

BEYOND THE NUMBERS GAME

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The idea of Beyond the Numbers Game was born around 4/5 years ago, instigated by Mark Dunford and Tricia Jenkins.

The project was led by Ben Gidley and the lead researcher was Imogen Slater. Imogen Slater and Ben Gidley are the main authors of this report, with additional contributions from Tony Dowmunt, Simon Rowe, India Court MacWeeney, Robert Smith, Alison Rooke and Paulo Cardullo. We are grateful for input into the final draft to Jess Tyrell, Lynne Connolly and Rebecca Maguire. We want to thank all those who helped us in the case study research, from the Inclusion Through Media programme and its partners and from First Light and its partners. Our biggest thank you is to those participated in the research, who kindly gave us their time to be interviewed, to participate in focus groups or to trial our Toolkit methods.

Design: Hi8us Midlands – Dave Gray



Beyond The Numbers Game: The one paragraph summary

It is one of the problems of policy research and evaluation reports, not least in the arts and media sector, that many readers only read the executive summary of reports. They often look for a bold, headline finding, preferably digestible in the form of an arresting statistic. This means that the nuance and detail of the research is often lost. This report argues for a more considered and qualitative approach to evaluation and research, taking seriously the complexity of the outcomes of participatory media, which is the subject of our research. However, if we were to summarise the report in four sentences, this is what we would say. First, media activity is particularly good at attracting a diverse range of people, so there is a need for flexibility in approach for project delivery, responding to individual needs. Second, a key ingredient is media professionalism and industry kudos, combined with a developmental whole-person approach, a combination which brings benefits far beyond either a narrow, skills-based pedagogical approach or a diversionary approach where media is not pursued seriously. Third, working with smaller numbers of people over time – quality not quantity – is often the key to creating professional standard participatory media work. Fourth, 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes are interdependent and interwoven in the media process – it provides not one or the other but both. These four points have vital implications for both evaluation and monitoring practice and for funders' policy frameworks.

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01. Executive Summary

The Research

The Beyond the Numbers Game research project set out to make an argument for the necessity of using qualitative approaches to understanding the full impacts of participatory media projects. This was based on the premise that using primarily quantitative data and focusing inappropriately on just 'hard' outcomes has detrimental effects, including undervaluing or even missing the real benefits. Focusing only on the 'hard' may appear to be an easy way of assessing project delivery, but it is not the most effective or complete way.

There is an ongoing tension between so-called 'soft' and 'hard' outcomes. The very terminology creates an unnatural divide. Instead, the research found that outcomes (both hard and soft) were interlinked – and, crucially, those deemed soft were often foundations for more tangible achievements.

The research looked at 14 case study projects nationally in order to better understand participatory media; its diversity, its delivery, and centrally what participants and staff experiences and views of its positive impacts are. There is a gap between how those 'on the ground' talk about the work, and how they are asked to evidence it for funders. Accountability isn't the issue but how to be accountable is. This research suggests that innovative and creative methods can be employed to

record both quantitative and qualitative outcomes, in a consistent, longitudinal, evidence based way. If these processes are built into projects, the task of Monitoring and Evaluation can be turned around. Instead of simply being an imposed requirement, projects can have more of a stake in defining what they see as the key elements of their success, and of using these processes to reflect on, inform and develop their work. Consequently, we developed a Toolkit for practitioners to use in evaluation, making the task accessible and user-friendly. (www.u-view.org)

The following three sections are organised into *Lights!*, essential ingredients for participatory media to work, *Camera!*, key features of the participatory process, and *Action!*, the different outcomes of the work.

Lights! Key ingredients of successful participatory media projects

Key Message: The combination of media professionalism and developmental youth work creates unique potential for the engagement of young people and marginalised groups.

- **Getting engaged** – Participants are attracted to projects for many reasons, and we can learn from this.
- **Media as a hook** – Media is undoubtedly a

strong attraction for multiple reasons.

- **Good old fashioned youth work** – All the projects used aspects of youth work to enhance their delivery, particularly in their holistic approach to participants.
- **Flexibility** – Projects were extremely varied as a result of being able to flexibly respond to the needs and desires of a diversity of participants.
- **Professionalism** – The professionalism involved was a key attraction, and integral to both 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes.

Camera! The process of engagement

Key Message: Media is a common language with a magnetic attraction. Its clear form offers opportunities for individual participation supported by group development.

- **A developmental and holistic approach** is needed, rather than a narrow, skills based approach.
- **Media professionalism** combined with a developmental approach brings the most added value.
- **Intensity and glamour** – Media has a glamour because of its ubiquity in all our lives, and media processes entail an intense involvement.
- **A niche for each** – In each of the case studies the 'group' was a central component, within which participants could find an individual role.
- **Full participation** – Meaningful participation is resource-intensive, sometimes difficult, but has the potential to bring about the greatest benefits for those involved.
- **A clear process with an end product** – The media form and process is recognisable and understandable, and the end product provides a successful conclusion.

Action! Outcomes

Key Message: The outcomes of participatory media projects are multiple and diverse, and include creative, personal and craft skills. Categorising them as either 'soft' or 'hard' ignores their interdependence, and values some whilst devaluing others. If we listen to participants' views it is the whole experience that impacts on them, and through this being positive, they develop their skills, experience, networks, and the potential to make positive life choices.

- **Life Skills, Creative Skills and Craft Skills** – These are more appropriate ways of looking at

the range of benefits and avoiding the 'hard' versus 'soft' divide.

- **A positive experience** – The research showed the value of non-mainstream learning, the importance of identities and narratives, of becoming equipped and discovering new pathways.
- **Widening networks, new arenas, alternative platforms** – Projects were good at opening up new possibilities both for individuals and groups, and as ways of getting their work into public spheres.

Distances Travelled

Key Message: There are lots of examples of participatory media success stories. These are more likely outcomes where clusters of projects provide stepping stones along pathways that are visible through the fact of peers and mentors having already followed these progression routes.

- **Matching pathways with people** – The routes that participants take were essentially individual and tailored, frequently informal, non-prescriptive and likely to be non-linear.
- **Apprentices and peers** are examples of success. They illustrate what is potentially possible for newer participants, and are often motivated to 'give back' in terms of supporting projects and other young people.
- **Inclusion Through Media success stories** – The report showcases some of the success stories of participatory media.

The Toolkit

We worked with Hi8us Midlands to produce u-view, an on-line evaluation Toolkit that will help practitioners embed evaluation in their practice, and therefore develop the more evaluative practice that we argue the sector needs. The Toolkit is designed to be practitioner- and young person-friendly and interactive. It is also designed to enable projects to translate between their everyday language and funders' requirements, via a system for "tagging" data that draws on Web 2.0 forms of practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The unique value of Participatory Media needs recognition. By understanding what it does and how it does this, expectations of projects to increase numbers of participants hitting particular outputs become nonsensical and in fact against the very grain of the work. To move beyond the numbers

game, shifts are needed on both sides: from policy makers and purse-holders on one hand and from inclusive media projects on the other. In fact they must see themselves as in a relationship with each other: that is two-way, and they may find they actually have aims in common, and can assist each other in securing their distinct objectives. Funding bodies need to take the lead from the most progressive among them, in exploring and encouraging possibilities for new and creative ways of evaluation where there is a greater emphasis on qualitative approaches. In response, projects need to engage with monitoring and evaluation, and to take responsibility for ensuring that this not only done, but becomes something that is a useful part of their own processes and learning, and the learning and experiences that their project users and participants have.

We therefore conclude with a table of our key findings and the recommendations that follow from these. We have included recommendations for monitoring and evaluation, and recommendations for funders, policy-makers and the media industry. The key recommendations include the importance of qualitative forms of evaluation, a need to build in the possibility of longitudinal tracking of participants, the value of creative and participatory methods, the need for media practitioners to become more evaluative and reflective, and the importance of funding resource-intensive long-term developmental work.





02. Introduction

"I think there is definitely a big pressure in terms of funders, and there's a lot of stuff about outcomes, and we're under pressure to go outcome led and it takes away a lot of freedom, you know, you're not working with young people where they are at, there's an outcome you have to tick at the end of it, people have to get jobs, people have to move on, that sort of thing. And there's a pressure to report back to funders on lots of their objectives and there's a game that goes on. I see a game going on, we get young people to tell us how good we are, and then we tell funders how good young people think we are." J. Spence, C. Devanney, K. Noonan 2006

"Over the past decade VCOs and others have expressed concern about a tendency amongst regulators and some funders to focus on characteristics of services that are easy to measure - outputs - rather than harder to measure but more important, outcomes. In some cases, reporting has been 'fudged' - with the compliance of purchasers - recognising that their indicators are irrelevant to the work being commissioned.

It has also been acknowledged that a focus on particular outputs can introduce perverse incentives for example, the 'management' of

hospital waiting lists by treating less serious cases first." NCVO (2004)

Most funders require statistical evidence, such as numbers of participants involved in a project, or how many young people may have gone on to education, training, or work. While this may seem a straightforward way of measuring a project's success, and therefore a justification for funding, there are pertinent questions that need to be asked about what this kind of data tells us, and also about what it doesn't.

There seems to be an assumption of trust in numerical data. As Bartlett and Payne comment, quantitative methods "are often given more respect due probably to the exalted view of science held by the educated public and its tendency to regard science as related to numbers and implying precision."¹ Funders frequently look to quantitative data to ensure that projects are delivering on their proposed objectives, perhaps because of the apparent ease involved in reading these; there is a simplicity that suggests transparency, though this can be erroneous.

It would seem, then, that one of the unspoken attractions of quantitative evaluation is its simplicity, in relation to both the act of recording and interpretation. An online voluntary sector guide *Measuring Soft Outcomes* states:

¹ Bartlett and Payne 1997

"The so-called hard outcomes are most likely to be linked to targets and so are often seen as the priority for funders. Easier to measure because they are quantifiable".²

This is difficult to refute, as it is likely that qualitative approaches will take more thought and more time to put into practice. However, using qualitative methods has additional benefits in that where they are embedded in project delivery, they can become a useful part of the delivery process. They are by their nature more able to capture what projects and participants regard as their priorities, and their own evaluation of their developments and successes. They also offer opportunities for reflection, which can then inform future progress, for both individuals and projects as a whole.

One of our case study projects described their client group as *"a small minority within a small minority"*, and though they evidence success in their work with young people, are under constant pressure to show that their delivery involves greater numbers. In fact, the development of their work has moved from working with larger numbers in short bursts, to focusing on smaller groups for more sustained periods of time. They have done this with the conviction that the impacts are more far reaching with this approach, though they are likely to be slower to 'bear fruit'. Stages of development/apprenticeship are integral to the work and the effect was described as *"the ripples moving gradually out"*. If this project is valued in terms of numerical outcomes (with more = better), then it can be read as unsuccessful. However, getting to know more about what the project is really doing and how, and in what ways it is impacting positively on the participants' lives gives a very different account of success.³

Another major issue with quantitative evaluation alone is that the outcomes it is able to capture are likely to be only a fraction of those that occur. The so-called 'soft' outcomes, which include aptitudes such as confidence or communication, are by nature difficult to quantify. Their importance may therefore be underestimated, and their role in underpinning more tangible successes, overlooked. Jermyn

² Kay 2007

³ As will be explored further below, people from excluded backgrounds have a hard time breaking into the media industry, whatever their qualifications, because of the extremely networked and cultural exclusive nature of the industry (see e.g. 'Ethnic minorities face film woes' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/7005684.stm>). There is therefore a real question of whether the demand to engage with more and more participants, and therefore water down the work, constitutes a form of discrimination, or at least compounds discrimination.

⁴ Dewson et al 2000

(2004) stresses the link between 'soft' and 'hard' outcomes, commenting that many of the *"benefits are interlinked, overlapping or even interdependent"*. It can therefore be argued that these kinds of skills are not additional or secondary outcomes, but are in fact the foundations for the kinds of 'hard' outcomes, that many funders look for. That is, without the development of a range of personal skills, an individual will find it difficult to secure employment for example, and to then sustain this. For example, many of our research participants spoke of what we describe as *"learning to learn"* as one of the life skills they developed; without this, it is impossible to get through a formal training course. We developed an alternative terminology of outcomes and skills – for example, dividing skills into life skills, craft skills and creative skills – which we believe better capture the different sort of outcomes than the dichotomy of 'hard' and 'soft'. These are discussed below in section 7.

For those involved in the delivery of projects the limitations of quantitative evaluation can be frustrating, as success seems reduced to numerical outputs, thereby ignoring the full scope of experiences and achievements of individuals and groups. 'Hard' outcomes imply a simplicity that is rarely found in the lives of project participants, whose pathways are likely to be non-linear, individual, and difficult to track. They also expect personal trajectories that are not only linear, but that progressively climb. For example an individual is engaged in a project and on leaving goes directly into a job in a related field. Succinctly put,

*"Hard outcomes such as jobs obtained, numbers of qualifications, and numbers progressing onto further education and training (though useful in some cases), do not show the success of the project as a whole."*⁴

The argument here is not that there is no value in quantitative data, or that it isn't useful for some purposes, but that there are types of intervention where using this approach is inappropriate, misses the real value of the work, and can even have a detrimental effect. There needs to be a greater focus on the qualitative outcomes of project delivery rather than the quantitative data relating to the people it engages with. Many practitioners feel that working with smaller groups over time is likely to improve the quality of engagement, thereby increasing the potential for effective and measurable long-term impact. Viewed quantitatively this presents difficulties; numbers of participants are smaller and therefore seem economically less

viable, while the longer term impacts are harder to measure and evidence.

While the importance of monitoring 'soft' outcomes is becoming more accepted they still have a secondary status. They are often regarded as stepping stones towards further training or job readiness, and not therefore as qualities that are desirable in themselves, integral to overall positive developments, and of benefit to participants in their life learning. The ESF's *Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distances Travelled* states:

"It is easy perhaps, to think that: Indicators (or measurements) of soft outcomes can be used as tools for measuring distance travelled towards labour market participation" (Dewson et al 2000).

This may stand in contrast with the individual participants' understandings of why they are engaged with a project, what they hope to get from it, and where they think it might lead onto.

Soft outcomes are defined for European Social Fund (ESF) funded projects as *"outcomes from training, support or guidance interventions, which unlike hard outcomes, such as qualifications and jobs, cannot be measured directly or tangibly. Soft outcomes may include achievements relating to:*

- *interpersonal skills, for example: social skills and coping with authority*
- *organisational skills, such as : personal organisation, and the ability to order and prioritise*
- *analytical skills, such as: the ability to exercise judgement, managing time or problem solving, and*
- *personal skills, for example: insight, motivation, confidence, reliability and health awareness"*⁵

Outcomes that are 'soft' evade quantitative kinds of assessment. To illustrate, how can increases in confidence be measured numerically? This report aims to demonstrate that this does not mean that 'soft' outcomes cannot be evidenced, but that a qualitative approach is required to do so. This can be done rigorously, methodically and consistently, over significant time frames.

