person, you know, as an as love, and we have fears with desires, we have wishes, we have dreams, all those things. And if we're</p>
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					<p>not careful, even within our own lives, when we're frightened, we want control. And this is what happens in society when they make policy. It should be about dreaming wishes, needs, protection and so on. But there's also fear and with that fear they want to control [10]. In the [redacted] [team] you can enable it you can develop policy in many ways, in your own way. Or you can take the council's policy and make it a bit more real with people, both working with people to enable them to do it or working for people in a way and doing it [12]. Are we coming at it from an equal power relationship? Or are we coming at as I'm the authority because I work for the local authority. And in the end, I hold decisions, power, or the elected members do or whatever. So that idea of really taking a reflective approach to that could address some of those barriers. And what, for some people it's just that community engagement isn't a priority. There's more important things. So that's another barrier [12]. we've went the social values stuff is pretty hard. I do a lot of work on that trying to get money and beg borrow and steal. That's why we tried to use our strategies and approaches as creating a framework for people to hang their investment under. But it's really hard. You spent ages they say yeah, but in the end, nothing comes through. Also, it depends when it's originally done in the town hall, we're not often involved in the commissioning process. So someone else on the town hall says, okay, you're going to do this number of apprenticeships, this for the school this with that, then when they come out to the neighbourhoods it's already decided. So often you don't have the power in neighbourhoods to work with people to define that social value. It's on a note, it's all pretty to be honest... there are some developers who've made a difference, but really, you'd be surprised how little they do because at the end, their job was to make money. There not some social setup thing, they're there to make money for their shareholders to keep people</p>
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employed, keep business move on to the next job [12]. In [REDACTED] there was a lot of engagement. And, you know, that that worked really well. And I think they had things important part there was that in every kind of, they did about six courtyards. And I think they had a spokesperson and a kind of cheerleader for each of those courtyards to sort of get people enthused and engaged in the in the project. And there's a bit of a danger with that, that is also risk that you can get someone with the strongest voice, you know, putting in what they want. And then, you know, you can missing out on what are some other members of the community might be aspiring to see in the in that park [13]. If I say to this group, oh, can you come and do some interviews? And we can we have a chance to do some photography work, and so on. But hey, I'm not going to help you in your campaign to actually save this space.... I mean, ethically it's just wrong [14]. it depends on the context, because I think, creativity within an institution, then there's a whole bunch of stuff that can come crashing down on us in terms of the how the institution is structured, you know, and also kind of getting back to the conversation, but, you know, becoming very well, they've always been important, but the media seems to be picking up a bit more now. They're around to institutional racism, for example. And structural inequality, have a huge impact on both enabling creativity and participation. So if you're talking about institutions, they can really put a tight grip on something That's, I mean, within, you know, higher education institutions, as well, all schools, you know, the kind of places that has certain types of modes of controlling people, and, you know, that can really stifle creativity. [14]. there's a lot of kind of institutional violence that can happen. And that, that deliberately crushes creativity in participation [14].

		Ownership	Relates to who the space belongs to or is owned by - who has control over the changes made to the UGS	Etic	3,9,13	<p>you know if I came along to [redacted]'s rooftop and [they] had been running it in the view of [their] imaginary, you know and then I go to [redacted]'s rooftop and I go, oh it's nice and then I'd leave but if I've actually influenced what is being programmed on there and I care about what else is programmed on there because it's going to give me more of what I said I needed more of it's got a different character to it, it becomes something bigger than [redacted]'s. It's like, you know, the rooftop project then became something that a lot of people owned [3]. I think the difficulty [with sustaining engagement] is, there's only like a few people that are completely engaged, and they really, you know, actively, publicly are doing and talking and whatever, that actually it's about giving credit to the people who are quietly doing it, who aren't actually, necessarily writing to papers or picking the litter up or whatever but they bring their grandkids and they just spend time in it and value it but sometimes in space like that it tends to become owned by a few vocal, fantastic people. But there's actually this, mass of other people who don't get recognised for it. So in some ways, if they can be, whether it be writing a poem with their words about their space... and put it up in the park of whatever... it's the ordinary as well and some people just take a long, long time to become actively involved anyway. So I'm more interested in the those, the people who are either think it's not for them. And, you know, I spent a lot of time talking to drug dealers and people whose first language wasn't English and you know, people were so shocked about someone wanting to talk to them about the space they're in [9]. the ownership of the co op needs to be something that we need to establish so that people have pride in their space. I mean, I've worked on Alexandra Park as well... and again, that was really important there to get the community involved. I mean, there was a lot of resistance to that project initially, because there was a lot of the tree felling, a lot</p>
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					<p>of trees were taken down to sort of stripped apart back to its original Victorian design. There was a lot of controversy about that, and a lot of kind of resentment and anger about the project initially, but now people love it. And you know, it was it's kind of been accepted that that was a necessary requirement to get know the project moving forward and to get it regenerated. So ownership and pride is really important [13]. [In █████ Park] they commissioned, because like there was that Heritage Lottery funded project, they wanted it stripped back to its original kind of design, it was in the Victorian era, it's like it was this competition winning design. And they commissioned some really high-end metal urns that will exact replicas of the urns that were in the park back in the Victorian era... And, I was just like oh bloody hell, for a public park, they're probably just going to get trashed or nicked or vandalised, or whatever. But I think actually, in retrospect, it just added that it sort of the cherry on the top of the cake, you know, it was worth it. And it kind of increased, I hope, people's sense of pride and ownership of the park. Like look at this, this is on our doorstep. And it's been beautifully designed, even down to the very last detail, it's something that could have been left off the design it's not an essential part of it. And but in fact, it really added to the sort of high specification, high end kind of feel of the park and open space [13 rept].</p>
	Time	Relates to how long and how often people use/	Emic	1,7,8,9,10,12,14	<p>[there are] certain targets sometimes [but] we have to make sure that we take a step back and breathe. And we go at the right pace for those people as well [1]. One of the things, youth work is like any other profession, so I probably, I mean, my post is 25 hours but it just feels like you never stop working. You never stop doing admin, your reward for finishing a report is another report. or your reward for finishing a fundraiser is some more fundraising, another fundraising application. So it just never ends. It just goes on and on...[7]. What stifles</p>

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creativity? I suppose over adherence to rules and norms but, I don't think necessarily that the rules or norms need to stifle it completely, you can think about it guiding rather than stifling. But I suppose some people would feel stifled and therefore turn away from it... I guess, time and resource to be able to have the luxury to be involved in it [8]. So the barrier to actually engaging, so you've got to get that right first. Then once people do engage even in the smallest way, it's really got to be a win-win win for everybody. So if I was running something, I have to know what I'm going to get out of it and I let all the people know what I'm going to get out of it and what they're going to get out of it as well. And who else will benefit as well or something like that, and go at people's pace, because I think sometimes when people try to get somebody involved in maybe planting some seeds or whatever, as I said before, you'll get a few enthusiasts, others will be reticent, but things often tail off, because it's led by some outsider, rather than somebody, you know [9]. Well, the existence of nearby spaces, that are good enough and you can develop a sense of belonging to so they can use it everyday and natural England did research and found that for some, for people to use a space every day has to be within a six minute walk. you can imagine six minutes there, six minutes back already adds up to 12. So the amount of time you spend there plus going back and forth is a kind of psychological restriction [10]. It takes time, I think to do good community engagement, really, you've got to build relationships. And that's as barrier because people don't like taking the time. That's another barrier. The time that people haven't had the time as professionals have [12]. we need a sort of longer term ethnography really, on understanding how places and spaces function, and actually, you know, that can shift really quickly. So it's a time based issue as well, you know, and, you know, depending on residential movement, or, or certain, you know, every day there

						has the potential for an unexpected variable that will suddenly come in to that location or demographic can add another layer to it [14].
		Communication/ Language	Relates to the words used to enable comprehension, universal language	Emic	1,2,3,8,10,11,12,13	you can't come in and be like, 'oh so, let me tell you about SUDs', and everyone else is like 'what are you talking about!?' so we've been trying to use, and think about how we use language and we talk about 'the park that drinks' and think of like more creative ways of getting people to think about how the park will work [2] [talking about UGS] we call them community spaces. It's exactly that, it's that language that and when you look at the make-up of the community it's only those, I suppose activist or middle level activists and environmentalists that really get it [1]. we need a place making literacy which I know placemakers and I know the place making community are really trying hard to promote and articulate, but there's more work to be done amongst you and I and people who have come from the design school training where we are kind of playing with this idea that design language is actually everyday language because it can enhance the way we think more systemically, it can enhance and improve the public participation we choose to get involved with, it can help us with decision making so we're not exhausted, so the planet is not exhaustive, you know, and then hopefully we can try and improve things so that whatever we are designing or redesigning and designing and redesigning, we're actually learning from what has happened before [3]. the challenges [with public participation] that need to be overcome are the languages in which people communicate participation so I think for developers and local authorities and governing bodies to turn around and go actually are we actually doing public participation?... Can we call this public participation? [3]. I've been doing this for quite a long time now. So while I wouldn't say that I'm by any means any sorts of perfect exemplar of explaining

