

# Who decides what's in my Fridge?

An overview of the Productive Margins Food Project.



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## Executive summary

*Who Decides What's In My Fridge* was a co-produced research project exploring how people experience the regulation of their food habits in their community. The project was a collaboration between the University of Bristol and three community organisations in Bristol: Coexist in Stokes Croft, Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) in Knowle West, and Single Parent Action Network (SPAN) in Easton. We also worked closely with groups and individuals from the nearby areas of two of the partner organisations involved; a group of eight 'Junior Digital Producers' employed by KWMC, local residents in Knowle West, and a group of Somali women in Easton supported by SPAN. As co-designed action research, the project sought to understand how access to affordable, nutritious food can be improved in these neighbourhoods and beyond.

We used a participatory approach and incorporated mixed methods, allowing the research design to be responsive to the emerging findings of the project and build on the experience and expertise of the partner organisations. In Knowle West, the emphasis was on gathering quantitative and qualitative data through surveying the local community and organising events, building collective capacity in the process. In Easton a group of local Somali women took part in peer research training based on participatory mapping and peer interviewing, as part of a broader action research process, leading to the design of new interventions. This report draws on multiple data sources produced through the project including audio recordings, visual mapping, photography, workshop notes, focus groups and interviews with the participants involved in the project.

From the beginning the intention was also to enable dialogue between the two communities, and this was made possible by several knowledge exchange events. For example, in February 2016 the two communities came together for a workshop facilitated by Coexist, to share knowledge and diverse cultural understandings, and identify overlapping research themes. Together the groups were interested in further exploring the **spatial regulation of food habits**: how local environments and



neighbourhoods work to influence the decisions that we make about food, and how to create change. Following this workshop we commissioned an artist, Anne-Marie Culhane, to work with project participants to explore and reimagine community food spaces to improve access to affordable, nutritious food. As part of the commission, Anne-Marie proposed bringing a 'Shed on Wheels' to Bristol to act as a hub for food-based activities and workshops. Anne-Marie designed and curated the Taste of Knowle West and Somali Kitchen events at The Shed on Wheels, working with the four partner organisations and community participants in Knowle West and Easton.

The project was a challenging but rich experience for all involved, with exciting ambitions for



*Participants at the 'Research Feast' to mark the end of the project, held at Hamilton House July 2016.*

enabling exchange and creating change. Many connections have been forged and as the project draws to a close future collaborations are being explored.

## Context and Rationale

This project was part of the 'Productive Margins' research project funded by the Cross-Council AHRC- and ESRC-funded *Connected Communities* programme. Productive Margins is a five year, multi-disciplinary collaboration between seven community organisations in Bristol and South Wales and the universities of Bristol and Cardiff. The programme is made up of seven research projects, each one bringing together academics and communities to explore new ways of engaging with regulation and exploring how communities that are excluded from regulatory decision-making can become active participants. Through using co-production on an experimental and large scale, Productive Margins seeks to find out; *'What happens when diverse communities and academics come together to re-shape engagement and work creatively with ideas that run through society, law, history and art?'*



The primary innovation of the Productive Margins research programme is Productive Communities Research Forum, a site where academics and communities together identify the focus and research questions for projects that develop regulatory regimes for engaging communities, projects that arise out of everyday lives rather than the bureaucratic needs of mainstream institutions. The methodology of co-production begins with two principles: 1) academics and community organisations are equal partners in the design and delivery of the research programme; 2) new understandings arise when we reflect what we think we know against others who bring to the field different perspectives. Through the Research Forum, community organisations working with communities at the margins are not only involved in conducting research, but are actively co-producing the agenda for research.

The food project developed out of discussions between academics and community partners at a Productive Margins forum in 2014. Who Decides What's in my Fridge was the overarching research question agreed by members of the food working group, to try and explore some of the factors that shape people's food habits. The three community organisations that worked on the food project, alongside academics from the University of Bristol, were:

**Coexist:** Coexist is a social enterprise based in the inner city of Bristol bringing together alternative micro-businesses in its expansive premises. We worked closely with the Coexist Community Kitchen, an initiative that runs cookery courses and workshops with groups that might not otherwise have access to them.

**Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC),** charity and social enterprise with 20 years' experience of working with people to understand how digital technologies can be utilised to meet local needs. It is a place where local people, artists, technologists, businesses and public sector organisations can come together to co-create new ideas, tools and technologies that will bring about positive social change.

**Single Parent Action Network:** SPAN works to support single parents living in poverty and deprived areas, through programmes of community empowerment projects, parenting courses, education and training development, and capacity building for family self-help groups.

Through valuing the expertise of marginalised communities that are often excluded from research and policy mechanisms the project hoped to co-produce transformative knowledge with participants about how food habits are regulated. Community based participation in the project was fostered through Knowle West Media Centre and Single Parent Action Network, with the RA worked closely with local groups, service users, residents and organisations from the nearby areas of these organisations.



## Why food?

Food itself is a powerful marker of social exclusion, both for individuals and communities (McGlone et al, 1999). Bristol, as a city, is widely regarded for its thriving local food scene, with many organisations and groups working to reconnect urban residents with a more localised food system, often growing organic food and distributing through independent and alternative outlets (for an overview and examples see Carey, 2013, and Moragues-Faus and Morgan, 2015 ). However these interventions can be out of reach for low income groups and time-poor residents of Bristol. More affluent consumers and/or those with more time are increasingly able to pursue – and pay for – nutritious, locally produced, and more sustainable food. At the same time, austerity, the benefit cap and stagnating wages, has meant that for many others, accessing decent, healthy food – that is, the shops or markets people can reach, what they can buy, for how much, and how they can cook it – is increasingly difficult. There are some 16 official food banks operating in the city, with use continuing to rise.<sup>1</sup>



*FoodCycle in Bristol - volunteers use surplus food that would otherwise go to waste to cook nutritious meals for low-income communities.*

Organisations and projects in Bristol, mostly led by committed volunteers, have long embodied the principle that good quality food is the right of the many, not the privileged few. However it is important to recognise that Bristol is very much a divided city, with high levels of wealth and spiralling house prices sitting uneasily in a city where one in every four children live in poverty and food bank use has risen by 28 per cent in the last three years.<sup>2</sup>

It is within this context that our project sought to develop understandings of how two communities in Bristol, which have been largely left out of decision making processes, negotiate and make

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<sup>1</sup> <https://opendata.bristol.gov.uk/Community/Bristol-Foodbanks/aynu-4h8r>

<sup>2</sup> <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s8278/Appendix%201%20-%20Bristols%20strategy%20for%200Children%20Young%20People%20and%20Families%202016-%202020.pdf>

decisions about food in their everyday lives. Each of the three partner organisations involved in the project wanted to explore food as an issue with the communities that they work with.

As the final report of the Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty 'Hungry for Change' makes clear, in recent years the rhetoric of 'food choices' has highlighted the responsibility of the individual to eat well, at the expense of emphasising the environment within which decisions are made. Under the overall research question *Who (or what) Decides What's in my Fridge* we worked with community participants to co-create knowledge about food habits, problematise the notion of 'food choices', and explore the factors that work to regulate the decisions that communities make about food.

## Research questions, aims, objectives

The project developed an ambitious set of aims and objectives in an early stage of collaboration. We also shaped broad research questions, anticipating an iterative process to refine them as findings emerged throughout the project.