There is perhaps beginning to be a sea change in the 'hard' versus 'soft' debate, with greater interest in outcomes as opposed to outputs from some areas of government and progressive funding bodies. The New Economics Foundation

⁵ Dewson et al 2000

⁶ Nicholls et al 2007

promotes the importance of Social Return on Investment (SROI), *"the 'return' or the value created for individuals, communities, society or the environment. This necessitates organisations themselves changing their approach to monitoring and evaluation:*

*"Value driven organisations are using new ways to understand, measure and foster awareness of their impacts."*⁶

The core issue seems to be the divide between the requirements of funding bodies and the practice of delivery by those 'on the ground', each having distinct agendas and needs. This is not insurmountable, and the probability is that beneath apparent differences, there are overarching aims in common. However, if those holding purse strings and informing policy decide upon targets from the top down, inevitably this will create difficulties and resentments for those working with young people, who feel that their work is undervalued and misunderstood. Accountability isn't the issue but how to be accountable is. That is, we are not disputing that recipients of public money need to be able to account for how they have spent it; they clearly do. The problem is that existing methods of *how* this is done are not the most effective ways of finding out and explaining what the real benefits of this work are, so we have to find more sophisticated ways of accounting for it.

"Kerry: Do you not think that in some ways that, them saying you have to have an objective, or something, writing out your aims and objectives for the programme in some way that's improving your youth work? Because you're seeing at the end if you've met your aims and your objectives?"

Jim: If the young people are setting the objectives, or if we are setting the objectives, it's some civil servant setting the objectives for a group of young people that I really struggle with..." Spence et al 2006

The task is therefore to encourage a better understanding of qualitative approaches, why these can be particularly useful, and how they can be better employed systematically and consistently, in order to evidence positive outcomes for outside agencies, and for projects themselves. In other words we need to change the attitudes towards qualitative methods, at a strategic level as well as that of project delivery, so that they are given (at least) Equal credence as a way of understanding and valuing participatory and inclusion based work in fields such as media, arts and sports.



03. Methodology

This research project began with the premise which its title encapsulates: the need to move beyond the numbers game in evaluation methodologies. We set out to evidence the fact that the value of participatory media projects cannot be represented or understood quantitatively, through numbers alone. Instead, we wanted to show, these kinds of projects need qualitative approaches to fully appraise them and to do justice to the full range of impacts, benefits and meanings for participants, workers, their communities, and wider networks.

We wanted to look at a diverse range of participatory media projects, in order to find out what participants and workers regarded as the consequences of their involvement, and what they felt were the most important benefits. In doing this it was hoped that a framework for better understanding the impacts of these projects, would emerge.

The majority of our case studies are part of the European Social Fund (ESF) Equal programme, Inclusion Through Media (ITM), a programme of media projects aimed at involving marginalised people in media.⁷ The work began with selecting a possible 18 case study projects through discussion with the ITM lead partner, Hi8us Projects. It was expected that these would be whittled down, with a target figure of twelve case studies aimed for. While

⁷ <http://www.inclusionthroughmedia.org>

the majority of these came under the ITM umbrella, it was felt that it would be useful to consider a few (two or three) projects that were outside this, but still participatory media based, in order to offer some comparison. Case studies were selected with a number of criteria in mind. These included: location, client group, type of media involved, access, and timing. The research wanted to reflect the diversity of these projects, whilst looking at what outcomes and themes might be common, despite differences.

Access to projects required consideration. The research aimed to be low impact in its approach; we wanted where possible to work alongside projects, but not significantly add to their workload, or distract from their programmes. This, coupled with the fact that projects were at different stages of delivery, meant that the research needed to tailor its approach and methods with each individual project, negotiating access and discussing the most appropriate contact. Different levels of research were defined, including following projects, retrospectively looking at projects, and a 'light touch'.

Time was an issue. Some of the kinds of impacts that the research wanted to be able to record were likely to have a longer time frame than that of the research itself. Therefore approaches were used in order to encourage for example reflection on experiences, or projection about future directions.

A number of Hi8us staff and trainees, who had previously been participants, were interviewed and asked about how they had originally come into contact with specific projects, become engaged, and how they had progressed to reach their current roles. Of interest was the pathways they took, but also what it was about their specific experiences that influenced the choices they made.

The research was not concerned with a straightforward evaluation of the case study projects. Instead, it was designed to test the efficacy of different qualitative methods in capturing and evidencing positive outcomes. Rather than ensuring consistency in approach with each case study, we wanted to draw from a broad range of methods used appropriately with each, in order to showcase the range of possible qualitative approaches to evaluation. These included session observations, semi-structured and informal interviews, focus groups, informal chatting, film, photography, time lines, questionnaires, participant snapshots, etc. Where possible we also used existing literature and material, from academic texts to evaluation reports and DVDs. Again the quantum of data we collected was not consistent across projects, and with some case studies we had large amounts, while with others far less. It is also worth noting that it was not always possible to use the research methods planned, and so the approach needed to be continually flexible.

Narratives were a central part of the research. These could relate to either individuals or projects, and took different formats. For example the story of an individual participant might be told by them to a researcher, or by a project worker. These were an important tool in building a bigger picture of the work of a project and the part it played in the life of individuals. The narrative form also felt appropriate to many of the case studies, as it is one that they themselves use creatively.⁸

The research team brought a variety of specialisms, and backgrounds, which included skills in film making and photography. With some of the case studies these came into play and were used in a number of ways; as a record of sessions or events, as visually illustrative and engaging, and sometimes as a tool by which the researcher could engage with project participants. These were felt to be particularly appropriate given the creative media

focus of our case studies. With hindsight, using creative and (hopefully) engaging research tools is not something that is simple to do, particularly for external evaluators going into projects. It needs careful planning and consideration, and ideally is a planned part of the programme, delivered by workers who have established relationships with participants. It should also be remembered that these methods are only tools that can be used to engage, to talk with and listen to participants and workers. Essentially it is how they are used that will influence their ability to produce good quality material.

The research aimed to be 'two-way' rather than 'one-way'. That is it was intended to be responsive to the case study projects, and where possible useful during the actual research process. In the first instance this meant being sensitive about approach, for example by sending interview transcripts or photos back to interviewees. Instances where this was taken further were usually in response to a project's requests, for example for research notes or interview transcripts, as useful data for reports, etc. A number of the interviewees said that they enjoyed the interview experience as it gave them a chance to think about and reflect on themselves, their work and their interests.

A worker we interviewed in one of the case studies said *"that the opportunity this research has provided to talk things through has been useful"*. It is a point at which to stop and reflect on work and to identify different aspects of the work. She felt that too often things get *"pushed to one side"* because of the priority of actually delivering the work. She added that she is learning *"to take account of these things"*, and that even for her there is learning going on, *"particularly through the delivery of programmes like these."*

Hand in hand with the research process and production was the task of creating an online Toolkit for projects to be able to access and utilise. To summarise, the idea was that projects should be able to record their own data (in a range of formats, e.g. written and film), and then selectively retrieve relevant parts of this in order to produce evaluations, funding bids and reports. The work on the research and Toolkit fed into one another, and a number of our case studies had input into the Toolkit design or agreed to test parts of it. As with interviews some of those involved found that they enjoyed the opportunity of personal reflection. The Toolkit is discussed more fully in section 10.

⁸On narrative research, see Smith (2007), Miskelly (2003, 2004, 2007)

⁹On participatory research, see Back (2007: introduction and chapter 2), Chambers (1997, 2003), Heron (1996), Smith et al (1997). On visual research, see Back (2004).



04. Case Studies

The table below lists the projects that were selected as case studies for this research. A fuller description of each project can be found in the Appendix.

TABLE 1

| PROJECTS/CASE STUDIES | BEYOND THE NUMBERS GAME RESEARCH |
|--|---|
| LONDON (HiBus South) | |
| Beatz! Camera! Action! Supporting young musicians develop skills, including video, promotion, and new networks. | Identify staff and participants to interview. Theme of long-term commitment to area. Look at any movement and exchange between projects. Attend events. |
| UK Sound TV Youth run broadband channel, with young people responsible for deciding and creating content, while developing broad range of skills. | |
| L8R Interactive digital drama, designed for delivery in various youth settings, and encouraging engagement with educational themes including Citizenship, PSHE, Drama and English | Interview staff. Use existing evaluation material and look at produced material. |
| Be Roma or Die Tryin' Documentary film project arising from collaboration between the Roma Support Group, HiBus South and a group of young Roma people. Created to express their voices, and culture, to raise discussion and awareness. | Focus group: retrospective look at the project process and outcomes – staff and participants. Using timeline tool. Look at film and relevant material. |

| PROJECTS/CASE STUDIES | BEYOND THE NUMBERS GAME RESEARCH |
|--|--|
| MIDLANDS (Hi8us Midlands) | |
| <p>StripSearchers Scheme to nurture and develop amateur comic illustrators, through practical workshops, producing participants work, events and industry networking.</p> | <p>Follow phase 3. Theme: changing/innovation in delivery from participant feedback, and exit routes. Interview participant from 2. Interview workers.</p> |
| <p>Boost Launched in response to identified needs of creatives in the digital industries. It offers bespoke business support, including a range of workshops and events, practical skills development, mentoring, resources and promotion.</p> | <p>Look at participant referred on from other Hi8us projects (interview).</p> |
| <p>Breastfeeding Awareness DVD Discrete project working with young parents to develop skills in order to produce an educational DVD about the pro's and con's of breastfeeding.</p> | <p>Interviews with participants and project manager. Visit to group session, photo record.</p> |
| <p>Projecting Stoke This project has worked in stages within different communities/localities in Stoke. It enables local people and groups to make their own films with professional support. The culmination is a screening event bringing together diverse individuals and organisations with interest in the area.</p> | <p>Follow set up and meetings, attend targeted sessions and event. View films produced, and other relevant material. Film/photographic record.</p> |
| CORNWALL (Hi8us Cornwall) | |
| <p>Chew TV and Liskeard Youth Club Chew TV is a collaborative broadband TV project 'run by young people for young people', and a range of benefits include developing young talent in the region. Liskeard Youth Club offers digital media projects to young people, working to varied briefs. Combining creativity and self expression with skills development, thereby opening new pathways for those involved.</p> | <p>Follow some sessions, talk with staff and participants, look at any relevant material, produce film record.</p> |
| OTHER | |
| <p>Converge – Goldmiths, University of London The aim is to increase young people's access to digital media arenas for showing and sharing their work, through practically demonstrating how to use existing resources or build their own channels.</p> | <p>Follow sessions, focusing on delivery and case study projects. Build in tools. Review any materials produced.</p> |
| <p>Music for Screen and Drama - Musicians in Focus Working with visually impaired musicians to hone skills for professional careers. Interfaces between musicians and the industry, and promotes development of relevant technologies.</p> | <p>Follow sessions. Interview staff and mentors/ volunteers /older participants.</p> |

| PROJECTS/CASE STUDIES | BEYOND THE NUMBERS GAME RESEARCH |
|--|---|
| NON-INCLUSION THROUGH MEDIA | |
| <p>Compulsive Community Pictures - First Light Project involving young people, youth workers and film professionals, aimed at skilling and empowering young people to create and produce their own film, and opening up pathways for further development in the field.</p> | Attend filming day on location, speak with staff and participants, including informal focus group with four. Photo record. Look at other relevant material. |
| <p>Every Street Dreams - First Light Animation project developed by the Cornerhouse, working with small group of young people to collaboratively produce a film. The involvement of professionals has enabled participants to intensively learn, increase experience and add to body of work.</p> | Talk with staff. Arrange group interview with participants and project co-ordinator. Look at relevant material, including their animation film. |

The two non-ITM projects were selected from a number recommended by First Light, from a national list of projects they had recently funded. Having spoken to a short list of six, two were selected. They were chosen for a number of reasons: their geographical location, the possibility of access to participants and workers, and the timescale of the projects. Interestingly they both seemed from the outset to be discrete projects that came together for the sole purpose of collectively making a film. However, from group discussions with participants it became apparent that their relationship with the delivery organisations was more complex and ongoing than this, with the young people continuing their involvement beyond the specific programme.

A range of project types and a range of participant types were identified – and this range reflects the flexibility of the participatory media model as understood within Inclusion Through Media. Projects seem to fall roughly into two categories:

1. Finite, distinct projects with already formed groups, in collaboration with youth or community workers. These are often groups that are accessed through a partner organisation e.g. school, youth club or support group. Examples include Be Roma, which worked with Roma youth who had been engaged by the Roma Support Group, or the Breastfeeding Awareness DVD project, which worked with young parents already engaged through a Sure Start programme.
2. Projects that are longer-term or ongoing (depending on funding), and may either

continue to develop work with group, or have intake of new cohorts. Participants have often been recruited through projects of the first type of project or via existing youth or community provision, focused around an interest in and aptitude for a particular media form. Examples include UK Sound TV and StripSearchers, both of which built groups or ‘crews’ around a specific media form.

These two styles of project are able to attract different groups of people and to therefore meet different needs. For example with the Be Roma project and the Breastfeeding Awareness DVD project, those who participated were engaged through their identities (e.g. as young parents or Roma young people), and the desire to communicate with others about their experiences. For them the media was a secondary attraction, and a creative means to translating their voices into formats that could reach wider audiences. While all may have increased their skills levels, some might also have found new interests that they wanted to take further. This kind of discrete one-off project also has the ability to attract those who may be deemed ‘hard to reach’. In the case of Beatz! Camera! Action!, the idea of groups on particular estates being able to make their own music videos was the initial attraction, with development work and other projects leading on from this foundation.

The second type of project is likely to be longer term, and pick up on young people who may have already accessed other discrete projects and shown skills, motivation and a desire to explore specific media further. These kinds of projects that we came

across in the case study selection were usually less single issue based, and therefore had wider content and a cross-section of styles and individual inputs. For example with both StripSearchers¹⁰ and UK Sound TV, while they produced a collaborative overall project, there was room within this for individual expression and development.

However, looking more closely we found that these apparent differences were not so easily delineated. Projects that seemed discrete (e.g. Breastfeeding Group, First Light/Compulsive, Be Roma), actually offered longer term involvement than the duration of the film project. For example with the young parents group, Hi8us Midlands recently went back to them to offer a careers day, and many of the Worthing project participants have continued to be involved in successive film-making projects.

With the ongoing projects, the follow on or development work is likely to be more consciously formalised. In most instances in our case studies it followed an apprenticeship model where young people progressed through a project, and if sufficiently interested were likely to move up, becoming volunteers, trainees, and possibly even paid workers.

Interestingly there were instances where the two kinds of projects described above, operated in relation to each other, and participants were therefore able to move from one to another in a stepping stone progression. This was more likely to occur where there was a cluster of Hi8us linked projects in one geographical locality.

Perhaps what distinguishes projects more aptly is their motivation. With some projects the use of a medium was about a collaborative learning process to get a message or idea 'out there'. The medium itself is exciting and challenging, but the majority of the group are not driven by this in itself. However, the longer term projects tend to attract young people who have already begun to realise an interest in and propensity for particular kinds of media. They may even be initially engaged through a discrete project and then continue on to a longer term project.