					<p>complex terminology to non-academic audiences, I am at least aware of trying to avoid using over complicated language or if I have to use over complicated language to explain what exactly it is, I mean by it [8]. I think that one of the things that needs to happen, crucially, in the 21st century, is that ordinary people can read your papers and understand them. And I think that academic terms should be precise, but shouldn't create things that are an absolute barrier to understanding. You can take popular terms that you can, perhaps re-iterate the definition of it and that actually makes the best paper because it will have most impact as lots of people read it [10]. I don't think creativity is being artistic, or a craft or a technique or oh what fun... Some people will say what a fantastic singer, look how creative they are. But actually, they are probably using creative to mean expressive. Or a painter. Oh, well, how creative they are, depending on the artist. It could be their work is super representational or look at the how you can pick the flowers off the page... you know that's about technique. That's the artists technique. It's not their creativity. That is their skill that has made those flowers come off the page. I mean, there could be other things that make them be creative. But people use the word creative to mean things that mean other things really... it's one of those words a bit like the word community, what does that mean? [11]. I think it's good for us to be working in more cross sectors to do the kind of thing that you're researching. But the language thing, sometimes it's like, oh, actually, no, we are talking about exactly the same thing. But you have to spend a while finding that out [11]. I do think as well, there's quite a lot of mystification of these professions. You know like urban design because, you know, I did a 10 week course, module. And I mean, okay, so I've got a creative background so I was able to transfer the knowledge in ways that made sense to me. But I did it and I came out of it and now I'm like, I can talk to people about</p>
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					<p>active frontages and blah, blah, like that, or I can choose to completely rewrite it and use different words, so that people know what that means and not use these kind of bits of techie language, that just mystify everything [11]. I will make sure that it is legible. And understandable to the people in the local authority, the planners, the developers, but it will also be understandable to the community. That's the task I set myself to make sure that is the case, and I don't think it's actually that difficult. I mean it's not like I'm underplaying my skill set, you know, but I think it is possible for this to be done [11]. the fundamentals of all that has been accountable and being clear, what is it you are doing? Why are you doing it? And what's the scope of people's participation or involvement or whatever because even those words can mean different things to different people. So for an activist, they might think, well, I participated therefore, I want to be really involved. Someone else says ell, I walked on up pointed to a couple of things on a map and go okay, cool and that's enough. That's my participation. So even it's, it's, I think, there's scope to look at the words we use. I don't know whether there's a solution to that [12]. we found that [within the community engagement agreement] community engagement across the council varied hugely, and we're trying to get a sort of uniformity to it. But we didn't really publish it [12]. underlying all of that is a scientific research project. So our kind of advertising line for the park makes it stand out and then makes it innovative is that it's a park that drinks water... a random thing was that this park is a park that drinks water. So it's like a big sponge. You know, we wanted to sort of simplify the language. So the [redacted], have got some like, sponges, like really rare sponges in their biology displays so there was some sort of discussion that may be they would come along and give a bit of a chat about these really weird looking sponges and then tie that in with this message about the park being this innovative park that is</p>
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					drinking water is part of a research project. And that, you know, the outcome, hopefully is that we'll be able to mitigate some of these climate change issues that we're trying to cope with so flooding, etc [13].
		Challenges	Relates to the barriers or different types of issues emerging from participation or creative approaches	1,3,5,6,8,11 12,13,14	I think that's the key to engagement. It's not just about all the lovely people and getting all that lovely wonderful engagement it's about recognising the challenges as well and the barriers [1] we can look at the role of participation throughout the centuries and it completely varies based on you know the current and social status and so on, everything cultural, interaction I mean even now you can look at what's happening with the pandemic I mean that's completely affecting public participation [3]. different sectors have different motivations for public participation [3]. [doing creative methods] it's not something that comes naturally to anybody, people are so used to being approached to fill in a survey or be interviewed for questionnaire or you know everything so data driven now, so people are assuming that data comes in number form. And is pretty binary and noughts and ones are the only way we can get information that's reliable but then I would argue that we need creative expression and creative methods to talk about fuzzy grey areas as well [3]. I think it's important to be challenging traditional forms of engagement. and I don't think it's really about trying to make

					<p>things arty or creative just for its own sake or just to make it look current [5]. so we really rely on PP and I think there are a lot of barriers to PP, like getting on the sites especially on these bigger sites where we do working, in the more rural areas of Oldham and Bolton for where it is quite difficult to get on public transport but a lot of our more urban sites (as we say), we do try to make sure that they are all accessible via some sort of public transport which is good [6]. I wouldn't have thought that we go out of way to speak to people in terms of we've got this, we'd love to be able to do this, it'll be that the council will come to us and say we've got this area and especially with council now being restricted in their funds they're always looking for different ways to [get] the community involved, that's something that we really excel at is bringing the community in and getting people involved but it is a bit of a struggle to get to all 10 district in GM [6]. we're only a small charity so there's only so much that we can do, and a lot of people were at one of our bigger events, we had to cap it at a certain amount which is fair enough because we haven't got the capacity to get hundreds and hundreds of people and we we're saying that we can add you to the waiting list, and people, they weren't getting, they were just frustrated I reckon because when you've got your mind on something that you really want to do, something good for the community, then it is really frustrating if someone tells you, you can't come or you can't do it [6 repeated]. I think this is the problem for some of the participatory stuff, is that yeah, I mean, obviously, at some point, you do have to compromise on some of this. And, you know, I think that really is one of the biggest challenges, even in the natural environment, where you've got much more scope really for it to provide multi-functions and to satisfy a whole range of different people, you still do get these conflicts, for example, you know, people talking about wanting mobility and access and other</p>
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					<p>people wanting wild and free and untamed natural environments. So, while I'm sure that those things can be accommodated, sometimes done in individual spaces and places, sometimes in local community areas, you know, I think that's one of the areas that can be kind of problematic for the creative participatory process, because you're going to end up and we like to think that people will negotiate their way through this and come to an agreed solution, but the reality is, some people they won't reach that amicable area. So, you need to think, about those sorts of circumstances and about the fact that some people have got louder voices than others and so on [8 repeated]. I suppose it goes back to the thing about policy, and what's the legal obligations [of public participation] in planning and regeneration and development at the moment it's almost zero. And so, within that field, things are so complicated, and makes it very difficult for people to penetrate the system and understand how they can get involved, let alone whether they can be creative within it [11]. So they've got to see a barrier is it's pointless the council just does what it always does, then that varies hugely. There's lots of different services in the council, some view community engagement in different ways... like highways, they're highways engineers who work in a specialist way, who do things this way and legally, they're bound to do it, and they use the word consultation, but it's not consultation, it's telling people what they're doing. But they have to legally use that word whereas for me, in , it's a very different thing. Sometimes a barrier is which part of the council is doing? And that each one has their beliefs. The sense of frustration, the judgement people make about the council historically, I mean, all the regeneration, that can be a barrier to good community engagement [12]. I'm not sure if they creative but I think the range of approaches from the focus groups to the workshops to the consultation events that you do, where you get out and do</p>
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					<p>something, we did road closure events a lot last year to buy through organised street parties, but at the same time, talk to residents about trying to look at the benefits and how they might want to work around this. So I think more and more I tried to make it participatory out in the community and talk to people at the same time. Now you can tell a lot of the stuff doesn't, it's hard for me for the work we do to be as robust, as you might say, as a research programme... So I'm not sure if that's creative, but that's trying to get a more robust evidence base to it, as well, which previous I haven't done as much... it's hard work because you I have to draw on other people to be able to do it. So I need the universities, I need others, so you're always relying on your networks and relationships to set the stuff up. And also it takes time. And sometimes, time isn't on your side, people want to see things happen. So you've got to balance the long term work with the short term wins, but also reacting like a load of rubbish has been dumped so we've got to get a cleaned up... So we react as well. We're not all planned. We react to all sorts of issues [12]. Because people some people say as a council, it can be it's too conservative with a small C, it doesn't have a history of really good community engagement. But we do have a history historically of doing some quite exciting things. What we tend to do is peak and trough. We do it really innovative stuff, and then we conservatism hits back like that... So my job now was an add on to my community engagement, so that it's evolved to a full time thing. But it's still the most underrated one of the more under-resourced the pay scales are lower in the [redacted] team in comparison across the council. And in the end, your everything gets piled on you to do [12]. there can be political influences as well you know landowners who might not want that happening there. you might have a politician who's got a greater interest in sport development over and above nature and biodiversity improvement, so there are</p>
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					<p>other stakeholders and factors that you've got to factor in, and who can be, you know, obstacles to it. So it's, yeah, it's quite important really to get can have as much support for your project as possible from all different levels that you have to, you know, with planners as well, planners need to understand [13]. general a general week is, is really, it's a mixture of the stuff that I absolutely have to kind of do and get paid for doing in terms of my contracts. But then the broader research and practice activities, as you kind of, you know, will know always takes a lot of development, a lot of relationship building a lot of padding to kind of keep it keep it fresh and keep on going. And that stuff, actually, which is take a lot of emotional labour [14]</p>	
		Disconnect	Relates to a disconnection between people and place, people and the state etc	Emic	1,2,3,7,10, 11	<p>It's challenging to align what we [org] needed with what the community needs were [1] there can be a disjoint between piloting the nature-based solutions and getting what the community wanted, and that you had to kind of blend the two. Which wasn't always easy [2]. I think we need to do more things like the People's Pop-up Park... that really got me excited because I thought this is like a mass version of a prototype. THIS is prototyping how we want to use the space you know this is, I think there is a term called 'urban prototyping', I don't know, if there isn't there should be... [I think about] how governing bodies are kind of managing public participation, I think they need to open their eyes and really look at what people are doing when they are mass demonstrating. So, there's one way of doing that, you can go down and you know wave the banner and shout and hope that the messages you're shouting are relayed. But the thing that the People's Pop-up Park did is that it prototyped with space. So surely what should be happening, and then what I don't see as connecting and I really genuinely hope your research shouts about this is a bit more is that then a few weeks later the artist interpretation pops up about the cycle route that's going to</p>