The aims of the project were:

1. To understand what regulates and can transform people's food habits
2. To co-produce with and empower communities to create lasting concrete and social change that improves well-being and access to affordable, nutritious food
3. To inform policy and practice (around co-production and regulation of food habits and transformative knowledge) to broaden reach of lasting change

The objectives were:

- a) To plan the themes, questions and activities with the community
- b) To gather and create data on what regulates habits and transformative knowledge through creative activities
- c) To co-document and share this knowledge within communities
- d) To co-document learning (on co-production/regulation/transformation) and create something to share with wider audiences, change makers, decision makers and practitioners

Our initial research questions were:

1. What practices and tactics can help us to document (visualise/reflect on) our food habits in a way that makes visible what we would like to change?

2. What forces (within and beyond community) beyond our control shape our food habits in ways that we collectively object to?
3. Which of these do we want to transform? What existing resources are there to do this? What can we add to share with others?

## Outline of methodology and key activities

The research project was designed by the project working group, involving academics from the University of Bristol and staff from the three community organisations. The design of the programme of activities was shaped progressively as local people and participants made their own interests and commitments clearer through the project's duration. There was a strong commitment to co-producing knowledge with local people rather than designing a top-down project - although in practice this proved difficult, given the limited time working group members had allocated to the project. The working group met monthly for between 2-4 hours while activities took place at each location throughout the working week.

The research took place mainly between June 2015 and July 2016. It was coordinated by a community-based researcher (Kitty Webster) who worked across the four partner organisations involved in the project. The researcher was employed by and based at Knowle West Media Centre, one of the partner organisations on the project.

In Knowle West, the project employed young people who have experienced barriers to employment to develop in-demand skills while working on a project that had a positive social impact. Working with local residents and organisations to gather quantitative and qualitative data through surveying the local community and organising event, In Easton, a group of local Somali women took part in peer research training based on participatory mapping and peer interviewing. The approach in both organisations is looked at in greater detail in the following section. Participants and residents from both sites were brought together three times throughout the project, enabled by Coexist providing both physical space and expertise in convening diverse groups and "creating spaces that best provide for the community". Working with an artist towards the end of the project enabled us to deepen our approach to coproduction, working with participants, residents and local organisations in both areas, to organise four days of participatory events and activities based on exploring alternative community food spaces.



**Table 1: Timeline of key project activities**

Activity	When	Description	Number of participants
Cook 'n Converse at KWMC and SPAN	May 2014	Events held in the run up to the project as part of the Food Connections festival in Bristol	40
Food diaries	May 2014	Food photo diaries kept by participants at KWMC demonstrating 'traditional' cooking techniques, budgets and recipes.	5
'Pilot study' focus groups drawing together local residents	June 2015	Lunchtime discussions were held at each of the partner organisations: Coexist, KWMC and SPAN, exploring food and shopping habits.	40
Joint community visit to 'Feed Bristol'.	June 2015	Joint visit to Feed Bristol, a community food growing project in Bristol. Members of the working group as well as participants from KWMC and SPAN as part of AHRC attended as part of Connected Communities Festival Fortnight. It was welcomed as an opportunity for meaningful cross-cultural exchange and demonstrated an initial interest in cooking and growing	16
Lunchtime discussion group formed at SPAN	September 2015	Service users of SPAN were invited to join a series of five lunch discussions based around sharing food and having discussions on food habits and cultures. The lunches represented different food cultures that participants had experience of, including Dutch, Somali and English, and participants were invited to cook and bring in food for different weeks.	30
Junior Digital Producers start at KWMC	October 2015	A team of eight 'Junior Digital Producers' are employed by KWMC to work on a 'real life' project and learn digital creative and employability create opportunities for young people to work in the creative and tech sectors. The JDPs will spend much of their 6 months working on the project.	8
SPAN visit to	October	A visit to a local community centre to take part in	11