Beyond media interest, case study participants were nearly impossible to categorise. This reinforces the assertion that media activity is especially able to attract and engage with an extremely diverse range of people. Most of our case studies worked with 'young people', and of these the majority

were 16-25, although the Equal funding did not prescribe an upper age limit. However, project design was primary, and any age limitations were more likely to be dictated by funding. They were also diverse in relation to gender, ethnicity, special needs, educational background, and geography. For example the Music for Screen and Drama project was specifically for those with visual impairment. Other than this commonality the participants were so diverse that the project co-ordinator said "*On paper it shouldn't have worked*", and yet they learnt to function cohesively and collaboratively. Likewise the range of media covered by the different projects was extremely wide, including; graphic illustration, film-making, broadband TV, animation, music production, video production, etc

Despite these obvious differences the research found strong similarities between projects in relation to ethos, approach, and delivery, which the following sections will explore.



¹⁰ StripSearch 1 and 2 produced a collaborative graphic story, whereas StripSearchers 3 produced individual comic books.



05. Lights! – Key Ingredients of Successful Participatory Media Projects

Key Message

The combination of media professionalism and developmental youth work creates unique potential for the engagement of young people and marginalised groups.

I. Getting Engaged

The point of engagement varies across projects, by the kind of project and media involved, and who it is targeted at. Our case study projects reveal a range of methods used, that are responsive to particular situations. However, most of the projects we looked at also recognised the importance of ‘on the ground’ direct contact. This was often done initially through an existing group with attached workers as ‘gate-keepers’. With some of our case stories (see Sibe’s Story) something that may appear as a chance encounter then leads on to progressional pathways. It is therefore key that these first points of contact are positive and attractive to potential participants. In the example below D is an experienced youth worker from the local area, with strong interests and connections in the music industry. These qualities would have been vital to his ability to engage with young people like Sibe and his friends.

SIBE’S STORY: GETTING ENGAGED

His first contact with Hi8us was when he was about 15. He met D through a youth club, who encouraged him and some of his friends to get involved in making a music video. He reflected:

“at the time yeah we liked doing it, I mean looking back at it I think it’s a bit pants, but like at the time we was really excited to be a part of it and that, so it was quite inspiring, and I got to go down to the edit suites and like, and I used to sit in on the editing...”

A couple of years later he was studying media at college and he needed a work placement so he went to D at Hi8us to ask if they could help him. By chance they were recording a UK Sound TV live show, which he really enjoyed being involved with, and got to know J, T and other people. He said that after that *“I just showed up, I just kept coming round, they couldn’t get rid of me to be honest, I just kept coming round asking if I could do things and that”.*

His persistence and motivation paid off; he became a part of UK Sound TV and they offered him a place as a Hi8us trainee. For Sibe this has meant a wide range of experiences, including the chance of paid work. He said:

“I’ve learnt loads of stuff like what I need to get on a shoot depending on what I’m shooting like if I’m getting an interview what I need to do, or if I’m

shooting some corporate stuff, how to follow a brief and do that kind of stuff, and learn how to edit..."

He also talked about some of the personal development that came out of the project, particularly the issues of group work, and sometimes taking the lead;

"we're all from like East London and were all quite young and that, and you know what I mean, people want to do their own things at times and people had tantrums and things like that, and you've just got to smile and carry on with the work, you know what I mean especially if like...in front of the people you interview and things like and makes you look bad and you've just got to shrug it off and be as professional as possible and hope people learn from you".

He says that he now wants to be a professional editor.

"I'd like to develop in editing, I just want to have an in-depth knowledge in whatever tasks I'm doing, so if I ever get asked any questions or if I get told 'we can pay you this' I can do it straight away".

His future aspirations include building on his skills and experience, and eventually to have his own post production house.

Overall he thinks that his connections with Hi8us have been fundamental in positively changing the direction of his life. Hi8us has given him colleagues who are also friends, and ambitions that he never had before.

Media as a tool is able to engage with people both those who are 'into it' and those who wouldn't define themselves in this way. Part of its appeal is in its recognition as a powerful and effective way of reaching wide audiences. Its ubiquity means that most participants are likely to be media literate, and therefore move relatively easily into being creators of, rather than just consumers of. Kyle's story shows another path into engagement.

KYLE'S STORY: GETTING ENGAGED

Kyle's story takes him from security guard to film director. He is 21 years old. He came on to UK Sound TV as security and determinedly not taking part in the actual project. He then started to become a trainee, the project progressed, he was drawn in and asked what interested him. He was full of stories and had a particularly unique take on Music and Gun Crime. This interest led to two documentaries. The first was about DIY music creation versus the mainstream music industry. The second film asked 'should the police carry guns?' When he first joined the project he was outspoken and could exhibit a temper. Through

the processes of expressing his ideas through the media and confronting his prejudices on gun crime and music he started to change. The start of the story was getting the job of security on the project. His transformation began with the act of becoming a trainee. By the end he had moved up to taking charge, made two films and became a Youth Producer.

Kyle's role in the UK Sound TV story began when he came to the Hi8us project two weeks before the first Live show. As he entered he was very much part of the UK Sound 'youth club' ethos. However, he began to work with a professional editor, Peter Black, on the DIY Music documentary. He transcended the 'youth club' ethos moving into the professional world of filmmaking, becoming sharper and much clearer about his ideas. It was observed that Kyle felt empowered by professional contact and taking on the role of the director. By the time the work reached the stage of the picture lock, Kyle had grown enormously; he had changed his character despite the resistance from his peer group. He now wants to make a documentary on pregnancy.

R. Smith, UK Sound TV Interview Notes, October 2006.

II. Media as a hook

At the initial point of engagement there are a number of things that need to be in place. Firstly there is the idea of the project; that it is exciting and able to attract participants. Media is a hook, offering a wide range of possible roles and involvements, therefore widening its possibility of attracting different individuals. For example young people who were offered the possibility of involvement in a film-making project said it was "such a unique opportunity", "it was new and interesting" and "it had a really good storyline".

Ed is keen, he contributes a lot to the process and needs little encouragement to be hands on and vocal in the decision-making and film making processes. He appears as an independent boy who takes on new challenges with interest and enthusiasm... He tells me he has not made a film before and he is not sure if it will be his main vocation but he likes to be involved and exposed to lots of creative things.

Projecting Stoke case study notes, December 2006.

The appeal draws on the common media literacy of young people, and that which is often regarded as cool, communicative and cutting edge. The technology and equipment may be regarded as 'sexy' or appealing, and access to being able to use

this, an opportunity in itself. There is an obvious glamour here, for example from young people being given the chance to make a music video thereby emulating artists they admire. Dolan Hewison (Greater Manchester Music Action Zone) speaks of young people as “consumers and creators of content” and says that “they want to engage with the creative process”. Technology has made this accessible and possible in new ways. There is the belief that the creative industries provide employment opportunities to the skilled and creative. Youth culture has a strong affiliation with the entertainment industry which reinforces the attractions of participatory media projects.

III. Good old fashioned youth work

The second key element relates to the staff involved in a project. With our case studies there was a combination of youth workers and media professionals, and sometimes people who were able to fulfil both roles. Vitally these roles require individuals that are ‘genuine’, and are able to relate to the young people they are working with, with understanding and respect. One participant when asked how people had interacted said there was “a lot of respect going on”, referring to both workers and young people.

LISKEARD YOUTH CLUB

GOOD OLD FASHIONED YOUTH WORK

Liskeard Youth Club started offering digital media to their young people about a year ago. They began with a group building their own computers, each one personally customised. Since then they have done a number of video projects. The most recent two were a result of the Hi8us Cornwall initiative. One was a DigiTales piece with a group of young mothers involving personal stories, and the second was a Rights Bytes piece, inspired by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. For this Liskeard were assigned ‘identity’ (Article 8 in the Convention) as their theme, but were supported in interpreting this as they wanted. They produced a plasticine model animation piece which is a critique of young people being hassled by the police. The project is regarded as successful, particularly because of the ownership that the participants had, which arose from their freedom of self expression.

Their work was supported by experienced and committed youth work practitioners, one of whom has worked in the ICT industry, so the team combine traditional youth work skills with ‘professional’ digital experience. This combination was key to facilitating all these media projects and to the real achievements

they engendered. For example, some of the older members of the club have been so interested in the media work that they have formed ‘ZAM Productions’, as well as one becoming a volunteer and another going on to Plymouth College of Art and Design.

The senior youth worker at the club, is convinced of the value of young people having a DVD of their own video work, and that this is preferable (in terms of self-esteem and employability) to the other forms of accreditation and certification (e.g. ASDAN) that they use in the club.

Notes from Cornwall Case Study Research.

.....: In the case of projects like Be Roma or the Breastfeeding Awareness DVD, support from youth or community workers already in place was essential for maintaining the group’s involvement through the project. With projects like UK Sound TV, media workers themselves take on the role of youth or community workers to support the participants. We characterise this as a *developmental* and *non-authoritarian approach to participant engagement*. By ‘developmental’, we mean a holistic focus on the participant as a whole person (i.e. not solely in terms of their media skills), a focus on the participants’ own needs and desires (i.e. not just in terms of labour market outcomes), and support for the developmental pathways that will best fulfil these needs and desires. By ‘non-authoritarian’, we mean approaching the participants respectfully and allowing their own motivation and enthusiasm (rather than an injunction to complete a course) to set the pace.

Connected to this non-authoritarian approach is a range of possible styles of engagement that make workers appealing to participants. For example, one participant we interviewed from the Breastfeeding Awareness DVD project spoke of Hi8us workers as “down to earth” and “even though they were older, they were fun and with it”; another said “I felt my opinions counted”; another said “they were on our level, they made us talk, listened and supported us and were not bossy”; another said they were “cool” and “proper”. These features can be especially true if staff are of similar age and/or come from similar backgrounds to the participants, if they work in spaces that participants can have some sense of ownership over and if the work focuses on things relevant in the young people’s own lives.¹¹

When the project workers (media, youth, or community), take this sort of approach, it is possible for them to become embedded in an area. As an example of this, one former Hi8us South participant we interviewed (who later became a worker) spoke

of a chance encounter in a local chicken takeaway with a worker he had met briefly on an earlier project; this chance encounter brought him back into contact with the project and ultimately changed the course of his life. If the worker had been a media professional brought in from elsewhere, rather than a local resident himself, then this encounter may never have happened.

Interestingly some projects attract workers who are able to fulfil both requirements; that is they have youth work skills as well as specific media skills. These are sometimes workers who were themselves once participants and who have therefore come up through the host organisations. The importance of finding the right people to deliver is found in other kinds of interventionist project. For example Dolan Hewison of GMMAZ has said that they needed “*icons and local heroes*” to deliver the kind of music that young people wanted, and they therefore needed to train these people up. He also spoke of “*marrying music experts with youth workers*”.¹²

IV. Flexibility

Good projects start with vision and well thought out project design. The journey from vision to project design has the potential to lead to meaningful participation, delivery, monitoring and evaluation. However, there needs to be a good degree of flexibility in project structure. Often well designed projects are subject to change because of group dynamics, participants’ needs and external, organisational or administrative structures.

By its nature a true participatory project must be flexible so that it is able to be shaped by those participating. One of the attractions participants spoke about was that their involvement meant a huge amount of input into projects, particularly in relation to content. This was important both for engagement and for the resulting outcomes. It created real ownership of projects and products, but could not have come about if projects followed fixed, pre-determined formats. This points to the importance of thinking ‘outside the box’ about possible routes of progression for participants, responding to participants individually, rather than expecting them to follow pathways pre-arranged before the onset of project delivery. A good example is offered by Hi8us South’s partnership with Seven

Seas. The project was conceived to involve placing trainees alongside professionals in the production; however, their actual specific placement was decided in response to the individuals’ skills and interests.

The ability during this time to evaluate qualitatively what a project offers different people is essential. This is particularly relevant during the early stages of project delivery or when working with the tensions of negotiating quantitative outputs. By understanding and presenting qualitative benefits clearly, projects can see beyond the numbers game how best to meet the needs of participants and adapt through shared communication at a time of uncertainty or changing dynamics. Projects utilising qualitative approaches to evaluating benefit, as they are able to highlight the differences in people’s needs.

V. Professionalism

What is fundamental to these projects is the industry-standard professionalism that they offer, frequently through delivery by appropriate media professionals. Some participants cited this as one of the main reasons for their involvement. The projects’ professionalism had a status and a seriousness for them. For example the two course convenors on the StripSearchers programme are themselves both practising and acclaimed graphic illustrators, which increased the attraction, relevance and credibility for aspiring participants. So this professionalism has a number of clear effects:

- It is in itself a real attraction for participants, a hook which facilitates initial engagement.
- Professionals are recognised as genuine, are respected and their views and guidance are appreciated.
- Young people want to ‘live up to’ this and respond positively – they feel that they are being given a unique opportunity and are therefore valued.
- Participants’ voices, ideas, and skills are not only encouraged but often given an Equal credibility alongside and by professionals. Many participants cited this experience which was an obvious boost to their self esteem.
- It produces high quality results, often industry standard, which enhances participants’ pride and hence leads on to other positive outcomes.

“The Seven Seas thing, the Brick Lane film, I learnt, like a lot of different things which I

¹¹ Halsey et al (2006) and Lord et al (2002) report similar findings, based on studies of NESTA- and EU-funded media education projects. In the next section, we will explore the specificity of the added value that this sort of youth work or community work ethos brings to media work.

¹² Hewison 2007

thought were very important to me. As a designer I've learnt a lot from the art director... He worked on Bleak House. And like, it was really good like, lots of times he would sit with me and we would work on a piece of design, and he taught me a lot of things that I couldn't learn from books really. Just like how to understand information that's laid out on a page. A lot of different things. And Simon, a lot of the times he forgot that I was a trainee. I was doing a lot of work, that's given me a huge portfolio. And it's like '3 years down the line from uni... give me a call' he said. So he was really cool with me." Ahmed, Hi8us Trainee

The projects we observed in the research occupy a special location, at the interface between professional media worlds, on the one hand, and specific (often marginalised) groups and communities on the other. It is this positioning that is integral to their successes in delivering positive outcomes.





06. Camera! – Process of Engagement

Key Message

Media is a common language with a magnetic attraction. Its clear form offers opportunities for individual participation supported by group development.

I. A developmental and holistic approach

In an account of a long-term study of six youth engagement projects, Tim Crabbe et al (2006) identify a series of characteristics in workers that are central to what we are calling here a developmental and holistic approach to engagement. This same approach was found across the case studies. First, there are the characteristics present in friendships:

- Interest in participants' wellbeing.
- Concern over their future plans.
- Co-receptive trust and respect.
- Familiarity and knowledge of personality traits.
- Warmth, joviality and humour.