					<p>go through Stevenson's Square and those images of those designs don't even reflect really, some might argue they do but I don't think they do, they don't reflect the design features that were so apparent, and the characteristics of that people's pop-up Park when we occupied that Stevenson square there was subtle design features that any experienced designer/landscape architect/ you know urban planner should have been milling around and observing and recording and getting an idea of and then translating that into a visual that was going to represent what people want there. I kind of feel like there's a disconnect between architects and urban planners and creating master plans and visuals that they think reflect what people want and then public participation taking actual place in these places and then there's like a fiction public participation like a people's pop-up Park, where people are using space that they want to be able to use. Why are those worlds not more intertwined, why are those worlds not actually just going, oh heck you know what guys, we need to like learn from each other on this [3]. see what the park was like before they started and what it looked like after. And we did that on the Saturday morning. And by the Tuesday night when we went out to do our next park based session. It looked like it did on the Saturday morning before we started. That was pretty heartbreaking really. So when you say well, did the communities get it? I don't think they did. And again, on reflection what we said was we would never do what we did, in terms of that litter campaign in that way again. We now on reflection, the mistake we made was going into the park when it was empty and tidying the park up. Because then the perception was that the council had been in or the fairies, either way, have been in and cleaned up the park and it can be messed up again. Now, if we did that project again, we would go in at a peak time in the park and tidy up around people so they can see that it isn't the council that's making this park look better,</p>
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					<p>it's members of their own community that's doing that. and I kind of think that's the kind of way that you make a difference. People need to see things, they need to kind of see and then also what we said was part of that we would have had a leaflet or a brochure of some description, where we were could kind of publicise what we were doing and why we're doing it [7]. BEN's ethos, you know, in 1987, we said, there's no such thing as a purely environmental project, a purely environmental project is one that's neglected it's social, cultural and economic context [10]. there are a lot of people who just don't think it's necessary, so that's a barrier. And from a kind of planning perspective, planning and development perspective, government policy and, the kind of laws and policies that local authorities have to, at the moment, don't really ask for hardly any public participation. Therefore, hardly anyone is doing it. That's in England [11]. when I retrained [in urban regeneration and development] I was shocked. I was really surprised. I mean, though, in some ways I've gone to do the MSC because I felt this complete lack of agency. I was then really shocked to discover how that kind of planning system felt about talking to local people about schemes and how it really didn't want to do that [11]. So I think that there was even quite a strong kind of not only implied, but sometimes completely explicit, "Oh, well, you know, it doesn't really matter what people think" going on. So, you know, so if the training in planning, training is saying that, you know, you're in trouble really... if there's a genuine desire within the planning and planning world to have more people able to do creative participation, then certainly they need to be recruiting creative students, and there's no effort going into doing that... I think architecture and landscape architecture and design, it's different because the word design is in there. Planning is different. And I think maybe a course that is</p>
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						just pure urban design would be different again, as well. Except these things shouldn't be separated out [11].
		Confidence	Relates to people feel comfortable to express themselves or trying something new	Emic	1,5,6,9 11, 14	We also get involved in a lot of capacity building within communities as well. So that side is very much about the training of volunteers building self-confidence, it's not all about formal training, it's building their self-confidence to participate in activities that will engage the wider community [1 repeated]. in terms of the creativity side of things, they can be quite expensive, you know there are a few events where personally myself would have liked to have gone on that have happened around and there just really expensive, I know you get all the kit and the equipment and people are doing it as their livelihood then that's fair enough but I think you know if you've got the option to be able to do something really rough and ready in terms of the experiences that I do in my events, anyone can do it, you don't have to be an artist, you don't have to have specific skills or anything. I think a lot of people within some creativity events or making things, I think they feel like as if they haven't got the skills to be able to do these things so I reckon it would be lack of confidence really and again that would be in both PP and in terms of the creative side of things as well is that that has definitely got a lot to.. well not answer for but you a lot of people do suffer from lack of confidence... So I reckon that would be for me what I think would be the top barrier would be lack of confidence to get going with any of these sort of events [6]. [barriers to CPP] I think there's practical stuff like time and money and resources... so feeling like pressure to deliver something with limited resources, I think is one of the biggest contexts that makes it hard to be more creative, or more imaginative. But I think underneath that there's just a general fear and probably vulnerability actually [5]. Well a lot of people come with barriers... like me, I've had a lifetime of being scared of being laughed at or whatever, through



					poetry or anything. So that acknowledgement of most people are coming with a whole load of fears and preconceptions. You know, and things like that. So, you know, if from the start... So that actual the setting, the time things are happening, the way in which these things are being set up, has to actually be right first, before you get anywhere, you have to think about EVERYTHING and probably have a scattergun approach [9]. with the new project it is definitely go to be community lead research, you know, they'll be working with me, but the idea in terms of the sustainability angle and the legacy is that their group of people feel confident to be able to research and evidence things because I will introduce them to very simple kind of ways of talking to other people about things that that are robust, yet are quite fun, you know, with washing lines and pegging things and that participatory appraisal techniques [11]. it's fear, actually there's a fear that people have that if what they're about to do or say, or, you know, produce is going to come back on them in some way, then that really prevents people from being creative, or wanting to participate, if there's an element of fear [14].	
		Injustice	Relates to fairness in terms or access, ability, opportun	Etic/em ic	7,10,14	When we did the cleanup campaign. We found a bottle of Lambrusco in the shortgrass, bottom up which was broken. So there's literally if you can imagine the jagged edges of a bottle of Lambrusco sitting in a bit of grass between the basketball court and children's play area, just an accident waiting to happen. And we said it at the time I think I can't remember if I wrote it online, I said at the time, that could NEVER happen in a park in Didsbury... So I do think there's that thing about the attitude of the, you know, I suppose just that kind of sums it up where you've got that kind of delineation between where in some areas there's a perception that some people don't care. And there's a perception of people who do care. Whereas I do think people do care in place like Crowcroft Park... I say it