Trinity Centre community garden.	2015	cooking activities including a herb workshop involving foraging, discussing medicinal benefits and making herb teas.	
Programme of peer research at SPAN, led by Helen Thomas from University of Bristol	November - December 2015	Six sessions delivered weekly by Helen Thomas, Research Associate on Productive Margins, to a group of between 6-15 participants. Research focuses on the number of fast food takeaways in the local area.	15
Data collection activities in Knowle West	November 2015	Junior Digital Producers run activities to test out data collection methods, including bottle data collection game about food choices and a map of the area to pin where people shop. Based on this experience, they start to design and build an interactive survey in the form of a lifestyle fridge.	25
Community event at KWMC	January 2016	Event at KWMC held- 'Fridge Raiders' - to engage local residents about the project for JDPs to trial and gather input in the 'fridge survey'.	30
Fridge survey taken out 'on tour' in Knowle West	February 2016	The JDPs took the interactive fridge survey on a tour of several community venues over the course of 10 days to gather data from local residents.	75
SPAN visit to Coexist Community Kitchen	February 2016	Project participants from SPAN visit the Coexist Community Kitchen for a cooking workshop with Ari Cantwell.	10
Joint community workshop held at Coexist	February 2016	Participants from KWMC and SPAN, as well as working group members, join together for a workshop at Coexist to identify shared interests and facilitate cross-cultural exchange.	25
Focus groups and workshops at KWMC with local residents	February - March 2016	Three focus groups were held at KWMC with a group of local residents to discuss access to food in the area, centered on the lack of a supermarket in the area. Research activities included mapping of past shops, and designing a survey about shopping habits	17

		in the area.	
Website built at KWMC	March 2016	Junior Digital Producers analyse data from the 'fridge survey' and work on building a bespoke website to share findings with the community.	8
Food and Hygiene certificates at SPAN	March 2016	Project participants at SPAN undertook Food and Hygiene certificates, level 1.	10
Shopping habits survey in Knowle West	April 2016	Survey distributed by five Knowle West residents to local community groups and neighbours, totaling 105 respondents.	105
Community event in Knowle West	April 2016	Event called 'Eat and Greet' organised by KWMC and JDPs to launch the website and showcase survey findings. Installation in unused local shop	200
Community event in Knowle West as part of Food Connections	May 2016	Event called 'Made in Knowle West' to explore and discuss the local landscape of Knowle West, for local residents including parents and children from the local children's centre. The event includes a foraging at a nearby allotment, drinks making, project presentation and discussions.	40
Community event in SPAN as part of Food Connections	May 2016	Event called 'Too Many Takeaways' held at SPAN to bring together project participants and local residents with food organisations and public health experts. The event includes cooking demonstrations, project presentation and discussions.	40
Campaigns training delivered at SPAN	May 2016	Two half days of campaigns training delivered for project participants at SPAN, including training on how to influence policy and creating a draft campaigns strategy to campaign on fast food takeaways.	15
Artist Anne-Marie	June 2016	Community participants from both KWMC and SPAN	20

Culhane commissioned to work on the project		are involved in the recruitment process of the artist. Anne-Marie Culhane and the RA hold a series of meetings and planning sessions with local residents, organisations and project participants to plan artistic intervention in both areas.	
Shed on Wheels event in Knowle West, curated by artist Anne-Marie Culhane	July 2016	Two days of events branded as 'Taste of Knowle West', using a pop-up 'Shed on Wheels' as a hub for food activities including a local produce competition.	Approximately 260 attendees
Shed on Wheels event in Easton, co-curated by Anne-Marie Culhane and project participants from SPAN	July 2016	An event called 'Somali Kitchen' held outside a library in Easton to showcase Somali food and culture. Project participants cooked traditional Somali food and organised cultural activities.	Approximately 500 attendees
Joint event held at Coexist, co-curated by Anne-Marie Culhane, Coexist, and the RA.	July 2016	A 'Research Feast' was held at Coexist to showcase the work of the project and to build on the concept of 'food utopias', as part of the Connected Communities' Festival 2016.	Approximately 60 people, plus 10 children.
Interviews and focus groups with participants and working group members	August 2016	The academic lead carried out interviews with all members of the project working group. The researcher carried out interviews and small focus groups with some of the participants from KWMC and SPAN.	15
Social Enterprise workshop for SPAN participants	October 2016	A half day workshop for project participants at SPAN exploring options to formalise as a group and plan next steps.	10