But, crucially, there are also *"additional characteristics which relocate their relationship with the young people from that of a pure 'buddy' to one of 'buddy/mentor/coach'":*

- Consistency and reliability.
- Setting of appropriate boundaries relating to

language and behaviour.

- Written or unwritten codes of conduct.
- Purposeful and developmental aims to the relationship.

From these characteristics, Crabbe et al develop a three-step model of engagement, which we find useful in thinking about using media as an engagement strategy.

THREE STEP MODEL

Step 1: Initial engagement and relationship building.

- » Use of activity as a 'hook'.
- » Use of initial relationship building tools including humour and conviviality.
- » Allowing 'risky' language/behaviour to go unchallenged to avoid 'distance'.

Step 2: Maintaining engagement/development.

- » Development of a mutual bond with each young person.
- » Distinguishing young person's needs and interests.
- » Signposting to appropriate schemes of work.

Step 3: Purposeful & tailored engagement.

- » Maintenance of a consistent level of engagement and familiarity.
- » Challenging inappropriate behaviour.

- » Accreditation of activities.
- » Person-specific advice and signposting to specialist agencies.

II. Added value of media plus developmental approach

Examining the process of participatory media, as exemplified by ITM projects, we are convinced that the use of media and a developmental approach can each be demonstrated to add value when used side by side. For example in terms of the added intensity and enchantment generated by high quality media products, the quality of craft skills, soft skills and creative skills generated in the media apprenticeship experience when these are delivered in the context of a developmental and holistic approach, and the ability of high quality media products to give voice to participants and communicate their stories to audiences when the participants are properly supported.

III. Intensity and glamour

After the initial excitement of the project it took the next few sessions before the Bomb Squad really took it seriously and the team took them seriously. The first half was about getting the music and they were all switched on but that is the side they knew more about. It took a lot more to learn about the Video side and they did not miss any of those sessions. The momentum of the group was good despite them all being hard to reach and at risk of offending. The final work is a triumph for all. It was felt that a key motivation was that they want to earn money and work.

Stories from Beatz! Camera! Action! - Be Curious, October 2006

Central to this is the *intensity* that can be generated by media: its glamour, buzz or kudos. This can be seen at a number of levels. We have already noted the glamour of media (and especially digital media, music and film) serving as a hook for engagement; it continues to serve in this way to maintain engagement as projects move into steps 2–3 of their engagement strategies, which is crucial when working with ‘excluded’ groups.

Key for this glamour is the concept of *brand*. The power of branding within participatory media can be

seen at a number of levels. Central to the success of Hi8us projects has been the build up of significant ‘brand equity’, both in terms of ‘family branding’ (the Hi8us brand) and ‘individual branding’ (the brands of projects, like UK Sound TV, Beatz! Camera! Action! or StripSearchers). In youth culture contexts, such in as the East London neighbourhoods where Hi8us South works, this brand equity can be built up through word of mouth exchanges amongst young people – an alternative form of ‘viral marketing’ typical of contemporary youth culture.¹³ Thus former Hi8us South participants we interviewed, when asked about how they knew about the project, said they heard about it from friends.

In the Midlands the StripSearchers programme has built a reputation and is now “*feeding on its own success*” in the words of one of its Lead Artists. Its branding is associated with success, through previous participants winning awards, getting publishing deals, etc. This is a virtuous circle, as the better regarded it becomes the more potential participants it attracts. Its success has enabled other follow-on projects, including a Junior StripSearchers and a ‘Comic Studio’ as a centre for excellence in teaching graphic arts now in the pipeline.

The attraction of this kind of ‘branding’ often draws on collective identity. Case study examples demonstrated groups who worked together because of affinities of interest, geography or ethnicity, and, by working collectively, developed vehicles for self-expression of which they felt a strong ownership. Through this creative self-presentation, they often achieved a ‘known-ness’ and profile within their own communities and more widely. Whilst this may seem likely to reinforce identities, and therefore be ‘inward-looking’, in fact we saw that it often boosted confidence and transferable skills, thereby encouraging a more outward-looking orientation and energy. For example, the youth producers with UK Sound TV have achieved a level of local and peer renown through what they do. This success has led directly to increased opportunities, such as presenting to professional audiences, that require them to leave comfort zones and encounter new experiences.

The intensity and glamour we are describing here are things that we saw vividly in a variety of situations in our research. For example, when we filmed a focus group with participants from the Be Roma project, the intensity and excitement with which they recall key, transformative moments in the project’s development. Similarly, during

¹³ Centre for Urban and Community Research and Crime Concern Trust UK (2006)

interviews, the moments when participants experienced particularly heightened intensity were recalled vividly. We will give some examples of these narratives in the following sections.

IV. A niche for each

All of the types of media that we examined in the case studies involve different forms of group-work, in different ways. Even with StripSearchers, where the primary activity was a solo one, participants produced and attended events and workshops as a group, and ex-participants have set up a publishing collective together.

We observed how the production process, by its nature, has particular requirements:

- Co-ordination
- Bringing together different elements
- Group working/collaboration
- Communication
- Motivation, application, dedication
- Using range of skills
- Reliability

While all group members will need some level of commitment to the project, there is clearly scope for individual strengths and skills to become an active resource.

A key aspect of this collaborative dimension that we have witnessed is that *different participants' individual creativity makes a significant difference to the endeavour*. In the production crew, each individual participant brings unique qualities and thus makes a unique difference – their presence is not interchangeable with that of any other person. This is what the theorists Deleuze and Guattari (1988), drawing on the anthropologist Elias Canetti (1973), called the 'pack' as opposed to the crowd or mass. In the pack (such as the youth crews HiBus South work with – the Wolf Pack and the Bomb Squad), the difference members make is *qualitative* rather than quantitative – new members do not simply contribute additional mass, but unique *qualities* that make a difference to the product. Thus pack collectivities – and relationships *within* them – tend to mutate over time, and the difference between individual and collective actions tends to blur. The difference between the pack and the crowd can be summed up in the difference between a crew member and an extra: the crew member's

function may or may not be clearly defined and may not be Equal to that of other crew members, but makes a crucial difference in the production, whereas the extra can be substituted by any other extra without making a difference. As Canetti writes, every pack member is:

"a distinct, substantial and indispensable addition... The position he occupied would be clear to all; he would really count in the economy of the group, in a way that scarcely any of us count today... they are a few, and have to make up in intensity what they lack in actual numbers" (109).

Importantly in relation to numbers group facilitators often cite the ideal for small groups as being between seven and 16 with the optimum being twelve. This minimises opportunities for sub-groups forming whilst maximising on potential benefits from positive group work.¹⁴ There is learning engendered in being part of a small group that arises from it going through a series of recognised stages that can be defined as 'forming, control, work, ending'. The UK Sound TV Youth Producers are a good example of this, having come together through shared interests, and going through often difficult processes in order to produce their own broadband channel.

We observed group dynamics at work during the research primarily by using two tools: ethnographic-style observation or participant-observation (i.e. spending time with projects during delivery) and focus groups with participants (i.e. structured and often interactive group interviews). In contrast, evaluation methods – whether qualitative or quantitative – which individualise participants, e.g. by relying on interviews or survey methods, can miss the vital group dimension of the engagement process. As well as external evaluators using tools like ethnography and focus groups, practitioners can (and, we believe, *should*) develop a more reflective attitude towards this element of their work by regularly logging observations of sessions.

V. Full participation

While participation is an often used term, and frequently a funding requirement, instances of full participation by project users are rare. Funders tend not to make distinctions about *levels* of participation, which can span a spectrum from simply turning up to shaping the nature of provision. In considering young people's participation in specific projects, Jane Tooke et al (2003) separate

¹⁴ See the group dynamics theories in the work of K. Lewin and of R.F. Bales, e.g. Lewin and Gold (1999)

this into *initiation, process, and outcomes*.¹⁵ This leads to questions about who initiates participation and why, the processes involved and whether these are youth-responsive, and finally whether there are visible outcomes that entail young people's input being valued and their views taken on board.

Where the nature of projects meant that participants were involved from the offset in the ideas, creation, and direction of the work, an intense level of participation was achieved. This was usually a far harder task in terms of process, as well as being more time- and resource-needy. Case study examples included UK Sound TV, the 'Be Roma' project, and the Worthing First Light project. With all of these, both participants and workers commented on the intensity of the process with very real ups and downs. The added pressure of production timescales meant that groups were really tested in their abilities, with team work and equitable participation at the forefront of this.

All those involved also spoke of very real benefits from this participative process, and it was apparent that the benefits are proportional to the level of participation. When they talked about the difficulties they had encountered, overcoming these together, it was clear that this had led to an increase in the sense of achievement and accomplishment.

The numbers argument is pertinent here. In talking with projects about media and arts participation, most feel strongly that the success of projects and the benefits to individuals are likely to be greater where numbers are smaller. Not only are practical things like access to equipment easier, but projects are able to give vital individual attention to participants.¹⁶

There is a further evaluation point here, too. This is that doing evaluation in a participatory way can enhance the participatory nature of a project. There are at least three ways of doing this. First, evaluation research can be conceived in a more action-oriented way, as helping to bring about learning outcomes for workers and participants, rather than being seen as a different form of monitoring that ends up on a funder's shelf. Second,

evaluation can use interactive, participatory tools, such as the timeline tool we used in the Be Roma focus group (see Table 2, page 30). Third, participants themselves can participate in the evaluation research as peer researchers, for instance by interviewing other participants.

VI. A clear process with an end product

Across the diversity of media projects we encountered, a clear process leading to an end product was a key element. We have come to understand this as a vital distinctive feature of media projects, one that is particularly attracting and rewarding for participants. That this kind of project has "*a clear programme of development, timescale, and resulting finished product*"¹⁷ is acknowledged as a key element of sustained engagement, particularly relating to media and arts. There is something about this structure that is rewarding, with the stages providing goals and markers of achievement along the way. It offers an obvious and comprehensible shape, with sequential tasks or steps, and then importantly a point of completion. This may be an end product such as a film, which is likely then to also involve an event or screening. Even with projects such as StripSearchers there was the production of a printed graphic piece at the end of the programme, plus an exhibition of artists' work. The end point is likely to be unimaginable at the outset, but the process involves a growth that makes this possible. The end becomes a vantage point from which progress can be charted, and is usually accompanied by surprise at the distance travelled in a relatively short time.

There is significant and lasting value in the moment at which the process generates a finished product, a tangible sign of the work the participants have done.¹⁸ This is important in terms of participants (particularly those who lack formal accreditation from their previous educational experiences) having something to show for themselves, e.g. as a portfolio that can be taken to potential employers. But as well as this 'hard' outcome, there are 'soft' outcomes around the final product that are valuable too. The moment of the final production – e.g. of performance or of screening – is one of the most intense moments in the production process, and a reward for coming through the difficulties and challenges of the process.

Most of the participants the research interviewed, spoke about this experience as being transformative for them. The public recognition of their achievements enabled them to more fully appreciate them themselves. In recounting this

¹⁵ See also Shaw (2007:183) on the need for "a clearer understanding of different 'stakeholders' approaches to 'participation'". See also Back et al (2000), Crabbe et al (2006).

¹⁶ This arguably contrasts with other interventionist activities, such as sports, where larger numbers of participants can actually be beneficial.

¹⁷ Slater and Thomas, 2004

¹⁸ Shaw and Robertson note that the media process enables participants to "develop a recognition of their capacity to achieve results, and this can be the first step towards self-help in other areas" (1997:12). This is most apparent at the moment of screening, publication or exhibition.

they often used emotive language. The following comments from different projects illustrate this:

Interestingly, with one project, the DVD they

D, a participant and peer mentor, said they got a real “buzz” from the performance, particularly as you “don’t usually get that level of feedback”, and “they could really understand what all the hard work was for”. He then said “We gave birth to a piece of music entirely our own”.

R and J said “seeing people who really appreciate what you’ve done” is intensely rewarding. They chatted about the experience of seeing their film shown and also going to London for the First Light Awards and then winning in their category. It was “Amazing”. When they spoke about it there was still an excitement in their tone - going up on stage, doing a thank you speech, and meeting people like Sean Bean. It “changes your perspective.”

L said “it’s an amazing thing to say ‘I’ve done a film’, I still can’t believe it”, and K said “having it being shown, you can’t beat the rush of that, it was really good.”

A former Hi8us South participant:

“When we finished the short film, it was like yeah yeah yeah, we’re gonna show it at Genesis. You know... nothing prepared me for that. I’d never seen anything that people had done that I’d been close to, especially on the big screen. So then they showed it and it was like, I think about 600 people came down in the end. There were 4 screens, 150 seater cinema, and they had 4 sessions. And they were all packed. I had to stand in the back. All my family came down... It was very emotional. I couldn’t sit down watching so I was like walking around at the back, and people started laughing. I was like I couldn’t believe it. That was one of the most amazing feelings I’ve ever had. And afterwards, they had drinks afterwards, and they were yeah, you’re really cool yeah. It was just a stupid little short film, crazy and stupid. It’s you know, a lot of people were like, yeah, you know you’ve never done this kind of thing before, well done, cool, what you’re going to do next? I was like, yeah I was excited, I was buzzing. And so it was good, and after that I started doing editing.”

worked on hadn’t been produced or screened because of issues with the commissioning body about content. For the participants, this has been frustrating, disappointing, and hard to understand. Importantly they haven’t benefited from the final culminative experience. One participant said for her it was important that “our experience has helped others and made us feel like we are helping”,

however, “After all the hard work and all you’ve put into it, it’s sad that they won’t show it or give it a chance.” Clearly, there needs to be some kind of conclusion for there to be a real sense of ownership and completion.

In terms of evaluation, it was key to be able to interview participants after the project had finished, as well as to be able to observe final events like screenings, in order to see the clear benefits associated with this final moment of project delivery. This is a rare experience in evaluation, as funders so often require final reports during the lifetime of a project.



07. Action! – Outcomes

Key Message

The outcomes of participatory media projects are multiple and diverse, and include creative, personal and craft skills. Categorising them as either 'soft' or 'hard' ignores their interdependence, and values some whilst devaluing others. If we listen to participants views it is the whole experience that impacts on them, and through this being positive, they develop their skills, experience, networks, and the potential to make positive life choices.

I. What are the outcomes of participatory media projects?

"Hard outcomes only provide half the picture. Sometimes given a lower profile because they are seen as less scientific and more subjective, soft outcomes provide the important detail that will give a real insight into the experiences of those who access your service. They describe the journey rather than the destination, and chart any changes that occur and the progress a person makes towards reaching his/her goal.

They ask:

- *what difference are you making to that person's life?*
- *what would happen if you had not offered the service to them?*

- *what is working, not working, and why?"*

Jane Kay, Measuring Soft Outcomes, Homeless Link 2007

The research has explored the outcomes of participatory media projects through a number of ways – literature (particularly relating to similar kinds projects), evaluation material, and the views and experiences of project staff and participants. We have found that similar outcomes crop up repeatedly across our case studies and more widely across participatory youth projects using media and/or a variety of activities e.g. arts, sports, etc. We can say that the benefits are largely known and acknowledged by those involved in these projects, when they are delivering effectively. The research was not involved in questioning the benefits, but in understanding what they are, and then finding ways of evidencing them, that are relatively straightforward for projects and those with a stake in them.