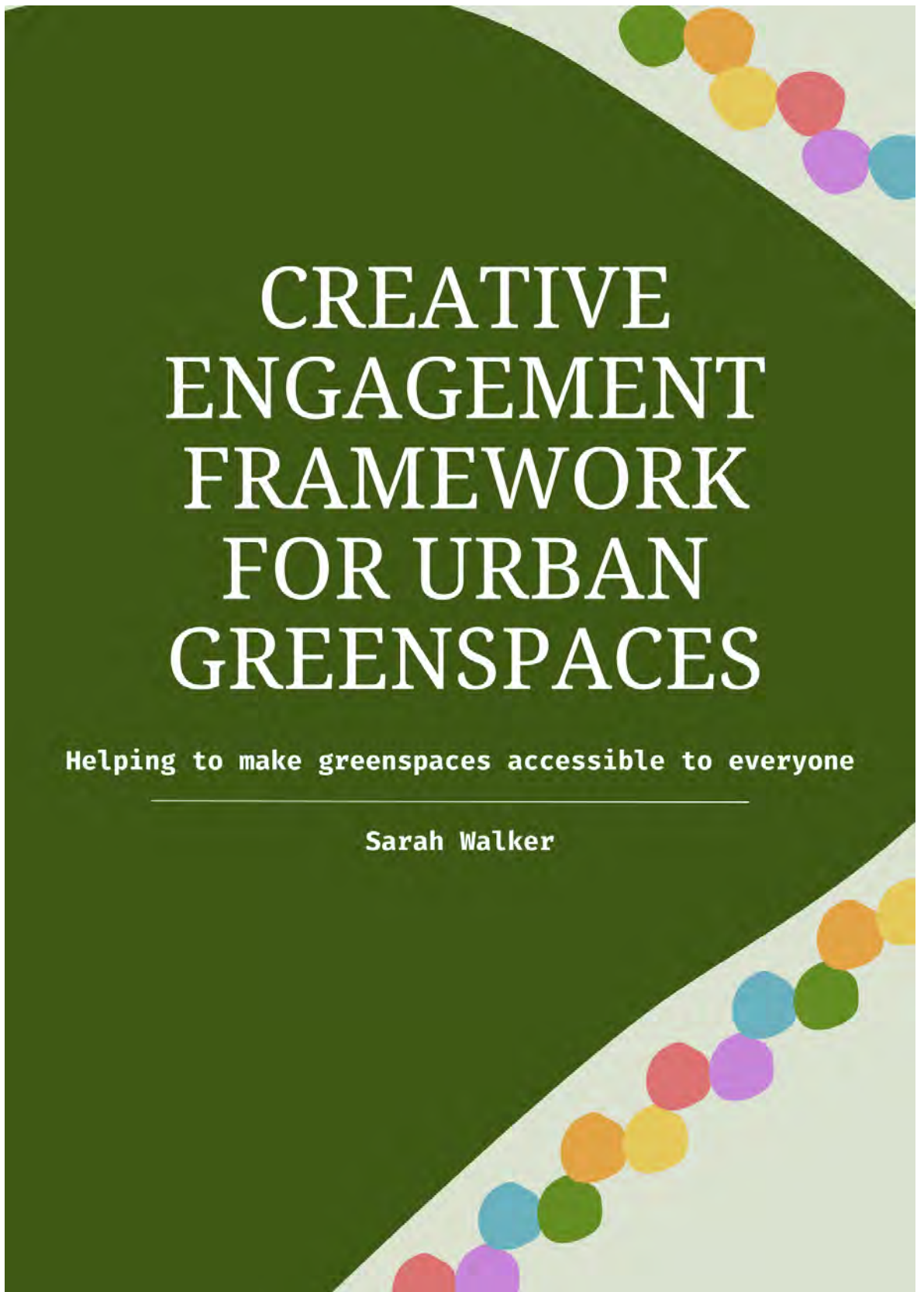
			ities and power			was in the long grass, the grass hadn't been cut for three or four weeks leading up to that. And when I asked them on the Monday morning when they came to cut it, why they hadn't been there and they said quote-unquote "well we're looking at turning park X into a green flag park, so we've put all our resources into there which is just wrong! [7]. if people have never seen nature, why would they work for it? You know, for example, I used to say to the environmental organisation staff, you know, should I assume that you're already volunteering on council estates? They'd say, why would we do that? I said, you wouldn't, because you don't know what the people you don't know the council estate. Why would you suddenly turn up volunteering, you don't know the issues or anything it's not part of your life? So if nature's not part of their life, why do they think that the first thing I want to do is volunteer for nature? [10]. with disadvantaged groups, they are in the worst environments with the least green space, so that's a real issue. You say you want people to access greenery and so on but they have to have the space and access it. Unless you begin to transform places like streets, at the moment, because of the virus they are thinking of shutting down streets in order to, to increase cycling and walking. So now that's a big opportunity for the shutdown streets can be transformed... people assume that they need to park their car in front of their houses and all this stuff. But it could be re-designed in such a way that certain number of streets got shut down. They turned into a space where you relate to green not entirely green space, but the way you configured it can give you a sense of connect to nature. That's one possibility. Because at the moment, the best green spaces are where all the rich people are [10 R]. there are other issues in terms of when we think about barriers and green spaces, you know, we're looking at things like, you know, public space and participation in public space. And yeah, then when you start thinking about issues
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					<p>of safety, then that might have a gendered perspective. It might have a racialised perspective in terms of participation, which again, is kind of come to the fore again in conversations around Black Lives Matter. You know, people's actual fear, or lack of agency in public space because of other factors, you know, other kind of structural racist factors. So, um, yeah, so that's there are lots of things actually, that have to be considered, I think, with any case study that you sort of want to get under the skin of [14]. in terms of [visibly] what can sort of stop creativity, I guess people's exhaustion, you know, exhaustion from the effects of inequality, you know, I guess, is the thing that eventually gets to people. And that's the thing that is really sad, actually, when you kind of sit or you follow certain activist campaigns, like with the Knutsford Vale group, you know, they were groups of 60+ people, all of whom have some kind of physical or mental health issue with them, we're trying to defend their green space as volunteers. And the people who are against them, essentially, the council and developers, were just trying to grind them down with false information, false detours and all the rest of it. And so this, you know, volunteer group had to find unbelievable resilience to combat that, and eventually they won, right. But by the time they get to that stage, they're exhausted, so. So you've either got to be so resilient, and so determined that you are going to participate, you are going to be creative in getting that thing done. But you have to draw on levels that are just, you know, abusive, really, I mean, it is abuse. It's kind of put people through that, like that. Just pushing them to the very edge hoping they're just going to give up. it's really horrible to watch. And because the people that are in power are all in paid positions, so they don't care, they can keep throwing stuff the other way doesn't affect them [14].</p>
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		Achievable / Maintainable	Relates to how process/projects/goals can/cannot be maintained		14	<p>I mean, maintenance is a really important element because you can be as aspirational as you want with a landscape design. But you have to bear in mind it's you can maintain it. So you know, there's no point, putting it in a beautiful boating Lake, if actually that's going to sort of silt up and look like a swamp in a few years time. You got to think about the practicalities of it [13]. when you're doing sort of participatory practice, is that you find yourself building a whole bank of people that you can continue to have relationships with. And so you have to manage your own levels of emotional labour in all of that, as well seems to be a barrier, as well, for you as a practitioner wanting to continue to do good work, because if you feel like you're burnt out, then and if you just drop the ball and go, forget it now, I'm not I'm not doing anything more, actually, that's really damaging as well. Because actually, you might be doing really good work, but you're just kind of at that point going on, can't do it anymore. You know, it's too tight [14].</p>
		Communication	Relates to a lack of communication between sectors, people, orgs, institutions		3,6,10,11,12,13	<p>I heard an architect say, it's not my job... I'm an architect I don't want to have to engage with people, I'm paraphrasing, I can't remember his direct statement, but he was like I don't want to deal with the people... it's something that desperately needs questioning you know a lot of people would also argue, and this argument has been going on forever, that you can't really design a building without knowing or understanding the participation of the people [3]. we do try and be in all the districts, there are some districts in GM that we probably don't do as much work in but again it does in a way it does depend on the land and we have to try and find landowners. so if the landowners themselves don't communicate or cooperate or anything then there's nothing much that we can really do so I guess we do have little hotspots where we do a lot of work [6 repeated]. so you get into the habit of thinking, you know, maybe if we wanted to do something, it</p>