## The research at SPAN

The Single Parent Action Network (SPAN) is based in Easton and delivers front-line services to support single parents and other disadvantaged families in the local area. Service users and families that use SPAN mostly live in the wards of Easton and Lawrence Hill, in the East of the city. This part of the city is the most diverse area in Bristol and connects a large cross section of different cultures, ethnicities, religions and backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> It also has neighbourhoods<sup>4</sup> that, according to national statistics, are amongst the 10% of most deprived neighbourhoods in the entire country.

*A project participant at SPAN cooks up a feast of traditional Somali food for one of our lunchtime discussions, September 2015.*



SPAN were keen to engage a targeted group of Somali mothers as project participants. Many of the women knew each other through meeting at SPAN events and through using SPAN services. In September 2015 the Researcher and staff at SPAN organised a series of weekly lunchtime discussions and activities to build relationships with potential participants and scope out key interests. There were between 6-20 attendees to each of the weekly lunches. Childcare was provided by SPAN to enable mothers with young children to attend the lunches. Participants were an informal grouping of mostly Somali women, with others, including an Iraqi women, being more involved towards the beginning of the project.

Sharing different foods together was a useful way to initiate conversations about food habits, but also to start having deeper discussions about cultural identity and experiences of migration. The key themes that emerged from the lunch discussions included; food advertising targeted at children,

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<sup>3</sup> Statistical Profile, Lawrence Hill and Ashley wards, Bristol City Council, 2013, page 2

<sup>4</sup> Neighbourhood here is defined in terms of Lower Level Super Output Areas (LLSOA). An explanation and a list of the Bristol LLSOAs can be found on the Bristol City Council website here <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/wardfinder?XSL=Isoa> A map of LLSOAs by ward can be accessed by clicking on the name of a ward on the Bristol City Council website.

interest in nutrition and increasing understanding and skills about 'healthy' cooking, and the number of fast food takeaways in Easton and the health impacts for the community, particularly children and young people. It was this latter issue that the group decided to focus on.

Participants had not been involved in a research project before, and there was interest in learning about Bristol University, as well as gaining new knowledge and skills. There was a strong desire that the project not only create new understandings but also that it should provide opportunities to build on transferable skills, such as improving language and organisational skills and practical skills such as cooking. There was excitement about wanting to include participation on CVs and opportunity to broaden job prospects. In response to this, Helen Thomas-Hughes, a Research Associate at University of Bristol working on Productive Margins, developed a schedule of peer research and led workshops in November and December 2016. The workshops included; an introduction to research ethics, how to formulate and ask questions, participatory mapping, and peer interviewing. The group of participants that signed up to the research training involved 12 individuals, however the group tended to vary each week, often with around 6 participants in attendance. This made it a challenge to build continuity and a sense of development over the sessions.

Another key challenge was that the mixed language levels of the group. Some of the group had fluent or high levels of English, others were more intermediate, and some a low level of spoken English. There was also a mixture of literacy levels – both in English and Somali. Additionally, there was one woman who spoke only Dutch or Arabic. A staff member from SPAN translated as needed at every session, and a participant translated into Arabic or Dutch as needed. Another challenge has been that the group of participants varies each week.

The participatory mapping exercise of fast food takeaways in the local area was a useful means to gather information, engage participants and stimulate discussion.