Literature from other participatory youth media projects¹⁹ reported the following 'soft' outcomes:

- Higher aspirations, self-confidence, self-esteem.
- Self-understanding and maturity.
- Improved social skills and relationships.
- Improved communication and team-work skills.

- Greater accountability.
- Greater follow-through.
- Improved time management skills.
- Critical thinking skills.
- Recognition of responsibility.
- A change in their sense of possibilities open to them and their own significance as individuals and citizens.
- Leadership skills.

Many of these echo the kinds of benefits that staff and participants in our case study projects noted. Most frequently cited were:

- Increased confidence.
- Meeting new people (networks).
- Support, trust, nurture.
- Facing challenges.
- Giving voice to.
- Group work.
- Motivation.
- Self belief.
- Increased aspirations.
- New pathways.
- Improved communication skills.
- Responsibility.
- Self awareness.

Interestingly when asked about what they thought were the main things they had gained from their involvement in ITM projects, participants far more frequently talked of these kinds of 'soft' outcomes than they did about more tangible skills gains. This was also found to be the case with an evaluation of First Light:

*"Learning technical skills on a film project had widespread social benefits for the young participants. Social positives were mentioned more frequently and with more emphasis than any other benefit."*²⁰

This isn't to say that media skills were not gained or not considered to be important. If we take an

¹⁹ Halsey et al (2006): Five case studies of NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) funded arts education projects with socially excluded youth in the UK.

Lord, P et al (2002): Two year project to assess the impacts of three different informal youth media programs in the EU. Part of the Connect 2000 initiative and funded by the EU.

²⁰ Impact Analysis of First Light: Report to First Light and the UK Film Council, November 2004, Annabel Jackson Associates.



example of a young person being involved in making a video, they are likely to learn a range of media skills related to the technology. However, if asked about the experience of the video making project, our research has found that they are more likely to talk about this in qualitative terms.

For example one participant (who has become a highly skilled editor) talked about positive relationships as one of the main things he gained. He said:

"It's weird but once somebody trusts you, you just think you know what I got respect for you. I'm not gonna let you down. I'm gonna try to be a good person you know."

Another participant who is becoming established as a designer said:

"I think I'm much more confident now, from before. Like, just like, approach people, talk whatever, if I need to. I've learnt like general skills that you would need in life really, which I find quite important. I mean like coming to Hi8us I've learnt like, there is another world out there."

'Hard' and 'soft' outcomes are, then, misnomers for the range of possible outcomes, which as we have seen are frequently inter-connected. Instead the research has developed a more descriptive terminology through setting project outcomes (relating to beneficiaries) alongside a composite list of relevant funders' requirements. In looking at both, it became apparent that not only were there clear matches, but that requirements and indicators of these could be divided into themes or areas. The research has termed these broadly as Inclusion, Well Being, Skills Development, Learning, and Economic Opportunity. Within 'Skills Development' there are three further categories: life skills, creative skills, and craft skills. What these groupings do is bring together both 'soft' and 'hard' indicators, thereby recognising that they may occur simultaneously and be linked or interdependent.

II. Life Skills, Creative Skills and Craft Skills

The benefits to young people were apparent in many of the films and in particular where groups worked on a film that reflected their collective concerns or interests and where the main focus was on them adopting new characters as actors or presenters. The film made by the kids of 'POW' was a good example of how working with film can be beneficial, as it provided the young people with the opportunity to creatively reflect on their dance theatre production called Lean on Me. By giving their evaluation on the project through questions and answers in a TV chat show format they were able to not only engage in another creative process that provided them with new skills, but also allowed them to re-engage in a reflective way upon their participation and add value to their production. When they were asked about what they had gained from their participation the most repeated statement was in relation to increased confidence.

From 'Projecting Stoke' Case Study Research Notes, March 2007.

Personal or life skills are important to the individual and crucially are transferable. That is that they can be extremely useful not just within the media world, but in relation to other career paths, and more broadly across life situations. Their development is likely to impact upon the success of any career choices, and particularly in fields like the media where work is frequently generated via networks. If we also accept that not all those that participate in media projects will go onto to follow media careers, then skills that are broadly applicable are even more important to this group.

The increase of confidence is pivotal. It is contingent to the development of a range of other skills and qualities including self-belief, improved communication skills, being able to meet new people and take on challenges, and to increased aspirations. Young people that the research encountered frequently not only mentioned this but displayed it. For example they were comfortable being interviewed or talking publicly, and were able to operate in new and different environments. One participant unwittingly showed excellent networking skills by asking the researcher about arts journalism and getting useful contacts.

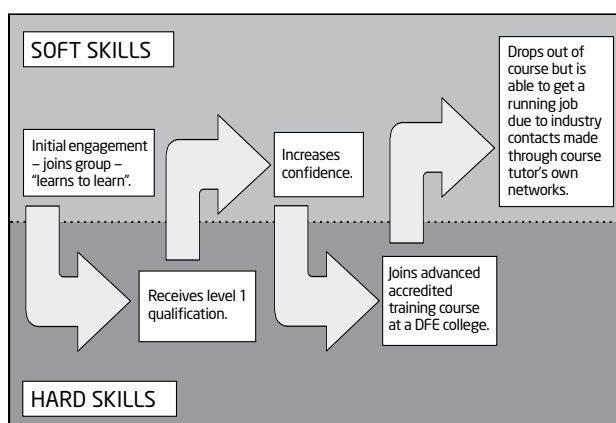
If Life Skills are widely applicable, and Craft Skills are

specific, then Creative Skills lie somewhere between the two, and relate to each. The research has included the following under the heading 'Creative Skills':

- Developing Ideas.
- Experimentation.
- Telling Stories.
- Imagination.
- Reflection.
- Expression.
- Creating pieces of work.

Notions of creativity in relation to learning include a mental athleticism/flexibility and being able to come up with ideas. It is a transferable multi-faceted skill made up of lots of mental functions, skill combinations and personality attributes. The NACCE report²¹ on creativity, culture and education states *"Genuine creative achievement involves knowledge, control and discipline combined with the freedom and confidence to experiment."* It is widely acknowledged as a necessary skill for learning, and not just arts based. The report also says *"Developing creative abilities is of fundamental importance in meeting the challenges of economic development."* So an outcome that is 'soft', and difficult to quantify, is recognised as being fundamentally intertwined with hard economic outcomes.

Table 2: Jimmy's story, illustrating the interdependence of 'soft' and 'hard' skills.



This graphic is intended to illustrate the way in which pathways are unlikely to move in a simple incremental way, but instead waiver with periods of intensive learning, as well as times when engagement slackens. Developing hard and soft skills are interlinked with effective gains in one impacting on the other.

²¹ All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education, 1999 National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCCE)

III. A Positive Experience

A common scenario: A young person is attracted by a media project, and becomes involved. Maybe they discover skills and interests they were not really aware of previously. They probably haven't found they had the same enthusiasm for school based learning, partly because of the subject, but also because of the way they are responded to by staff and peers. Certainly there are changes noticeable to those around them from when they first entered the project. They go through a creative process that involves practically producing something, a film or video maybe. Their voice and ideas influence the content and design. They feel proud of what they produce; it has meaning for them and a real connection with their lives. They also get lots of positive responses from audiences. It is the first time they have experienced a real sense of achievement. The project has made them think about what they want to do, and more importantly begin to believe that they are able to take control and make positive choices about the course of their life.

Carl is largely self taught and he spoke about this kind of learning, as opposed to within a mainstream school or college. He said:

"the thing is, if I discovered what I wanted to do in secondary school I would have went [sic] to college or university. I didn't. By that time, cos I was learning things from outside, I didn't want to go into that thing where people said do this, it will probably take six months to get to use this... I probably cut better than you so what am I doing in the school? The only thing I missed out on, and you know, is having I think like a lecturer, or a teacher, who knew so much about filmmaking... I have people around me who are just like that, which is good and that's what I love. That would have been nice, but you can't have everything. I debated about going to university, trying to do a Masters, going to film school and stuff. But then I think I don't really want to at this point in time. And I don't think I would ever want to. Because I know I can do it outside."

This story was told and re-told in different words and formats throughout the research. It seems that there are less apparent elements that are embedded in the engagement process and therefore inseparable from what is produced. They don't fit neatly within singular 'hard' or 'soft' outcomes, but instead overarch, relating to multiple sets of skills.

The participatory media projects this research has looked at are non-mainstream. That is they are located outside of mainstream education, and offer alternative options for learning. Because of their situation they are able to approach skills development creatively, and to work with participants in an equitable and respectful way. This means that they are frequently able to attract young people who have not benefited from mainstream provision, or whose interests are not reflected in the mainstream.

The participants find value in themselves, their skills, their interests, their voices and their identities. Through these they make something, and in doing so go through a transformative process. When they emerge at the end (unless of course they continue to follow the particular medium further), they are in many ways better equipped to shape their lives and deal with the world around them. Their involvement in the project is either part of or the impetus for pursuing an individual developmental pathway. They have a better idea of what they might want to do, more confidence in pursuing this, and a clearer idea of what the stepping stones might be to getting there. Considering these elements it seems obvious that whether participants continue along media paths or not, they can gain from the same experiences.

What did they get from it? Talking with a group of young people involved in a First Light funded film project.

Some found themselves not only learning, but going in directions that they hadn't expected, for example Lindsey learning sound and Jo, camera.

Jo said that she thought she was technically literate before, but after filming and then helping with the editing, she said *"I knew what I wanted to do"*. Before the project her ideas were vague, though she had some general sense of direction, and the project helped her test, develop and hone these. She is now about to go on to university to study TV and Film Production. One of the workers said that she feels that Jo will probably take this further and has the ability to become a director.

IV. Giving voice: media literacy as civic literacy

The two following case studies illustrate very different ways in which young people are enabled to use their experiences and voices in participatory media projects:

ON RACISM AND IDENTITY

THE 'BE ROMA OR DIE TRYIN' FILM PROJECT

Dada - *"I think young people are really aware of what are the general beliefs. What struck me really was they were very much aware and that showed through the workshops because they knew, they knew, they wanted to sort of challenge it, you know, they wanted to challenge many things, so they know what people think. But the way they wanted to challenge them was very graceful, you know, because it was like through humour, it wasn't through conflict, it wasn't through argument or anything like it. It wasn't about proving a point, it was about, well, let us charm you. That's what was very strong for me and maybe at this point it is important to say at the very beginning none of the young people wanted to show their face in the film."*

Imogen - *"In front of the camera?"*

Dada - *"Yeah, yeah."*

Sylvester - *"Sorry to interrupt but one very significant thing I think we should mention is that none of the young people wanted to - anybody who knows them to know that they are Roma. Most of these young people in schools and colleges prefer to say that they are Polish rather than Roma because of fear that there may be abuse from non-Roma people. So at the end of this film this is one of the results which always makes all of us happy. I think Simon was told by Patrick, or Patrick read out, or there was a letter written by Patrick at the cinema read out, it was read out by one of the other young people, where he says that this film has changed the way he thinks about himself and that he will no longer call himself Polish but Roma."*

Transcript excerpt From Be Roma Focus Group, January 2007.

L8R contrasts with most of our other case studies in that it is not a project made by young people directly,²² but instead engages them interactively. Clodagh Miskelly has been involved in a number of evaluations of L8R work and is therefore well placed to assess what impacts it has:

L8R
CLODAGH MISKELLY

Finding a voice through digital storytelling

"Storytelling for activism or empowerment in local communities and communities of interest has a

²² The project did however involve a group of young people as actors on whom the animated characters are based.

²³ This is explored further in Gidley (2007), Porter (2007) and Couldry (2007).

long history in community and participatory media production. It has been argued that communities and individuals using media technology to tell their stories and have their voices heard is a valuable process which can strengthen communities as well as represent their views and experiences. Over the last ten years there has been a growing interest and involvement in the use of digital media and more recently web based media to produce and disseminate these stories as a means self-discovery and expression, campaigning and raising debate."

"Like true teenager life"

L8R storylines are fictional, but are informed by young actors' and participants' contributions which draw on their own experiences and concerns. Young people identify with the characters and do not feel patronised by the resource. They talk about L8R as "real" and "like true teenager life". The drama is a fictional space for experimenting which is relevant to their lives while safely avoiding the specifics of their experience.

"Seeing how other people cope in difficult situations is a good thing to see because then you can copy in a difficult situation and see if you cope better or worse and I don't know, it could help if you cope, if you cope worse than them." (Young mother aged 16)

Young people know (usually) that the characters are not "real" and do not always accept their actions as credible, but in the [online] forum they 'speak' directly to them and are curious about other aspects of their lives.

(Miskelly 2007:173-4)

Participatory media, then, provides a unique space for developing 'civic literacy': articulating one's story to a public of fellow citizens.²³

V. Widening networks, new arenas, alternative platforms

The above description can be applied in various ways to all of the case study projects, which given that media refers to forms of communication, may not be surprising.

The networks that are created or extended are both social and professional. They begin with the group of participants and workers associated with particular projects, and then extend outwards from this. One ex participant said:

"I mean like coming to Hi8us I've learnt like, there is another world out there. Because... the area I'm from, the school that I went to was full of Bengali people. College, mainly Bengali. And this is like, you know, I come to Hi8us you meet

people from like different ages and different backgrounds, you know. It was really interesting to see that."

In areas where Hi8us was well established, delivering clusters of different projects, inevitably there was more scope for developing wider networks.

With a number of the case studies the links between individual participants and the project continued after the project was completed. They might either continue to 'pop in' and/or move on to other projects. Project workers frequently offer a combination of support and career assistance, and may utilise their own industry connections for keen participants. Examples of this include Hi8us South providing trainees for the production of *Brick Lane*, and ex-participants on First Light projects being offered opportunities to be professionally involved in other productions.

The StripSearchers programme is a good example of the importance and power of networks existing on a number of levels. Participants spoke about the value of exchange with other graphic artists given the frequently solitary nature of the craft. Ex-StripSearchers have formed their own publishing collective and so continue to network. Many also continue to be in contact with staff, several of whom are renowned professional comic illustrators. Kulwant Dhaliwal writes about this as a conscious strategy:

*"When projects end we try to stay in touch with people to see how they progress and, where possible, we continue to give informal support while remaining informed of their own needs."*²⁴

Where they can, they use their experience and contacts to promote StripSearchers participants. The programme has been so successful that it has developed its own profile in the cartoon world, therefore becoming a part of this network.

STRIPSEARCHERS VIEWS FROM THE PROJECT

Hunt Emerson - Joint Lead Artist

He said that the programme is "feeding on its own success" - and I think he was referring to the fact that it has built up a reputation, and there is a momentum to its growth and status. He said that peers are

²⁴ Dhaliwal (2007)

²⁵ Porter (2007)

²⁶ Monk (2007)

²⁷ See also Hadzi (2007)

setting the standard - they demonstrate pathways already explored and travelled - they make real through their own example what is possible for new cohorts. Participants from the last three programmes have won prestigious international Manga awards, and this kind of renown means that its attraction grows.