					<p>is a sense, not just a potential but of allowance. Things that people actually do not do in the past because they have a whole list in their minds and all the signs they ever see says. Do not do this. Don't walk on the grass, don't play ball, don't do this or whatever. Maybe if you do this, you're not allowed. So this sense of being allowed to do things you were at least asked, you know, can we do this? So the space begin to creatively open now because there's a flow of communication between either staff or managers on parks and guards. And then the park itself can have the attitude that there is always a space or reimagining, even temporary things [10]. So this, this knowledge that this profession holds, and urban design is part of planning. So it's like the profession holds this knowledge. But communities don't know about it... So by working across sector things get kind of revealed [11]. I'd say probably that the biggest motivation and expense around this is people can see a tangible benefit of what they do, if you work to put in plants to green things, you can see the benefit. It can be fun, especially in the summertime, and you can have a sense of community around it. And that could be a small green space or a bigger green space. The demotivational factors, and maybe say you have something like there's a lot of litter in it or something damages or something happens. Or say someone stops doing something and it becomes overgrown, and it loses that sort of sustainability. So for example, in March this year, we did a community planting event with the university residents and others people in ■■■ we planted a 100 metre long hedge, bulbs and everything. And a few weeks ago grounds maintenance came down and mowed down the hedge. So that's the demotivation when an organisation messes up [12]. I think communication, like I said, at the beginning really is important to design these spaces, kind of from the ground up, don't go kind of marching as a designer, with this attitude that it should be done this way. This is the only way.</p>
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						<p>You should be open to sort of people's suggestions and ideas [13]. Could that be something where people are bit locked into try something that's new? So for example, we had a bit of, yeah, we had to have some debate with our highways department in terms of their acceptance to allow us to take water off the highway, because it's just not standard way of doing it... it's the fear of the unknown [13].</p>
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# CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR URBAN GREENSPACES

Helping to make greenspaces accessible to everyone

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Sarah Walker



Creative Engagement Framework for Urban Greenspaces  
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## Contents

Step 1	Self-assessment of engagement quality - Working out how well you engage	...4
Step 2	Identify areas to improve engagement	...10
Step 3	Look at recommendations and ideas	...12
Step 4	Planning activities	...23
Step 5	Reflect on activity success	...24
Step 6	Develop engagement plans further	...25
Step 7	Achieve collective decision-making	...26

# ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR URBAN GREENSPACES

This engagement framework can help your group or organisation\* to assess how well you are engaging with the public on green projects. **It offers key steps to help you to improve the quality of engagement with the communities you work with so you can do more environmental action together.**

"Environmental action" is defined as an individual or groups interacting and taking care on their local environment, e.g. a park or greenspace.

By using this framework, you can:

- **Assess** how effectively you are engaging with the community.
- **Identify** areas for improvement.
- **Plan** to involve more people.
- **Evaluate** the success of your efforts.

Here's how it works:



This framework focuses on five main areas that are crucial for keeping people involved in meaningful environmental actions:

**Motivation:** Understand what drives people to get involved.

**Access:** Recognise how to make it easier for people to participate.

**Support:** Identify the help or resources people need to stay involved.

**Communication:** Figure out what kind of communication works best.

**Openness:** Discover the benefits of being transparent and welcoming.

Please answer the questions honestly. Based on your answers, recommendations will be offered to help you better connect with the community.

\* 'Organisation' is used as a collective term that includes members of voluntary groups, charities, social enterprises, not-for-profits, environmental organisations and institutions.



# Motivation

These statements focus on understanding the people you typically engage with and the reasoning behind their environmental action.

Mark on the scale how you agree or disagree with the following statements. The numbers are to help add up your score at the end, the agreement scale flows left (strongly disagree) to right (strongly agree).

You understand how to attract engagement from multiple audiences e.g. young people, volunteers, residents groups.

1    2    3    4    5    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You typically do not think about potential motivational factors of your project before engaging e.g. what would interest people.

5    4    3    2    1    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You struggle to recall the reason why participants want to engage or get involved.

5    4    3    2    1    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You have a clear understanding of the benefits of your work on those who engage.

1    2    3    4    5    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You do not research the area or types of people/groups in an area before engaging with people, e.g. look for community groups.

5    4    3    2    1    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You run a variety of activities to capture people's attention and interest.

1    2    3    4    5    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You have a limited understanding of the reasons behind people's involvement with your projects.

5    4    3    2    1    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You aim to identify the motivations for engagement through activities to get to know each other e.g. through questions or games.

1    2    3    4    5    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You often do not understand the context and area you work within before engaging.

5    4    3    2    1    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You uncover the strengths and challenges of individuals when beginning a project.

1    2    3    4    5    N/A  
 << strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

5

Add numbers above to give you a score out of 50.

Score:

# Access

These statements focus on considering accessibility and how it can effect engagement in environmental action.

Mark on the scale how you agree or disagree with the following statements  
The numbers are to help add up your score at the end, the agreement scale flows left (strongly disagree) to right (strongly agree).

You have a limited understanding of the challenges people may face to engage or get involved.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You consider and manage access to the sites you work within e.g. ensure pathways are clear.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You typically do not provide information about exact transportation links to engagement events.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You make an effort to provide transportation options to engagement events or sites.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You offer a limited amount of opportunities or activities for individuals to engage.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You effectively use multi-media messaging to reach and engage participants e.g. printed flyers and social media.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You are unsure about how aspects of equal access impact the participation of people.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You specifically target community leaders within the community you are focusing on e.g. community group leaders, council officers.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You struggle to identify and connect with people within the community you are focusing on.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You make it a priority to meet with key leaders before reaching out to others in the community.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

6

Add numbers above to give you a score out of 50.

Score:



# Support

These statements focus on how support is managed and given to those taking environmental action.

Mark on the scale how you agree or disagree with the following statements  
The numbers are to help add up your score at the end, the agreement scale flows left (strongly disagree) to right (strongly agree).

Your structure of support given to people taking environmental action needs further development.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

When beginning a project, roles are clearly designated to ensure it runs smooth and is completed.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

Key responsibilities are often not clearly defined and agreed upon by all involved in running engagement activities.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

It is clear and understood who is responsible for each task or role within a project.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You do not share roles and responsibilities across all involved with engagement.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You ensure that tasks, actions and progress are documented clearly and appropriately.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You struggle to organise and maintain a level of support throughout the engagement process e.g. with the council, volunteers.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You easily organise and maintain support for individuals and groups throughout the engagement process.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You do not share or outline the amount of time you have available to dedicate to a project with participants e.g. managing expectations.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You set clear expectations with your participants regarding yours and their roles and responsibilities.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

7 Add numbers above to give you a score out of 50.

Score:

# Communication

These statements focus on how communication can help projects runs smoothly and sustain environmental action.

Mark on the scale how you agree or disagree with the following statements  
The numbers are to help add up your score at the end, the agreement scale flows left (strongly disagree) to right (strongly agree).

You typically do not have time to fully understand localised knowledge (including colloquialisms, area-specific details, and audience preferences).

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You make sure that everyone involved in the project understands the words and concepts being used.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You do not determine the most appropriate phrases and terms when communicating with people involved in the project.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

Phrases and terms are clearly defined and agreed upon to ensure full understanding.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You struggle to actively ensure everyone understands the plans and decisions made in a project.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You ensure that information is shared clearly and regularly to provide guidance and clarity e.g. social media updates, newsletters.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You do not proactively share key contacts to facilitate communication and engagement between different individuals/groups.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You clearly outline the agenda and process of a project to ensure transparency and understanding.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You typically do not gain an understanding of other people's agenda and motivations for engagement.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You carefully select the most effective communication channels to enable transparency and open dialogue.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

8

Add numbers above to give you a score out of 50.

Score:



# Openness

These statements focus on how being open can effect a project's outcome and help sustain engagement.

Mark on the scale how you agree or disagree with the following statements  
The numbers are to help add up your score at the end, the agreement scale flows left (strongly disagree) to right (strongly agree).

You allow for extra time within the planning phase to allow for flexibility and collaboration within the project with people.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You are often not able to remain open to suggestions and feedback from stakeholders.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You find it challenging to ensure that participants have a meaningful say and influence in the process of the project.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You provide opportunities to collectively develop ideas with people e.g. creating a collaborative approach.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You allow for time to reflect and make amendments according to the unfolding needs and aspirations of people involved.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

Flexibility is not intentionally planned or unused within the timescale of the project.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

There are dedicated opportunities for reflection throughout the entire project duration.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

You struggle to include new ideas and approaches during a project.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

Ideas are actively explored and effectively managed throughout the project.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

Your approach often does not include reflection or feedback e.g. individual experience is rarely included.

5 4 3 2 1 N/A  
<< strongly disagree || strongly agree>>

9 Add numbers above to give you a score out of 50.

Score:

# IDENTIFYING AREAS TO IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT



After you've answered the questions and totalled your scores, move on to **Step 2**. On the chart below, mark your or your team's score. You can add the number, shade the box or just put a tick where your score fits.

This section helps you understand how you or your team is doing in different areas of engagement: **Motivation, Access, Support, Communication, and Openness (MASCO)**. More detail about the scoring can be found on the next page.