*"Takeaways are everywhere – near schools, near my house. The children love it. Whenever they have £2 they go and buy it." - Sahra.*



*Project participants at SPAN map fast food takeaways in their neighbourhood at a peer-research workshop.*

During the research activities we identified that there are 494 fast food takeaways in Bristol.<sup>5</sup> This means that of all local authorities in England, Bristol has the eight highest number of outlets. Fast food outlets offer cheap, tasty and energy-dense food but lacking in nutritional value, with high levels of fat, sugar and salt which are linked to obesity and related health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. Evidence shows that outlets cluster in neighbourhoods of high deprivation, and so could play a role in reinforcing inequalities in disease, diet and rates of obesity.<sup>6</sup>

In Easton and Lawrence Hill, the two wards where some of the participants live, there are 66 fast food takeaways. In other wards there are much less, for example in Clifton there are only seven. This means that children and young people in certain parts of the city are more exposed to unhealthy food.

As we unpicked the issue of fast food takeaways it was clear that the concerns were not only around the health impact of fast food, although this was a key concern, but also around the lack of alternative spaces of the community, and particularly Somali women and children, to meet. There

<sup>5</sup> Public Health England, Fast food outlets by local authority, URL: <https://www.noo.org.uk/visualisation>.

<sup>6</sup> Burgoine, T., Forouhi, N. G., Griffin, S. J., Brage, S., Wareham, N. J., & Monsivais, P. (2016). Does neighborhood fast-food outlet exposure amplify inequalities in diet and obesity? A cross-sectional study. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 103 (6), 1540-1547.

was also a worry that with few other options in the area, the Somali youth were congregating in queues outside fast food takeaways, providing an arena for anti-social behaviour and gangs.

*“We don’t have a single youth club, any safe places where youngsters can come together and have a good time. So the takeaways become the place where youngsters meet.” - Aisha.*

### **‘Boundary issues’ in co-produced research?**

Though food habits and fast food takeaways formed a starting point for discussions, many other issues emerged that were of central importance to the participants, particularly around issues of cultural identity and the need for a sense of ‘belonging’ among Somali communities. This presented a dilemma and highlights a challenge for co-produced research: should the research questions be allowed to shift where the (funded) research focus has been agreed prior to participants’ involvement? While the issue of fast food takeaways was of interest, it was not necessarily the most pressing issue for participants in their daily lives. This difficulty was partly mitigated by focusing research activities at both sites on the *spatiality* of food access and justice in the second part of the project. Meanwhile, the relationship established between participants and both the researcher and the Productive Margins Research Associate was strong, allowing these concerns to be explored. However, this represents a challenge to the model of co-production itself. There is a hope that some of the more sensitive issues that participants were interested in can be picked up in later research collaborations with the University of Bristol.

### **Creating conditions for making change**

A driving interest in the research from SPAN from the beginning was that it should instigate positive change for the participants and the wider community: there was an ambition to learn in order to change. One participant at SPAN, Hanna, summarises a core motivation for being involved; “We want the research to be helpful to our community”. As the work around the fast food takeaways progressed, the Researcher organised two sessions of campaigns training for participants. The first was delivered by researchers from the Productive Margins team and focused on and introduction to campaigns and influencing policy. The second session was delivered by a community organiser based in Bristol, with experience of organising among migrant groups. The group felt a real connection to this and were

particularly interested an activity around 'Telling the story of us', in order to discuss identity and community based struggles.

As the project evolved, the group discussed the shared identity of the group, and agreed to formalise initially as a Muslim Women's group, and later as a Somali Women's group. They increasingly saw themselves as less as a subgroup of research participants or service users of an organisation, and more as a group of community activists. This was a significant turning point in a number of ways. Firstly, while the group had initially met and were supported by SPAN, the organisation were facing considerable upheavals and staff were not always able to commit to coming to meetings or workshops. The ambitions of co-production and collaboration with community organisations face a number of difficulties in a harsh political climate of funding cuts. Yet with the group feeling more confident and committed to working with each other outside of the context of the research partnership with SPAN, new possibilities could continue to open up. With the participants feeling more empowered through having a shared identity and a clearer agenda, the Researcher was able to organise activities and liaise directly with participants who wanted to 'get their voices heard'. Some participants of the group were interested in actively campaigning on the issue of fast food in the area and were invited to talk on a local radio show about the project, speaking passionately about the research and the work they were doing together. Participants later got involved in influencing activities, supported by the RA, including presenting to local councillors at a local neighbourhood forum and meeting with the Bristol Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing to discuss the issue of fast food takeaways.