Asia - Participant

The graphic cartoon world operates very much on contacts. The two artists co-ordinating the project (Hunt and John) *"were great"* and have opened these up to participants. They have invested lots of time and given her *"lots and lots of help"*. They continue to maintain networks and forward her opportunities that come up. They even recommended her to the CEO of a comics company.

Taken from research interview notes.

.....: Some of the case studies we looked at were designed specifically to provide alternative arenas and platforms for participants to articulate their vision and voice. These include the projects in East London (notably UK Sound TV)²⁵ and in Cornwall (Chew TV)²⁶, both youth broadband TV channels where young producers can exhibit their creative output. In East London particularly, there is evidence of alternative platforms that are well recognised within their communities and peer groups. Converge takes the same principle a little further, and trains practitioners in enabling their participants to exhibit their work on the web, either on proprietary platforms like YouTube or on alternative platforms like Democracy Player. It draws on 'copy left' Creative Commons principles and on FLOSS (free and open source software) principles.²⁷

The development of platforms is important for media work with excluded groups, because, while some may make it into mainstream media, the odds are still stacked against them. Alternative platforms enable them not only to achieve voice (the sort of civic literacy and narrative dimensions discussed above), but also enables them to showcase their work, develop a professionalism, and have a sense of ownership over the product that brings the intensity described earlier in this report. The development of platforms, therefore, needs to be considered seriously by funders and policy-makers: if excluded people are developing media skills and learning to tell their stories, but there is no arena whereby these can reach an audience, then the value of the investment might be limited. This also has an implication for evaluation too: evaluators need to consider platforms and audiences when examining the impact of a project.



08. Distances Travelled

Key Message

There are lots of examples of participatory media success stories. These are more likely outcomes where clusters of projects provide stepping stones along pathways that are visible through the fact of peers and mentors having already followed these progression routes.

I. Pathways

Most of the pathways that the research encountered were informal. This does not mean not intended, but that participation was not contingent upon commitment to an accredited course of learning. Some projects were tightly structured around specific delivery (for example StripSearchers and Boost), while others were framed around the process involved (for example video production). There is currently pressure for more accreditation in non-mainstream learning settings, in part because of the quantifiable or 'hard' outcomes that result. What isn't clear is whether the kinds of projects this research is concerned with can be adapted to this without losing their ability to engage and produce multiple beneficial outcomes for participants. In the case of the Liskeard project, staff felt that the media provision was of greater benefit to their young people than other accredited programmes, in that they felt more a deeper sense of satisfaction and achievement with a DVD of their work (rather

than a certificate) in their hands at the end of a project.

The tailoring of pathways is a relationship with participants that is responsive to them as *individuals*. This requires time and resources to build and come about. Some projects have been designed through responsiveness to the identified needs of individuals they work with, as with Hi8us Midlands, where new projects have been created through the experiences of previous ones and feedback from these. They thereby can become stepping stones along the pathways of some participants. The Boost project offers tailored business support, and a number of the current participants have moved onto this from StripSearchers and other Hi8us projects.

In the case of Hi8us South, young people become known by the organisation through their initial involvement, and are then encouraged or recommended to enter into other projects, or even to develop their own. Clearly, where there are clusters of projects closely linked, there is greater sustainability as well as the potential for ongoing tailored engagement. This appears to happen largely in an unplanned but responsive way, with the organisation recognising an individual's talents and desires, and then finding a way to encourage, develop and incorporate these. This also acts as a sifting process in that it requires a level of motivation from the individual. This was reflected

in the stories of a number of the Hi8us trainees. The projects' flexibility and responsiveness created pathways that are not only individual but also non-linear. That is, they do not follow a set trajectory that climbs incrementally within fixed time periods. The projects' non-linear pathways contrast sharply with mainstream education, and as a result may better fit many non-mainstream learners.

Distance travelled is one of the hardest things to record through evaluation because it is by definition long-term. Time will continue to be an issue in trying to evidence some of the deeper and longer term impacts. It is arguably ultimately impossible to fully assess the impacts of these kinds of projects for participants, given that positive experiences in an individual young person's life could bear fruit years later. However, staff and participants observe and recount a wide range of impacts within the timeframe of projects. These can be methodically recorded through the tools available in the Hi8us Toolkit or other similar methods. If the real impetus for funding and therefore delivery is the positive development of a young person, then before looking at exit points, there also needs to be some assessment of what their individual starting point was, set in the context of their lives. Without this, any real reckoning of progress or achievement is impossible.

What remains an issue is what happens with participants after the end of a programme. It could be argued that only through longitudinal tracking of participants can these impacts really be assessed. Those that remain in some form of contact with a project are obviously the easiest to track, though their continued involvement means that they are also likely to be the ones that are 'successes'. This raises questions about other participants who were engaged but have lost touch, including where they have moved on to, and whether there were ways in which they benefited in other spheres of life.

The most practical way of evidencing these sorts of longitudinal impacts is to collect data either from sample projects or from a sample of individual participants across projects. The Toolkit contains a 'follow-up snapshot' which aims to record this kind of information, and while it is envisaged only a proportion of participants would complete this, the data it offers will still enable valuable understanding of longer term project impacts. With participants whose involvement is longer term, and who therefore follow more easily recordable pathways,

interviews that encourage them to reflect on their journeys provide insightful and powerful narratives that put flesh on the bare bones of quantitative analysis.²⁸ Carl's story is a compelling example of this:

CARL'S STORY

He lost interest in school and became seen as "lazy". As one of the "naughty kids" he got to do film studies, and he loved film and drama, but he didn't tell anyone about this because he didn't see it as a possible job. Instead he left early and went to work for his Granddad who dealt in second-hand furniture. His mum gave him a flyer about a Hi8us film project locally. He didn't follow it up until months later, by which time the project was finished, but they invited him to come and meet them anyway.

Carl spoke about the importance of this first point of contact -

"To be honest, the thing is with me, the kind of person I am, I need to be... I need to show what I can do, what I am about. I didn't know what I was about then. I couldn't show you what I could do. I hadn't done anything in terms of filmmaking. I knew what I could do but I don't like to go to meetings to go, like, I'm god. So I went in there and it was a big thing for me. I was nervous as hell. She [J] was really really nice, she made me feel so welcome... You missed the position but there's some running, do you want to do it? I was like oh yeah I'll do it. There's no money in it... And then I met D, A and M, who used to work here... and they were really cool guys... They were like come in, stand up, now you're part of the team, working with film. So I was excited man, and then you had to shoot..."

Carl saw this as a real opportunity and his response was to live up to it. He said:

"Like people say they're running and then they walk, but I say no, if you're running, you run. You run to the shot. You run on the train and you get there in 15 minutes rather than half an hour. You run around the train and take initiatives and have bottles of water ready. And I was like I was always running. It's efficiency, man. It's exciting man. Make it work."

He said that by the second week his hard work had got him noticed and so they paid him for it. It then seemed natural that he became accepted as a trainee along with the others on the project. After the film was finished, Hi8us suggested that the trainees all made their own film together. They came up with ideas, and during the process Carl got a chance to direct, act, and then edit. When this was shown at a cinema he felt it was one of the most amazing things that he had ever experienced.

²⁸ See Smith (2007)

Carl continued to go to Hi8us, getting encouragement, and using the equipment. He started doing his own bits of work, and was supported in this. He spoke about wanting to film a friend's music show and asking to borrow a camera. He couldn't believe that they were prepared to trust him with such expensive equipment.

"I said do you think I could take a camera? I'll leave money or something down, I'll write 7 addresses down. You don't know me, and I'm asking to take a 3.5 grand camera. And they were like, you know, some of the guys said that's fine you can take it. You can use the equipment, that's fine it's what it's there for... I was like, are you sure? Come on man, I can't take this. They were like no, no, no, someone came out with me and we filmed it. That was really nice to have someone trust you with their equipment and stuff. That was really cool."

He continued to be involved, developing skills and working on a range of film projects. At one point he got offered a difficult piece of professional work as an editor. Initially he doubted his abilities, but he worked hard at it, came through and his skills really came on. He is currently the main editor at Hi8us South, in a permanent position. Asked about how this progression had worked he replied:

"I think it just naturally happened. You go from being a trainee to just doing the edits, to cutting participatory films. And you're cutting work where I've seen them getting, editors - people from outside and do the same job"

He's now 23 and his knowledge and skills have reached the point at which he is able to teach others, though he feels that with developments in technology he continues to learn as well. While film-making is his main motivation he relates to other young people coming into it. He said that if someone is interested in getting into the film world but doesn't yet know how, he can:

"help a person like that. Cos that was me. I can help you. And working here has given me the opportunity to do that. And given me the opportunity to meet, especially in UK Sound you have to talk to a lot of young people. What are you doing at the moment? How you're feeling? That's helped a lot as well. It's helped me grow as a person, to talk to people and help them."

This isn't really the end of Carl's story. Yes he has found a way to do something he loves, make a living from it, and 'give back', but it's likely to be another stage from which he continues to move on and up.

.....: Returning to the 'numbers game' quandary, if we accept the evidence of success stories like Carl's, and that his story is not exceptional, what then are the expectations of participatory media projects? If

it is unreasonable to expect that all participants will travel similar distances and directions as Carl, then it can be argued that anticipated outcomes need to be made appropriate and relevant to projects and individual participants. So instead the expectation could be that all engaged participants travel some distance, with recognition that this is variable and relational to individual skills, motivations, life contexts, etc. This view places the evaluative focus on the *distance travelled* as opposed to the finishing point alone. Importantly it is also contingent upon the *quality* of the engagement, which relies on the key ingredients outlined in section 5. Underpinning this is numbers. As we have already noted, working with smaller groups of participants in participatory media means that the quality will be greater.

II. Matching pathways with people

An issue that was raised during the research was the management of participant expectation. We have seen how media can have a magnetic appeal. However, the flip side of this attraction is that young people may think their involvement will ensure access into media careers that appear associated with 'fame and fortune'. This is clearly unrealistic, particularly given the difficulties of breaching industry barriers. Therefore, as well as staff awareness of this issue, the *transferability* of skills needs to be highlighted, so that participants think about the widest possible variety of pathways.

One worker said that it was usually quite clear who had the talent and application to potentially pursue a media career and who probably didn't. Therefore it is important to carefully manage this and to stress the gain in qualitative outcomes and transferable skills that will be important whatever pathway the individual takes. A good example of this is the group of young people that became involved with L8R as actors, and whom the characters are based upon. With hindsight one of the workers involved with the project said they *"got a lot out of it"* and *"really achieved something quite significant"*. He thinks this is in part because of the public (and award winning) profile of the project. He thinks that the project was central in raising their aspirations; two of the six have established acting careers, the other four have used their skills and experiences in other fields, for example one is a teacher and another a trainee midwife.

In order to really understand and evidence how a project impacts upon an individual, it is necessary to go back before the point of engagement and find

out about where they were. This leads on to then seek to understand how the project has benefited them, and also how it has affected the choices participants have gone on to make. For the fullest account they would then need to be followed after the conclusion of the project, to see where they move on to. Obviously this is time and resource intensive and beyond the scope of most research or evaluation. However, talking to participants at various stages, and ideally at regular intervals, and/or getting them to both reflect on where they have been and how they envision their future steps, counteracts longitudinal issues.

This deeper kind of evaluation, which may throw up both 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes is unlikely to appear through the use of more quantitative methods. It requires a level of trust and reflection from the participant, and ideally time to have passed to allow for hindsight. It is projects themselves that are ideally placed to do this, through practices of recording that are integral to the project, and through their personal relationships with and knowledge of participants.

The Engagement Matrix (see below) was adapted for use by Hi8us projects²⁹, and is designed to be able to easily capture developments with both individuals and groups. If used over time it charts

progress as well as regression, which is particularly useful when referenced alongside session logs. It offers a way to record a starting point and therefore any developments that build on this, relating these to project specific activities, as opposed to progressional markers (or milestones) that may be defined by funders. Even if pathways are individualised, projects can evidence these as a totality.

III. Apprentices and Peers

Overall there is a tension between programmes being able to offer pathways that are informal and individually responsive, and the formalisation of pathways that can then become prescriptive, with individuals required to fit them. Individually tailored pathways require an obvious investment of time and support, while accredited programmes demand time in terms of delivery planning and assessment. Likewise they both offer different end gains; recognised certification or industry recognised production/achievement. This is likely to be an ongoing issue for many of the case study projects. The answer might lie in trying to do both, where this fits with current delivery. The Positive Futures Case Study Research found that many projects offered formal opportunities for training and accreditation to young people voluntarily. Their participation

Table 3 Section from Hi8us Engagement Matrix, The Toolkit

| Level 1 DISENGAGEMENT | Level 2 CURIOSITY | Level 3 INVOLVEMENT | Level 4 ACHIEVEMENT | Level 5 AUTONOMY | Level 6 MOVING ON |
|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| This is when users do not engage with the project. Most common with the most excluded users. | The point of first participation. Curiosity is a pre-requisite of learning. The arts engender curiosity because the outcome is unknown. | The stage when participation progresses to active participation. | The stage when young people 'relax' into the process and accept all of its challenges and risks. | The stage when young people are 'affected' by their achievement – the activity changes them. They start to become less dependent on the project. | The stage when young people are 'affected' by their achievement – the activity changes them. They start to become less dependent on the project. Takes the risk of leaving the status of participant or user, enters wider world. |

²⁹ It is based on an engagement matrix first developed by darts (Doncaster Community Arts) which can be found in 'epic -Engaging People in Change: Examining the value arts activity can add to service delivery in Doncaster' A. Wilson & L Robertshaw, 2006.

was not contingent upon entry into an accredited programme, but these were available for those who were interested. Findings included:

"In order to support young people's progression it is vital that projects provide access to both informal and formal recognition of their achievements and well structured and signposted pathways into volunteering and employment" (Crabbe et al Aug 2006).

A clear achievement observed in a number of the case studies was the development of participants, from initial engagement, through apprenticeship, traineeship, and into professional practice. This is not all participants, but those who for multiple reasons find the passion and commitment to further their interest in particular media. This 'Apprenticeship Model' has been defined by Ashley Grey as a cycle that moves from Observer – Participant – Novice – Independent.³⁰ We interviewed a number of people who had travelled this route although each had specific and different areas of interest and expertise. We wanted to understand what it was about them and their experiences that had enabled them to travel such distances and achieve significant success.

INSIGHT MO'S EXPERIENCE

Through a youth club Mo got involved with Hi8us in 2001 as a trainee on a film project. He said that they recognised *"I had a bit of potential"*. His involvement and learning continued in a stepping stone fashion from project to project. He was offered support and access to resources. Mo has now been Hi8us IT Resources Manager for 3-4 years. He said that this is 'amazing' – the position fits his skills and interests so well, and he feels a genuine recognition in terms of both trust and earning a salary.