		Quality of Engagement				
Engagement elements	Basic	Moderate	Substantial	Significant	Valuable	Extensive
	24 or below	25-28	29-33	34-37	38-41	42+
Motivation						
Access						
Support						
Communication						
Openness						

**Once you fill out the table, it will help you to identify areas where you can improve engagement.**

For example, your team might be really good at **motivating** and **communicating** with groups, but there could be **support** and **accessibility** issues to ensure everyone feels involved. You can then look at the support and access recommendations in Step 3. By spotting these areas, you have clear evidence of where you can improve.

After you're done with the table, **turn to the next page**. There, you'll find tips on how to improve engagement to help you plan your projects better.

**Please note:** the recommendations of **Step 3** are organised according to the MASCO themes for you to gather ideas to improve the quality of engagement. Your scores are not needed to complete Step 3 however, they will help you identify which MASCO area to focus on.



# IDENTIFYING AREAS TO IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT



The scoring helps to identify areas for improving engagement. The spectrum of engagement levels are shown below, ranging from Basic to Extensive. These show a breakdown of what each score bracket means in terms of quality of engagement and potential areas for improvement.

Quality of Engagement	
Basic [24 or below]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What it means:</b> Not much interaction happening.</li> <li>• <b>How to improve:</b> Try new ways to get people involved, like changing content or asking for feedback.</li> </ul>
Moderate [25-28]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What it means:</b> Some interaction is taking place.</li> <li>• <b>How to improve:</b> Get people more involved with the process and start discussions about what they would like to do.</li> </ul>
Substantial [29-33]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What it means:</b> Quite a bit of interaction going on.</li> <li>• <b>How to improve:</b> Find ways to keep this going strong. Tailor content to what people like or create activities that get them talking more.</li> </ul>
Significant [34-37]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What it means:</b> People are really interested and involved.</li> <li>• <b>How to improve:</b> Keep them engaged by getting them to create content and share with others.</li> </ul>
Valuable [38-41]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What it means:</b> People are very engaged.</li> <li>• <b>How to improve:</b> Try new creative ideas to make it even better. Personalise interactions or make special campaigns to keep them interested.</li> </ul>
Extensive [42+]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What it means:</b> People are fully involved and connected.</li> <li>• <b>How to improve:</b> This is impressive engagement! You'll need to keep things exciting. Ensure you are having regular conversations to decide what activities to continue doing.</li> </ul>

Remember engagement is context specific and may vary across different projects or activities. For example, social media activities will be planned differently over in-person events. Regular reflection of your engagement is important. Getting feedback from the people you are engaging with can help to improve engagement quality and bring your scores up.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

The recommendations presented here are to be viewed as inspiration to guide your group's or organisation's engagement process. Many of the recommendations should be considered in the first stages of a project to ensure maximum benefit. However, they may also be useful during a project when more engagement is needed.

This begins **Step 3** of the framework process shown below:



The recommendations follow the same five key areas of community engagement that help to sustain meaningful environmental action:

**Motivation:** Understand what drives people to get involved.

**Access:** Recognise how to make it easier for people to participate.

**Support:** Identify the help or resources people need to stay involved.

**Communication:** Figure out what kind of communication works best.

**Openness:** Discover the benefits of being transparent and welcoming.

**Steps 1 and 2** have helped to identify areas where engagement can be improved. The following recommendations in **Step 3** will give you an overview for how to improve engagement tailored to your key areas of focus.



# MOTIVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations to boost engagement

Getting to know what motivates and drives people is key when you're looking to keep a project going strong. Once you've got the support you need, it's all about understanding what keeps people coming back. Learning about your audience helps you make smart choices and reach out to the community effectively.

## Let's get creative!

When you're bringing in new people, it's good to think about what gets them interested. Often, folks have similar reasons for joining in, and figuring this out can help you get more people on board. Try out role-playing to see things from their perspective, and use prototyping to get a real feel for what people want in their urban greenspaces. These hands-on approaches help you really get why people care and what they're looking for.

**Activities to increase motivational engagement** – more information about each of these activities can be found on the next page:

1. **Networking and Collaboration Events:** Connect with others who care.
2. **Volunteer Recognition:** Say thanks to those who give their time.
3. **Interactive Workshops:** Find out what people care about.
4. **Prototyping and Role Play:** Test ideas for greenspaces in a fun way.
5. **Storytelling Campaigns:** Share stories of impact and change.
6. **Community Garden Building Days:** Create something green together.
7. **Empowerment Workshops:** Learn how to make a difference.
8. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Spread the word about what matters.
9. **Impact Assessment and Feedback:** See what's working and what is not.
10. **Partnership Building:** Team up to tackle bigger changes.
11. **Community Engagement Events:** Get locals involved in decisions.

**Motivation** goes hand in hand with feeling like you're part of something bigger and making a difference. By creating chances for people to get involved and showing that every bit of help counts, you're building a community that's ready and excited to take action for the environment.

**Flip over for more on each activity...**

# MOTIVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Networking & Collaboration Events:** Organise events and workshops that bring people together who are keen on making a difference in the environment. These events are a great place for sharing what's worked, what hasn't, and celebrating the wins. They're all about making connections and building a community of people who support each other.
2. **Volunteer Recognition:** Create a way to show your appreciation for the volunteers. Publicly recognising their contributions and presenting awards or certificates can boost their motivation and sense of accomplishment.
3. **Interactive Workshops:** Conduct workshops and sessions enabling participants to explore their personal environmental interests and passions. This process helps individuals uncover their intrinsic motivations and align their actions with their values and interests.
4. **Prototyping & Role Play Exercises:** Engage people with hands-on activities to imagine and design new projects for urban green spaces. Encourage a mix of ideas to spark creativity and fresh thinking in shaping our environment.
5. **Storytelling Campaigns:** Use the power of storytelling to show the difference environmental action can make. Share stories about what people or groups have done and the positive changes that have come from it. It's about showing what's possible and getting others inspired to join in.
6. **Community Garden Building Days:** Coordinate community garden building events, providing individuals with opportunities to actively contribute to the creation of greenspaces. It's hands-on work that helps people feel connected to the project and to each other, creating a shared sense of ownership and teamwork.
7. **Empowerment Workshops:** Offer workshops focused on developing leadership skills, effective communication, and advocacy. Equipping individuals and groups with these essential skills boosts their confidence to take environmental action.
8. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Organise campaigns to educate the wider community about environmental issues and the significance of actions. Raising awareness garners public support and motivates more people to engage in environmental initiatives.
9. **Impact Assessment & Feedback:** Regularly assess the impact of environmental projects and gather feedback from participants. Demonstrating outcomes and incorporating feedback reinforces motivation and provides valuable insights for future projects.
10. **Partnership Building:** Encourage different groups and organisations to team up with environmental activists. Strong partnerships mean more resources and better support, which can help make environmental actions last.
11. **Community Engagement Events:** Host events in local parks or greenspaces to involve residents in decision-making processes and solicit their ideas and opinions. Empowering people to shape their local environment increases their motivation to take action.

These recommendations are a starting point to improve **motivation** in environmental action – find what feels right for you!



# ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Framework  
process

Step 3

## Recommendations to increase engagement

Access is a very important consideration when approaching people or hosting activities or events. By incorporating factors associated with access (e.g. making sure there are public transport links, clear pathways and access to information about the activities etc.), you can begin to understand different people or communities. Access can be considered within multiple contexts - initially accessing people, understanding the barriers and challenges of physical and psychological access and then seeking to improve access for all.

## Let's get creative!

Finding fun ways to get people into green spaces can really draw a crowd. Take the People's Pop-Up Park in Stevenson's Square, for instance. It wasn't a park to begin with, but by setting it up to feel like one, it gave everyone a taste of what could be. Making spaces welcoming and interesting through events or activities can really pull people in. And remember, even if you can't always do something out-of-the-ordinary, a little bit of creativity can go a long way, even in things like making flyers or planning your event.

**Activities to increase accessible engagement** - more information about each of these activities can be found on the next page:

1. **Community Outreach Events:** Raise awareness to unite communities.
2. **Greenspace Information Hubs:** Connect people with local greenspaces.
3. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Join forces for environmental progress.
4. **Greenspace Exploration Workshops:** Discover and learn in nature.
5. **Capacity Building Programmes:** Equip for environmental action.
6. **Virtual Engagement Platforms:** Engage from anywhere, anytime.
7. **Stakeholder Engagement Forums:** Discuss, decide, and develop together.
8. **Community Art Projects:** Express and inspire through art.
9. **Accessible Greenspace Design Advocacy:** Ensure spaces for all.
10. **Citizen Science Involvement:** Contribute to local research.
11. **Recognition and Appreciation:** Celebrate community contributions.

By using some of these activities, you can work towards breaking down the barriers to greenspace access and promote engagement among different communities. Creating inclusive and accessible greenspaces will not only enhance peoples connection to nature but also increase their motivation for environmental action, helping protect greenspaces.