## The research at KWMC

As its name suggests, the Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) is based in Knowle West, a housing estate in the south of Bristol, today home to approximately 12,000 residents. The estate was built in the 1920s and 1930s as a council housing estate, constructed on garden city principles (see box two). Over the years, the areas has experienced long-term social and economic issues and scores high on multiple measures of disadvantage. Filwood and Inns Court, both wards in Knowle West, have previously been ranked among the five per cent most deprived areas in the country.<sup>7</sup>

KWMC seeks to create social, environmental and economic regeneration in the area by building on

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-indices-of-deprivation>

the community assets in the area. KWMC has a long history of collaborative work with communities and universities, and as an organisation is committed to using 'socially engaged arts practice' as a type of action research. KWMC was committed to linking the research to the many existing initiatives at local food production in the area.

### Box two: Garden city principles and food production in Knowle West

“ Much of the Knowle West estate was built in the 1930s, to provide new homes for those who needed to be relocated as a result of clearance of inner-city slums in Bristol. The estate aimed to not only provide homes but also "to provide healthier living conditions for large families on low incomes". The estate's development followed **garden city principles** such as the provision of large gardens and generous green space in the form of both parks and countryside. Whilst other elements of the estate's original design – the provision of local employment opportunities, leisure facilities and integrated transport links – have fallen by the wayside, local food production remains a notable part of the estate's character.

Current food production activities include the following: a number of local authority-owned allotments; Bramble Farm, a smallholding run by families on the estate, growing vegetables and keeping chickens, pigs and turkeys; A growing project in The Park Community Centre with chickens, bees, ducks and a goat; Re:Work, a social enterprise recycling building materials and reclaiming spaces for training and work experience in construction and gardening for unemployed adults; Knowle West Health Association, an organisation running a community allotment and a community kitchen; domestic orchards, chicken-keeping, bee-keeping, fruit and vegetable growing; the hunting of wild rabbits on common ground with dogs.

[ [...] To an urban outsider, food production in places like Knowle West presents interesting challenges and contradictions to preconceptions of suburbs, to distinctions between the urban and rural, to ideas of the local, and to romanticised images of organic growing. Most of the growing projects on the estate take place in some of the sorts of *edgeland* spaces, a disused school, reclaimed common land and allotments, thriving on the fringes, the in-between spaces; on land left over (or behind) by the tides of building and industrial development, in pockets behind houses or factories, and in ribbons along the trackbeds of railways. ”

Adapted from Hurley, 2013, pp. 106-7

There were ambitions at KWMC to engage a wide range of local people, groups and organisations in the project, rather than working with a core group of research participants in an attempt to 'do research differently'. Additionally, another objective of KWMC is to upskill young people and create work opportunities for those that otherwise wouldn't have them in the creative industries. Part of this commitment is met through their Junior Digital Producer (JDP) programme, with eight young

people (18-24 year olds) who were previously on Job Seekers' Allowance, employed for six months, learning digital skills such as coding and design, while being supported to improve their confidence and professionalism. The training takes place within the context of a 'real life' project that aims to produce a positive social impact by working with local people to respond to an identified need.

## The Junior Digital Producers

With the approval of the working group, with support from the working group, KWMC decided to merge the food project with their JDP programme so that the eight young people would be employed to work on the project for six months. The JDPs started their six months at KWMC in October 2015, with an intensive programme of inductions and trainings, including introduction to data, data ethics, creating surveys, photography, coding, using sensors, film production, community engagement and project planning. The JDPs planned to do a creative data collection exercise in the community and then produce a visualisation (on and offline) to display their findings and raise awareness of the topic.