I asked Mo what he thinks are the main things that Hi8us has given him and he gave the following:

- Trust.
- Training.
- Working side by side with professionals.
- Recognition of his skills.
- Nurturing.
- Two way gain and learning.

He said *"if there's courses I want to do I mention it I can do it"*. He obviously values this opportunity for his own development. Continually learning, developing

³⁰ Ashley Grey, Poplar Film School Evaluation Report Nov 2006.

and keeping interested is important to Mo.

Mo talked about his role in the project and how he is seen. He mentors young people coming into and up through it, and has credibility as someone who has been through this himself. His experience offers a real and undeniable illustration of what is possible. He said that they see him as *"an example of where they can go and what they can achieve"*.

.....: The research found a number of common elements in these narratives. Importantly there was a two way relationship between the individual and project workers. They were encouraged, supported and offered opportunities in response to their own skills development and drive. The projects tended to work in a way that went beyond the confines of programme delivery, connecting young people with new projects and opportunities, and responding positively to their own impetuses. For example in Carl's story he mentions wanting to make his own film and Hi8us helping him to do this. Building these kind of relationships, and having the resources to develop them, relied upon projects being well established themselves with a number of programmes ongoing, as is the case, for example, with both Hi8us South and Hi8us Midlands and with Hi8us Cornwall's emerging model. These examples also demonstrate how having industry links can open up ways in for some participants.

The impact of the success of such individuals is not just personal. They become peer role models for other young people at earlier stages of engagement. Those we interviewed seemed conscious of this; of how they had been encouraged by mentors, and of how they had then become mentors and role models themselves. In fact most seemed to have a desire to 'give back', making time to do this, for example by going into schools or colleges to talk about their own experiences, or to teach.

INSIGHT AHMED'S EXPERIENCE

"I mean it's good that Hi8us has given me that realisation. But I mean it's like I see other people, I see people like S, I see people like L, you know they do sometimes inspire me to do things. I see people around me like, definitely M. Cos M he's just like, he's been with Hi8us, now he's got his own established company. They've won an award, they've been in The Guardian and various things. They've done a lot for themselves, and that's something I see myself much

later in life establishing. Definitely. When you see people like that, you think it is possible. It's not just a dream. It is a possibility. There is a reality within that, which is very important to me."

IV. Participatory Media - Inclusion Through Media Success Stories

There are lots of success stories within Inclusion Through Media, in terms of both personal and skills development, and of participants who move into professional media arenas. Some projects like StripSearchers have not only created new pathways for participants into the associated industry, but have been so successful at this that they have impacted on the shape of it, creating a status and recognition for the programme itself. Other projects like UK Sound TV illustrate success in providing new and alternative platforms to the mainstream, where young people have been able to decide upon and create content that is globally accessible.

However, the barriers that young people (and particularly those who experience the effects of social exclusion) face, to breaking into the media industry must in no way be underestimated. Despite industry acknowledgement that both access into and cultural diversity within the media is an ongoing issue, barriers remain almost insurmountable.³¹ Hi8us' Mark Dunford comments:

"A lack of diversity in the media industry is a recognised problem and UK policy makers have committed themselves to taking strategic action to address this."³²

Therefore, any view of the successes of these projects in creating openings into professional media worlds must take this into account. Some of the participants that the research encountered have made this huge leap, and will hopefully be forerunners for others to follow.

INSIGHT

ASIA – STRIPSEARCHERS³³

Asia is a young Muslim woman and as such is a rarity in the world of graphic illustration. She is also unquestionably successful though still in the early stages of her career. A few years ago her pathway and rapid trajectory would have been unimaginable, to her most of all. She emigrated from Libya as a young girl, living first in Glasgow and then settling

in Birmingham. Despite family pressure to pursue a career in medicine, she resisted because of her passion for creativity and the arts. She turned to graphic illustration influenced by Manga, to express her experiences and beliefs. By chance someone told her about the StripSearchers programme, and she applied just in time. She was amazed to find out she'd been accepted as one of twelve participants, the rest of whom were male. Asia feels that this opening "*kickstarted*" her career, and that it felt far more relevant and engaging than her degree course. She found the learning intensive, and felt that she was really supported and encouraged by the workers and professionals from the project. There have been a number of stepping stones since StripSearchers. She won an international Manga competition, was accepted onto the Boost programme, and recent commissions have included artwork for a London Underground station and a graphic novel for Bloomsbury Books. She continues to be involved with Hi8us Midlands as well as with other ex-StripSearchers. Her appreciation of the project and those involved in it is demonstrated by her desire to 'give back' through for example doing interviews, or going into schools to encourage other young women to consider the option of similar pathways to hers.

Many Hi8us participants, most of those we interviewed, imagined themselves continuing to have contact and a relationship with the organisation and staff. This was particularly expressed by those on the brink of moving on, i.e. already beginning to find achievement and success independently and feeling ready to move into the media world beyond their experiences so far. Some need encouragement to 'spread their wings', while others who want to may have needs relating to networking/self promotion, self-employment, etc. One worker said,

"it is imperative that Mo and Carl go off and work in the industry too. By doing this they will bring back learning to Hi8us".

So the relationship with Hi8us, is likely to continue in a mutually beneficial way; they know that they can always come back and get interest and support, and they will be able to offer Hi8us and new participants the benefits of their skills and experience.

³¹ See the Cultural Diversity Network <http://www.cdnetwork.org.uk>

³² Dunford 2007.

³³ For more detail of Asia's story see Slater (2007) and Dhaliwal (2007).



09. Toolkit

"That's why I think it is really helpful that there are people researching how to make evaluation better, and how to make this liaising between funders and people on the ground better. Because we don't have time to jump through all the hoops and figure out exactly how we can communicate that." Spence et al 2006

Having made the argument that participatory media projects demand qualitative approaches to recording and understanding their value, the obvious next question is how? And more than just how, there need to be ways of doing this that make sense to both projects and funding bodies. Crucially these need to be as straightforward, quick, and consistent as possible, without impacting negatively on the 'real' face-to-face work.

There is a common resistance to monitoring and evaluation, particularly when it is seen as being additional work that is concerned with meeting the requirements of outside bodies. It becomes seen as a 'threat' to the core objective of working with participants.³⁴ Ideally evaluation needs to be embedded in projects from the outset, so that the task of recording practice and progress does not feel imposed from the outside, but instead becomes a useful way of reflecting on the work and feeding

³⁴ Youth Work: Voices of Practice, J. Spence, C. Devanney, K. Noonan, The National Youth Agency 2006.

back into it.

A number of sources cite the importance of turning around this view of evaluation, so that it is project driven, thereby becoming a practice that is useful firstly for projects themselves, with a secondary benefit of meeting funding requirements. Initially this is likely to require additional work around the change of practice, but it is hoped that project staff will recognise the potential benefits from doing so.

"Our research highlights the limitations of fixed, inflexible and exclusively quantitative assessments of project and programme performance.

For it to be effective, monitoring, evaluation and research needs to be integral to project work and developmental in practice, embracing qualitative and quantitative methods which give a more complete picture of the ways in which projects influence participants' engagement and development." Crabbe et al. (2006)

The Beyond the Numbers Game project in partnership with Hi8us Midlands have developed an online and interactive Toolkit that can be used by projects to monitor and evaluate (www.u-view.org). It is designed to encourage the recording of a range of data from sessional logs to blogs to video clips. These all become 'data', material that can be selectively retrieved and referenced (as well as

shared between projects), for the purposes of self evaluation, funding requirements, progress reports, etc.

Contained in the Toolkit are 'personal snapshots' in which the necessary quantitative details are logged (for example age, ethnicity or postcode), as well as more qualitative responses. If these are repeated with individual participants, they can build up a picture of progression, through the development and changes between one snapshot and the next.

The Toolkit is also designed with some flexibility so that it can meet the needs of specific projects. It is modelled in part on popular social networking sites, with the intention of being able to attract young people to use it as a personal resource for profiling their work, accessing other young people's work, and exchanging ideas and views. If this works it will mean that the views of participants will become an integral part of the evaluation system.

The Toolkit was created following examination of the kinds of records that projects already have to keep, and with the aim of both streamlining these and making them consistent across projects. Instead of duplicating sets of data for different funders, all data will be recorded in one place. This has the potential of providing data that can either refer to a specific project, or aspects of numbers of projects, as a shared and easily accessible resource.

The research also looked at the requirements of a significant number of relevant funding bodies. These were amalgamated, so that common areas or themes (indicators) were apparent. From these a taxonomy of metadata – a series of 'tags' – has been developed, which can be applied (by either project workers or external evaluators) to raw data, therefore making direct connections between practice and funding requirements. The aim here is to translate between the everyday languages spoken by participants and workers, and the languages spoken by funders.

Several case study projects helped in the development and testing of parts of the Toolkit. Feedback was generally constructive and positive. For example one group of young people expressed real pleasure in the opportunity it gave to reflect on themselves and their involvement. Workers also found it a valuable way of taking time to talk with participants and maybe get to know them better. The real test will be when the full version of the Toolkit is available online, and how projects use and respond to it.





10. Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

In this report, we have seen that the value of participatory media cannot be isolated in any of its components, but rather comes from the interaction between its different elements. A focus on high-quality professional media alone – or on participant-centred and developmental youth and community work alone – would miss the unique value added by the combination of these in participatory media. Participatory media must be seen as a *process* – starting with the ‘hook’ that media offers, going through the intensity of media production, to the buzz of seeing a finished product. This process can be uneven – like participants’ own lives, it does not follow a set, linear pathway – but it almost always requires duration, a long-term investment. Similarly, an emphasis solely on measurable outcomes, whether in terms of hard skills or employability, would miss the point of the *impact* of the work on people’s lives, including the development of their personal and creative skills, their civic engagement, and the stories they can tell through media.

The kinds of projects the research has encountered are (like their delivery), a hybrid. They combine aspects of the media with voluntary sector youth provision. This seems to result in a real freedom in approach to their delivery; they are able to creatively develop ideas that are tied into understandings of need, and relationships with young people and

their communities. They are not constrained by the necessity of ongoing provision but instead work in a way that independent media does, where projects tend to be short term, only some ‘come off’, but maintaining networks is vital.

The diversity and range of projects and their resultant wide appeal, is another participatory media USP. However, the research found that where projects were clustered together geographically over time they became embedded in an area and consequently more sustainable. Projects were able to share resources, new ideas were actively developed on the back of existing work, and learning was consolidated. Most significantly they acted as stepping stones, with participants able to move on from one to another, and by doing so create pathways. Through the pathways of young people moving from initial engagement onto apprenticeship and then professionalism, supported and encouraged by hub projects, bigger or longer term impacts were brought about.

The argument about numbers arises again here. Participatory media requires specific resources, is time-intensive, and, unlike some other engagement activities (e.g. sport), cannot work effectively with large numbers of participants. Funders looking for a good ‘spend to output ratio’ create the false economy; greater numbers actually often Equal less impact. Therefore evidence of longer term and

longer lasting impacts on the lives of participants needs to be recorded.

The report recognises the efficacy of various methods of gathering evidence, particularly in relation to charting 'distances travelled'.

"The learning from this project provides an opportunity to develop the strong 'learning curve' from Observer to Creator through adopting a more rigorous and consistent monitoring and evaluation methodology. This would benefit Hi8us South because it would link planning, evidence gathering and evaluation into a comprehensive format." Grey (2006)

Participatory media and other participatory youth interventions need funders to be more open minded about the range of outcomes they can produce. If their ability to attract diverse people is recognised then it must be seen as inevitable that participants will enter at different starting points, that they won't all follow the same routes, and their exit points will be various. A narrow view might be that enough targets are not hit, but the real measure of success is that all participants have gained something, and the project experiences have helped them move along their own developmental pathways. For some of these media industries will be the goal, while others will use newly developed abilities in other areas.

If the projects this research has been concerned with are able to continue and to grow post ITM funding then there are areas that it will benefit them to focus on. One key area is the formalisation of trainee pathways, so that these are apparent to participants (and funders), with more possibility of accreditation offered. This needs to be designed to fit the work as it is currently delivered, and not the other way around. Links could also be developed with other organisations and companies in order to support follow on work with participants. A successful example of this is the Brick Lane Trainee Scheme.

The need for regular monitoring and data collection cannot be emphasised enough. There may be some understandable resistance to this, but it is unavoidable and there is no gain in dealing with this half-heartedly. A better understanding of the impacts of participatory media can be gained through recording and sharing data, and this should

be important firstly to projects themselves. Without consistent records of projects their real benefits cannot be evidenced. These will therefore remain known and recognised to those within the field, but seem unsubstantiated to those outside. The Toolkit provides one framework for doing this. Creative Partnerships are recognised as having a 'sophisticated'³⁵ approach to evaluation, regarding it primarily as a process by which partners and participants can learn. They state:

*"Creative Partnerships encourages thoughtful evaluation and reflection....Inevitably, this process generates new ideas, projects and approaches."*³⁶

We also believe that it is only through building up consistency in evaluation across the sector that comparisons can be made and a bigger picture put together. This would enable the sector to make stronger arguments for the efficacy and therefore funding of participatory arts and media projects. And it would allow funders and policy-makers to understand the value of the sector's work, and therefore channel investment appropriately. Within current funding (and therefore evaluation) regimes, there are precious few opportunities to aggregate data across projects and build up this vital bigger picture.

On the 20/04/07 Beatz! Camera! Action! hosted a night of celebration of UK urban music through music video screenings, panel discussion, and live performance at Rich Mix in East London. Talent and success were at the forefront of this event. Talent was reflected in the high level of artistry and buzz within the building. The music videos that were produced were of a very high standard and covered a range of issues relevant to UK black urban youth culture and life, with most of the music videos feeling like the artists were working at keeping it both real and positive. Like the Projecting Stoke films, the music videos had provided participants with access to industry standard professionals who were able to help them present their talents to a wider world through exposure on TV, radio, the internet and press. This left me wanting to ask the question 'what will happen when the lights fade, the camera stops rolling and those who have influenced these lives have left or moved on to the next project or funding stream?'

From Research Notes

³⁵ Poplar Film School Evaluation Report Nov 2006, Commissioned by Hi8us South, Ashley Grey, Project Futures.