**Flip over for more on each activity...**

# ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS



1. **Community Outreach Events:** Arrange resource fairs in local areas to tell people about parks, how to help the environment, and where to find help and money for projects. This involves cultural events and celebrations in greenspaces to attract diverse audiences and showcase inclusive and accessible public spaces.
2. **Greenpace Information Hubs:** Establish accessible information centres as hubs for connecting people with nearby greenspaces, activities, and engagement opportunities. These hubs also provide information on support networks, including pop-up parks that can travel to different communities with limited greenspace.
3. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Build partnerships with community organisations, local businesses, and institutions to expand the reach of environmental initiatives. This involves pooling resources and networks, including collaborations with educational institutions to engage students in environmental topics and greenspace stewardship, creating a lasting impact on environmental awareness.
4. **Greenpace Exploration Workshops:** Conduct guided tours, workshops, and hands-on experiences in greenspaces to offer educational opportunities on topics such as sustainability, biodiversity, and conservation. This fosters a deeper connection and appreciation for nature.
5. **Capacity Building Programmes:** Provide training and capacity-building programmes for community groups and individuals interested in environmental projects. Empower them with knowledge, skills, and guidance on available grants and funding opportunities, increasing access to financial support.
6. **Virtual Engagement Platforms:** Develop inclusive online platforms, virtual events, and webinars to engage individuals facing barriers in accessing physical greenspaces due to physical or psychological reasons.
7. **Stakeholder Engagement Forums:** Organise forums or town hall meetings to facilitate interaction between community members and decision-makers overseeing greenspaces, promoting collaboration in shaping policies and initiatives.
8. **Community Art and Storytelling:** Use arts and culture to involve diverse communities in environmental action through events like art exhibitions, performances, and storytelling sessions. These projects create a sense of collective identity and ownership over greenspaces.
9. **Accessible Greenspace Design Advocacy:** Advocate for greenspace designs that prioritise inclusivity and accessibility, including features like wheelchair-accessible facilities, sensory gardens, and inclusive play areas.
10. **Citizen Science Involvement:** Engage the community in citizen science projects, empowering individuals to actively participate in data collection, research, and monitoring of greenspaces for environmental conservation efforts.
11. **Recognition and Appreciation:** Acknowledge and celebrate community efforts engaged in environmental action. Establishing local ambassador programmes in communities lacking greenspace access can help to connect residents with relevant support from environmental organisations.

These recommendations are a starting point to improve **access** in environmental action - find what feels right for you!



# SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations to increase engagement

An well organised support system is the foundation for collective action. It is important for people running projects or activities to manage expectations of all those involved and use active listening skills to ensure participation is taking onboard people's thoughts and ideas (e.g. making notes, drawing). Support for those involved in a project should be thought through and organised before starting a project.

## Let's get creative !

Creativity can be applied when approaching the various support needs of different people, groups, communities. For example, what might work to attract certain types of people may not for others, therefore multiple creative approaches can be used. A series of tools or approaches can be used to ensure you are can develop more meaningful relationships that are mutually beneficial. E.g. collectively mapping networks of community groups and contacts. Bringing in creative approaches can help people express themselves open and honestly whilst allowing people to understand decision making processes. A good support system helps people to feel a sense of belonging and unity with their local community.

**Activities to increase supportive engagement** - more information about each of these activities can be found on the next page:

1. **Support Networking Events:** Connect communities and stakeholders.
2. **Capacity Building Workshops:** Enhance skills and community ownership.
3. **Financial Resource Clinics:** Simplify the grant application process.
4. **Support Mentoring Programmes:** Link environmental newcomers with mentors.
5. **Community Engagement Ambassadors:** Pair locals with decision-makers.
6. **Decision-making Forums:** Create spaces to discuss greenspace governance.
7. **Support Awareness Campaigns:** Launch community support initiatives.
8. **Recognition Initiatives:** Celebrate contributions and refine projects.
9. **Project Incubators:** Guide and support community-led initiatives.
10. **Creative Engagement Approaches:** Create support-focused activities.
11. **Support Assessment:** Improve support strategies through feedback.

By focusing on enhancing **support** networks and addressing the specific support needs of individuals and groups, these activities can foster a more sustainable and inclusive approach to environmental engagement in greenspaces.

**Flip over for more on each activity...**

# SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Support Networking Events:** Organise inclusive events uniting community members and stakeholders to foster relationships and identify mutual support opportunities. Arrange meet-and-greet sessions to facilitate interactions, idea exchange, and connection building. Host discussions to collaboratively identify shared goals and potential collaborations among stakeholders.
2. **Capacity Building Workshops:** Provide training to empower individuals/groups with essential skills and knowledge for effective environmental action. Offer tailored training sessions and hands-on workshops for direct engagement in environmental projects to enhance participants' expertise, fostering a sense of ownership and accomplishment.
3. **Financial Resource Clinics:** Host informative clinics about available funding opportunities and offering guidance on navigating the application process. Conduct sessions on grants, funding sources and resources for environmental initiatives. Offer personalised support for grant applications and funding proposals, ensuring access to vital financial support.
4. **Support Mentoring Programmes:** Establish mentoring initiatives that pair experienced environmental activists with newcomers, offering continuous support and guidance throughout their involvement journey.
5. **Community Engagement Ambassadors:** Recruit and train engagement ambassadors from the community to act as liaisons between decision-makers and residents. Pair experienced activists with newcomers for regular mentorship sessions, sharing insights and advice. Foster peer mentorship within community groups, enabling members to support and learn from each other.
6. **Decision-making Forums:** Organise frequent meetings or forums to promote transparency and inclusivity in greenspace decision-making. Enable direct interactions between community members and decision-makers. Provide training on decision-making processes and governance structures to encourage active participation.
7. **Support Awareness Campaigns:** Initiate campaigns to raise awareness about the vital role of support in sustaining environmental action. Collaborate with communities to develop and launch creative awareness initiatives, such as community murals, or social media challenges. Host workshops to underscore the significance of community backing in maintaining environmental efforts.
8. **Recognition Initiatives:** Implement programmes to publicly acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of individuals/groups in environmental action, fostering a culture of support. Organise collaborative ideation sessions to refine project concepts.
9. **Project Incubators:** Establish spaces or platforms for community members to present and receive expert guidance on their environmental project ideas. Facilitate project incubators for idea development, offering mentorship and support.
10. **Creative Engagement Approaches:** Use innovative strategies to engage diverse communities, considering their support needs. Organise community art projects and storytelling workshops to creatively express connections to greenspaces and environmental action. Host themed events like upcycling competitions to engage varied audiences in environmental topics.
11. **Support Assessment:** Regularly assess support needs and effectiveness, using participant feedback to enhance support mechanisms for better engagement outcomes. Conduct feedback surveys or focus groups to gather input on mechanism effectiveness. Develop action plans based on feedback to address specific support needs and enrich engagement experiences.

These recommendations are a starting point to improve **support** in environmental action - find what feels right for you!



# COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations to increase engagement

Being able to clearly communicate change or action is dependent on knowing how people want to be supported or collaborated with. Therefore, setting up communication channels and roles is important when beginning any form of engagement. By collaborating and opening up this communication channel, you are able to engage with people in a manner that suits them. Thoughtful communication channels need to serve the majority of people, this means multiple ways of communicating is needed. Offering multiple means of communication is important to ensure everyone has access.

### Let's get creative!

Communication can be made more effective if creativity is used to attract people's attention. Trying different communication methods can be worthwhile to understand what works best for those involved. Learning how people want to communicate through creative means will help to develop relationships and understand the communities surrounding an urban greenspace. For example, when you begin a project, you can designate roles to a group you are working with.

**Activities to increase communicative engagement** - more information about each of these activities can be found on the next page:

1. **Community Communication Workshops:** Host active listening sessions.
2. **Digital Inclusion Initiatives:** Boost digital skills for engagement.
3. **Transparent Decision-Making Processes:** Discuss decisions openly.
4. **Community Networking Events:** Connect locals and community leaders.
5. **Capacity Building for Facilitators:** Support facilitators with training.
6. **Creative Communication Approaches:** Share news through art and stories.
7. **Inclusive Decision-Making Processes:** Include diverse voices in choices.
8. **Regular Communication Updates:** Keep communities informed.
9. **Collaboration Facilitation:** Facilitate collaboration workshops.
10. **Clear Communication Roles:** Assign clearly defined roles.
11. **Community-Led Engagement:** Support community voices in greenspaces.