³⁶ <http://www.creative-partnerships.com>

Recommendations

In this section we return to each of the key findings set out in the report, and draw out the recommendations. These are divided into recommendations for monitoring and evaluation

– which we hope will be read by professional evaluators, but also those who commission evaluation or whose projects are evaluated – and recommendations to funders, policy-makers and the media industry.

| Finding | Recommendation for Monitoring and Evaluation | Recommendation to Funders, Policy Makers and the Industry |
|---|--|---|
| There is a unique value to media professionalism and developmental youth work. | Impacts in terms of participant development need to be evaluated as well as 'hard' industry outcomes. | Funders will derive added value from projects that combine professional media input with skilled youth work – the Hi8us model. |
| Media is a common language with a magnetic attraction. | The attraction of media can be harnessed in evaluation, if you use creative methods, such as video-diaries, blogs, film and photography. | There should be recognition of participatory media as an effective youth inclusion strategy. |
| Flexibility is a key element in good participatory media. | M&E frameworks need to be flexible enough to allow for unintended outcomes and changing priorities. | Funding regimes need to encourage rather than inhibit flexibility and innovation in delivery. |
| Good engagement draws on many elements, including local knowledge, word of mouth credibility and targeted outreach. | Evaluation techniques need to be designed to capture context of young people's lives and range of entry points. | Working with young people that are deemed 'hard to reach' requires investment in early stages of engagement. Media deliverers should be encouraged to either work with locally embedded youth/ community projects or become embedded in communities in themselves through a 'hub' or 'cluster' approach to delivery or a combination of these approaches (the Hi8us model). |
| Engagement needs sustaining over time; an advantage of the Hi8us model is that it allows for long-term engagement. | Ensuring individual and project progress and developments are recorded over time. | Sustaining engagement may be resource-intensive, but projects need to be able to support participants holistically. |
| Intensity and glamour is a key feature of media work. | Qualitative methods are uniquely able to capture these elements. | |
| Media has an exceptional ability to develop both individuals and collectives. | Evaluators need to record both individual achievements and group outcomes – as well as the quality of the group work process itself. This requires a range of techniques including individually oriented ones (e.g. interviews) and group oriented ones (e.g. observing sessions, running and focus groups). | Building teamwork is an achievement in itself – concentrating just on numerical targets alone can miss the value of this. |

| Finding | Recommendation for Monitoring and Evaluation | Recommendation to Funders, Policy Makers and the Industry |
|---|---|---|
| The fuller the participation, the greater the outcomes. | The process of participation (and different levels and forms of participation) should be including in evaluation. Session observation should be standard good practice for projects. The engagement matrix is a useful tool for enhancing this. | Genuine participation is resource-intensive, but produces greater long-term impact. |
| Skills should not be separated into 'hard' and 'soft', but be rethought, in all their interconnectedness (our framework was in terms of 'personal', 'craft' and 'creative' skills). | Evaluation should use methods that can recognise and record this range of skills. Projects should encourage participants to be reflexive about their skill development, e.g. using participant diaries. | Too much focus on 'hard' skills misses the value of 'soft' skills as building blocks for other skills and as valuable in their own right. |
| Non-mainstream styles and sites of learning fit well with participatory media. | Evaluators need to be sensitive and aware of the dynamics present in non-mainstream sites, and use methods appropriate to this, e.g. low-key participant observation or interactive tools appropriate to this, e.g. low-key participant observation or interactive tools. | Non-mainstream approaches are able to engage the marginalised and bring out their potential, which has a social and economic benefit, deserving of investment. |
| Finding a voice, and a platform for expressing it, is one of the values of participatory media, especially in terms of active citizenship. | Evaluation research should use the voices and media products of participants themselves. Other methods which do justice to this include narrative, diaries/blogs, video/photo records and life history interviews. | Funders should recognise the value of individual case studies alongside quantitative monitoring data. Funders should resource the creation/development of platforms (e.g. channels) for media expression alongside the funding of skill development. |
| Pathways through participatory media are diverse, individual, and likely to be non-linear. There is no one path that will fit all participants. | <p>Numbers of participants following formal, accredited pathways are not the only indicators of progression –although progression along such paths could be better sign-posted by practitioners.</p> <p>In addition, evaluation needs to record non-linear forms of participant progression, allowing for unpredictable outcomes, e.g. by taking qualitative 'snapshots' of participants along the way. This can be done by projects themselves as well as by external evaluators.</p> <p>Longitudinal forms of research – talking to participants at different stages of their journey, including long after the project has come to an end – is of immense value.</p> | <p>Funders should value both projects which enable the marginalised to enter the industry mainstream and projects which enable participants to create alternative pathways. A sole focus on 'hard' targets around entry to the industry can inhibit some of the value of participatory media.</p> <p>Funding ideally should allow for evaluation some time after a project has completed, in order to get longitudinal data on longer-term impacts. But Equally, funding regimes need to think in terms of much longer timescales, allowing projects to work with participants for sustained periods, and not expect quick fixes.</p> |

| Finding | Recommendation for Monitoring and Evaluation | Recommendation to Funders, Policy Makers and the Industry |
|--|---|---|
| <p>The informal apprenticeship model – nurturing ‘homegrown’ talent – is a model of best practice in participatory media.</p> | <p>Learning in a project can be most intense amongst former users who are now working on projects, and evaluators can learn a lot about a project by engaging with these sorts of participants.</p> | <p>Funders need to prioritise project sustainability in the sense of allowing deliverers the opportunity to use ‘homegrown’ talent in delivering to future cohorts.</p> |
| <p>Networks play a vital role in media work.</p> | <p>Evaluation needs to find ways of evidencing the role of informal networks, both in initial engagement (e.g. projects’ abilities to tap into local networks amongst the excluded) and in progressing beyond projects (e.g. in being able to help participants access the networks on which the industry is based).</p> | <p>Because networks play such an important role in the media industries, they have a key economic importance despite their apparently intangible nature. Accessing networks can be as important as gaining skills, and funding regimes need to recognise this.</p> |
| <p>Participatory media has a value for participants who may never end up working in the industries, as well as the ability to discover unfulfilled talent.</p> | <p>There should be a holistic approach to evaluation, rather than an industry-focused approach. Projects/evaluators must record the range of forms of development that participants go through, in order to evidence the real value of the project.</p> | <p>Funders should have expectations from projects in terms of transferable skills and personal development, rather than in terms of industry jobs.</p> |
| <p>Evaluation is often seen by practitioners as a threat or a burden, when in fact evaluation can be a way of giving voice to participants, doing justice to the work, and gaining recognition for achievements. Practitioners and funders have a common stake in evaluation as a tool for learning. There needs to be a stronger culture of evaluation across the sector.</p> | <p>Practitioners and projects need to become more open to evaluation and the value it can bring to their work. Evaluation should not be viewed as a hoop to be jumped through, or as something bought in from outside at the last minute. Practitioners should develop the skills and awareness to record and reflect on the progress of their participants and projects, and ultimately to set the terms of evaluation themselves.</p> <p>A Toolkit for evaluation, which embeds evaluative practice in delivery, is one way of facilitating this. The Beyond the Numbers Game Toolkit, u-view, helps translate between the everyday languages of practitioners and users and the language of funders.</p> <p>Drawing together the learning from different evaluations can be of huge value – to deliverers (who can use the data as evidence for future funding and as a source of reflection for their own development) and to the participatory media community as a whole.</p> | <p>Funders should encourage a reflective, holistic approach to evaluation, working with projects to develop the most appropriate M&E frameworks for the delivery, with the time consumed by this proportionate to the scale of the programme, and adequate resources set aside for rigorous and meaningful evaluation. Projects should be encouraged always to evaluate themselves and to incorporate evaluative practices in their work, whether they employ external evaluators or not.</p> <p>Funders have a responsibility to learn from the evaluations of the projects they fund and to share that learning. All too often, ‘doing an evaluation’ is seen as a box to be ticked, and the report ends up on a shelf unread. Funders are uniquely placed to aggregate the data generated from their programmes.</p> |



11. Appendix: The Case Studies

Beatz! Camera! Action! (Hi8us South)

www.beatzcameraaction.com

An artist development programme for young musicians to learn how to create their own music video promos and gain valuable advice on negotiating the music industry through a series of seminars and one-to-one workshops. The programme has worked with various local 'crews', and is currently developing ideas for a full length digital feature film, about the music scene in East London.

UK Sound TV (Hi8us South)

www.uksoundtv.com

UK Sound TV is a youth run broadband channel focusing on UK underground music, emergent technology and local/global issues - UK Sound TV is the first broadband channel produced and directed by a team of youth producers from Bow, East London. UK Sound TV is both a youth entertainment channel and a launch pad for new young talent, where young people can learn skills in production, sound, video, content development, design, and marketing.

L8R (Hi8us South)

www.l8r.uk.net

An interactive digital drama, accessible through TV, DVD and the web. Designed with characters based on a group of young actors, to raise current issues facing real young people. L8R is used by 12-17 year-olds in schools, PRUs, Youth Projects, and other youth based settings across the UK. Its learning themes are closely linked to PSHE, Citizenship, English and Drama, and mirror key elements of the Youth Service Curriculum Guidance.

'Be Roma or Die Trying' Roma Support Group Film Project (Hi8us South)

www.beromadvd.net

A collaborative documentary produced with a group of young Roma people, through a partnership between Hi8us South and the Roma Support Group.

The film is a journey through their heritage and across London, examining Britain's ignorance of their culture and celebrating the new life they are making for themselves. It premiered at the Genesis Cinema and has since been shown at film festivals and conferences. The film is accompanied by an education pack for use in schools to promote discussion on issues such as stereotypes, culture, tradition, and the power of the media.

StripSearchers (Hi8us Midlands)

www.stripsearch.org.uk
www.artpeeps.co.uk

StripSearchers aims to support and nurture amateur talented comic illustrators, via a professional-led vocational training scheme to culminating in the production of their own comic book. The scheme also involves creating an online content managed gallery site to promote West Midlands based artists, a touring exhibition of their work and VIP trip to the UK's largest comic convention. The scheme has been running for a couple of years and has forged the way for new comic talent to be recognised within the industry. Ex-StripSearchers have also formed their own publishing comic collective – MC2.

Boost (Hi8us Midlands)

www.boostwm.co.uk

The Boost scheme is delivered by Hi8us Midlands, as part of the Digital Central consortium. Fundamental to the scheme, is that it offers bespoke business support that responds to the needs identified by creatives in the digital industries. The scheme includes one-to-one business mentoring, business workshops, networking events, industry placements and an office base, with computers with broadband connection. In contrast with other similar schemes it is designed to be responsive to the individual. Participants get to select their own mentors, suggest workshops that would be useful for them, identify events/courses they need to attend and are given practical support to market their services or products. The Boost scheme is oversubscribed which demonstrates the need for it. While discrete it also offers the opportunity for business development for participants from other Hi8us Midlands schemes such as StripSearchers.

Breastfeeding Awareness DVD (Hi8us Midlands)

Hi8us Midlands has worked with a group of young parents through Handsworth Sure Start, to develop a learning resource DVD focusing on breastfeeding for expectant mothers *The Breast Intention*. While the DVD was created to promote breastfeeding it was developed to offer a balanced argument, drawing on the young parents real life experiences. The participants learnt a range of skills involved in the production process, and worked with professional film-makers in doing so. They have recently been involved in a careers advice workshop, looking at where they want to go next.

Projecting Stoke (Hi8us Midlands)

www.projectingstoke.com

Projecting Stoke aims to give a voice to communities based in Stoke-on-Trent through the media of film and maybe spot filmmaking talent along the way. Participants develop their ideas with the help of local filmmakers and learn how to storyboard their ideas, direct, film and edit their stories. Applications could either be made by individuals or groups. A diverse range of entrants were selected including: youth groups, learning centres, Residents Associations, arts groups, special needs groups, and YIPs.

The first phase of this scheme focused on the Meir district and 10 films were made with over 50 participants. Phase 2 of the scheme ran from September 2006 to February 2007, with eleven new films completed in the Tunstall district. The premiere for these films took place on 21 February at the Stoke-on-Trent Film Theatre. During the week 21 – 23 March films from both phases were projected onto the side of the Regent's Theatre, with a press night on the first evening. The week culminated in an awards show for all the participants of Projecting Stoke at the 1,400 capacity Victoria Hall, on Saturday March 24th.

Chew TV and Liskeard Youth Club (Hi8us Cornwall)

www.chewtv.com

Chew TV is a broadband TV based in the South West, 'run by young people for young people'. It is a collaborative project involving the Arts Council, Creative Partnerships, Cornwall Film and South West Screen with Twofour providing the platform, as well as technical and creative support.

Chew TV is unlike You Tube in that uses user-generated content as part of an edited and timed programme schedule alongside commissioned programmes. It aims to provide young people with exciting new entertainment and communication possibilities via the internet, and to enable further networking between young people, their peers and the media industry. As a broadband channel it obviously has a global reach, but its core aim is to nurture and develop talent in the South East.

Converge (Goldsmiths, University of London)

www.converge.org.uk

The aim of Converge is to increase the opportunities for young people to exhibit and distribute moving image productions. There are two main strands to its work – to develop a website, and publish information about existing sites where young people can upload their digital videos to run a series of ‘how to’ hands on workshops across a number of ITM partner groups, to enable young people to fully utilise both existing resources and build their own open source based channels. Converge has offered training to both young people and those that work with young people to encourage their access to showing their work on the web.

Open Up (Mental Health Media)

www.openupToolkit.net

Mental Health Media’s Anti-discrimination Toolkit project, which assists and inspires people involved in local anti-discrimination action and campaigns. Involvement in the project is for many a *“catalyst for personal development”*.

This initiative brings together the best in rights and anti-discrimination work, learning from a range of movements about how best change attitudes. The London-based Toolkit team plus the five regional co-ordinators, work closely with local groups across England and Wales, including trainers. Equal funding supports their ‘train-the-trainers’ programme.

Music for Screen and Drama (Musicians in Focus)

Musicians in Focus is committed to providing a central point of contact for the exchange and dissemination of information, liaising with the music industry in the research and development of new technology. Developments in voice synthesis and magnification software have brought music technology within reach of the visually impaired. This exciting progress will enable visually impaired musicians to continue working or build a career, creating new opportunities for themselves and for musicians of the future. The Equal funded ‘Music for Screen and Drama’ programme comprises of two strands of work; working with the music industry to advance relevant technologies, and working with visually impaired musicians in order to inform this advance. The project is London based but also attracts participants from further afield, all of whom benefit in terms of personal, skills and career development.

Compulsive Community Pictures (First Light)

www.compulsiveproductions.com

Compulsive Community Pictures recently completed a First Light Funded production with young people from Worthing entitled ‘Polaroid’ in January 2007. Polaroid is described as *“offering an insight into how a loners mind perceives the world around him, and how the world sees him”*. This five minute psychological thriller has been entered into film festivals across the UK and recently picked up the 3P Media Award for Youth Groups at The End of the Pier International Film Festival 2007. Worthing Youth Theatre were partners in the project, and this collaboration is ongoing. The work has led onto further projects plus an internet site intended to *“offer a showcase for the young people of Worthing to show their films”*, which they have produced, directed and acted in.

Every Street Dreams, Cornerhouse (First Light)

www.livewire-manchester.com

Every Street Dreams was an animation project involving 12 young people. It involved working with professional film-makers, skills workshops, and close collaboration between participants. The film has been shown at a number of events and film festivals and recently picked up a First Light Award for Best Animation. It came out of LiveWire, which is the Cornerhouse’s education project for 14 to 18 year olds *“who want to get creative and work with experienced artists and filmmakers”*. They offer film, art and multi-technology projects, and events (including a film camp) throughout the year.





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