By using some of these activities, your group or organisation can achieve more effective **communication**, enhance community engagement, and create more inclusive and collaborative environments for greenspace projects.

# COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Framework  
process

Step 3

1. **Community Communication Workshops:** Host workshops or training sessions to improve communication skills for community members and organisations involved in greenspace projects. Offer sessions on effective communication methods, active listening, and building inclusive communication channels.
2. **Digital Inclusion Initiatives:** Develop initiatives to improve digital literacy and access to online communication tools for those with limited computer access. Provide training on using digital platforms for engagement, making sure to reach out to diverse communities.
3. **Transparent Decision-Making Processes:** Organise transparency sessions where decisions related to greenspace projects are openly discussed with the community. Implement feedback mechanisms to ensure that decisions are informed by the input of interested parties.
4. **Community Networking Events:** Arrange networking events to bring together community members, organisations, and decision-makers to foster communication and collaboration. Encourage informal interactions to build relationships and facilitate open dialogue.
5. **Capacity Building for Facilitators:** Provide training and support for individuals interested in becoming facilitators for public participation initiatives. Equip facilitators with the skills to effectively communicate and engage with diverse communities.
6. **Creative Communication Approaches:** Use creative methods such as community exhibitions, storytelling events, or community murals to communicate greenspace changes and initiatives. Experiment with different communication channels to understand what works best for different community members.
7. **Inclusive Decision-Making Processes:** Engage with stakeholders through focus groups or surveys to gather input and feedback on greenspace decisions. Encourage the inclusion of diverse voices to ensure decision-making reflects the needs and desires of all stakeholders.
8. **Regular Communication Updates:** Establish consistent communication channels, such as newsletters or social media platforms, to provide updates on greenspace projects and initiatives. Ensure that information is shared in a timely and accessible manner.
9. **Collaboration Facilitation:** Facilitate collaboration workshops between community members and local authorities to promote better communication and understanding. Encourage both parties to actively listen and consider each other's perspectives.
10. **Clear Communication Roles:** Clearly define communication roles within organisations and projects to ensure that information dissemination is efficient and effective. Assign communication responsibilities to specific individuals or teams to avoid confusion and delays.
11. **Community-Led Engagement:** Empower community members to take an active role in engagement by providing them with the resources and support needed to communicate their ideas and concerns. Recognise and celebrate instances of effective communication and community-led initiatives.

These recommendations are a starting point to improve **communication** in environmental action – find what feels right for you!



# OPENNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations to increase engagement

Openness is seen here as an outlook or frame of mind that can be useful to ensure projects develop and run smoothly and more genuinely. Openness needs to be considered at every stage of a project. Having clear guidelines or approaches to be open and adapt to change is important. Getting all involved in a project to reach a consensus is not always worthwhile within public engagement. Understanding different issues and strengths can be much more useful, therefore being able to adapt to people's inputs can help to collectively work towards engaging with urban greenspaces more meaningfully.

## Let's be creative

Being open is creative. How you choose to respond to different scenarios and change are innately creative as it ensures the outcome is met and things keep developing. Openness can be used at any stage of a project however, an awareness of flexibility and openness when beginning projects is vital to the engagement process. For example, using co-design in a project can help to engage with more people and gives them a say in the type of engagement or activities they want to do.

**Activities to increase open engagement** - more information about each of these activities can be found on the next page:

1. **Flexibility Workshops:** Promote adaptability for greenspace issues.
2. **Collaborative Idea-athon:** Generate ideas with communities.
3. **Experimentation Days:** Trial new engagement tactics in greenspaces.
4. **Open Consultation Processes:** Shape projects with local input.
5. **Openness in Decision-Making:** Value diverse ideas for greenspaces.
6. **Learning & Development Sessions:** Boost greenspace stewardship skills.
7. **Openness in Funding Applications:** Be adaptable in funding efforts.
8. **Openness to Collaboration:** Promote joint efforts for greenspace care.
9. **Recognise and Reward Openness:** Celebrate wins from flexible thinking.
10. **Adaptability Training for Leaders:** Train leaders in change readiness.
11. **Reflective Feedback Sessions:** Use feedback to refine engagement.

By using some of these activities, you and your organisation can promote **openness** and creative approaches to improve engagement, allowing for innovative and effective greenspace projects that take onboard the needs and interests of the community.

# OPENNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Flexibility Workshops:** Organise workshops or training sessions to promote flexibility and adaptability among stakeholders involved in greenspace projects. Encourage participants to explore alternative approaches and problem-solving methods to overcome time and resource constraints.
2. **Collaborative Idea-athon:** Create platforms or forums for community members to generate ideas for engagement in greenspaces. Emphasise the value of open dialogue and encourage participants to build on each other's ideas to foster creativity and openness.
3. **Experimentation Days:** Host experimentation days where participants can try out new engagement methods and activities in a safe and supportive environment. Encourage participants to think outside the box and explore unconventional approaches to greenspace engagement.
4. **Open Consultation Processes:** Implement flexible and open consultation periods for greenspace projects, allowing for local knowledge and insights to influence interventions. Prioritise meaningful engagement over predetermined outcomes or targets.
5. **Openness in Decision-Making:** Promote openness in decision-making processes by considering multiple perspectives and ideas before finalising project plans. Encourage stakeholders to remain open to feedback and suggestions throughout the project lifecycle.
6. **Learning & Development Sessions:** Offer learning and development sessions for organisations and individuals involved in greenspace projects to enhance their skills and knowledge. Emphasise the value of continuous learning and openness to new strategies and approaches.
7. **Openness in Funding Applications:** Encourage stakeholders to remain open to new ideas and avoid bending proposals to fit trends in funding streams. Emphasise the importance of staying true to the project's vision and goals while seeking funding support.
8. **Openness to Collaboration:** Foster a culture of openness to collaboration among different organisations and community groups. Facilitate networking events to encourage new partnerships and joint initiatives for greenspace projects.
9. **Recognise and Reward Openness:** Recognise and celebrate instances where openness and flexibility have led to successful and meaningful engagement. Use success stories to inspire others to embrace open-mindedness and creative problem-solving.
10. **Adaptability Training for Leaders:** Provide training for leaders and key decision-makers on adaptability and openness to change. Help them understand the importance of remaining open to new ideas and feedback from the community.
11. **Reflective Feedback Sessions:** Conduct reflective feedback sessions after each greenspace project to identify areas for improvement and potential for greater openness in future engagements. Use feedback to refine strategies and approaches for increased effectiveness.

These recommendations are a starting point to improve **openness** in environmental action - find what feels right for you!






# REFLECT ON ACTIVITY SUCCESS

## How well does the activity work?

Reflecting on your engagement activities is an important step towards establishing genuine connections to those you work with. They help to reflect on the success of the activity, consider asking yourself and/or the participants the following questions:

- 
- What worked well with this activity?
  - How did people respond to the activity?
  - Was it a positive or negative experience?
  - What could have been done differently?
  - Was it useful for the people and you?
  - How can you build from the activities/engagement?

By asking these questions you can begin to reflect on the activity or activities done and whether they helped improve engagement. From here, you or your organisation can move into **Step 6** of the framework process: Develop engagement plans further.



# DEVELOP ENGAGEMENT PLANS FURTHER

Framework  
process

Step 6

Taking the responses to the previous step, you can begin to plan a more detailed engagement approach. Being aware of the following four parts of the circular process below, you can create an evidence base or record of engagement to demonstrate you or your organisation's impact in environmental action.



This iterative process encourages review and reflection of engagement to ensure the people you are engaging with are aware of the engagement process and feel motivated to get involved with the decisions being made about their local urban greenspaces.

Ultimately, if you follow all these steps, you or your organisation can work towards the final step...

## ACHIEVING COLLECTIVE DECISION-MAKING



# ACHIEVING COLLECTIVE DECISION-MAKING

Following the different stages of this framework helps you or your organisation develop meaningful experiences and relationships with those engaging in environmental action. This results in achieving collective decision-making.



Collective decision-making is an important part of environmental action as it allows people to get involved and feel heard about their ideas for improving spaces. Of course, this does not mean that every decision made can or has to be collectively approached, rather it opens up the conversation and understanding in to why and how local greenspaces are cared for and managed.

Hopefully by following the steps in this framework, you and your organisation can develop more detailed and interesting ways to engage with people who either are or may want to take environmental action.

This tool provides a guide to tackling issues surrounding maintenance and care for urban greenspaces and aims to empower individuals and groups to feel like their input is thoughtfully recognised and appreciated.

If everyone's contribution to urban greenspace are valued, then decision-making in these spaces becomes more reflective of what people want to see and how they want to interact in nature.