After trialling a number of data collection activities, the JDPs developed and built an interactive installation and survey in that form of a life-size refrigerator filled with food models and feedback mechanisms. The Fridge survey asked *"What factors influence your food habits in ways you would like to change?"* and included 10 factors that could affect someone's food habits, such as the price of food, location of shops and availability of produce. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they were affected by each factor. In February 2016 the survey installation was taken on a tour of several community venues over the course of 10 days to gather data from local residents.

**Box 2:** Naomi Yates, who managed the Junior Digital Producers at KWMC, reflects on the data collection method in Knowle West.

“ The idea to make the process of data collection and visualisation creative and engaging was directly informed by Knowle West Media Centre long standing practice of community engagement, and using the arts and media as a tool to make information and technology accessible to the community of Knowle.

The tour was designed to target specific pre-existing community groups who fell into the categories for being at risk of food poverty, that were outlined in the scoping study. Those 4 groups were: pensioners or elderly people; young people living alone; single parents or low income families; and disabled people.

Overall on the Tour the fridge gathered data from 75 people. 60% of whom were over the age of 60 and female, and a high percentage of which were disabled. Despite doing our best to target single parents or low income families by multiple visits to the nurseries and children’s centre’s where parents were likely to be, the parents in a rush to pick up their children did not want to take the time to do the Fridge survey. Some took paper surveys away with them, but they were never returned.

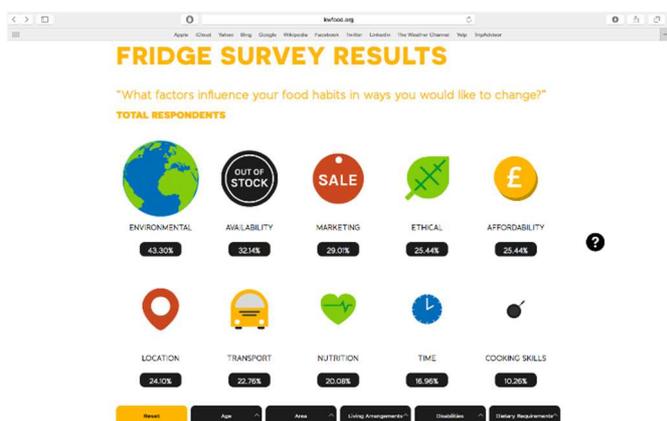
Some elderly people were also intimidated by the Fridge and didn’t want to go up and interact with it, since the interaction involved being on your own, as it was a single person activity. So this may have contributed to why people did not want to participate.

The headphones meant that only one person could listen at a time, which slowed the process down considerably, meaning that only one person could answer the survey at any one times, unless they headphones were omitted and the answers read out to the participant instead. Overall we felt that 75 respondents was satisfactory, considering the level of in-depth data we had collected, and the amount of time it took one person to answer all the questions.

It was challenging to find answers and questions that fitted the formulaic, binary answer response system which was needed to conduct a survey of this kind, which did lead to certain questions being challenging to phrase in a non-leading way. It is possible that some of the explanations lead the participants to choosing one answer over another, thus creating disproportionate responses in some cases. ”

While they need be read within the limitations outlined above, the results of the survey do help to illustrate some of the factors that might influence food habits for local people. For BS4 residents (local to Knowle West) issues of availability of products in local shops, access to transport and location of shops were the first, third and sixth priority, respectively. For residents outside of BS4, these three factors slip down the list of priorities to seventh, 9th and 8th, respectively. For the full results, visit [www.kwfood.org](http://www.kwfood.org)

As part of their training it was also important that the JDPs also make a piece of work demonstrating their new skills in coding through the creation of a portfolio piece. Following the data collection, a web developer worked with the JDPs to build a bespoke website to present and visualise the results of the survey, including an interactive digital tool for visitors to segment and interact with the survey results. The website will continue to be available online beyond the life of the project.



Local MP, Karin Smyth,

- The website was launched at a showcase event organised by KWMC and local organisations in April 2016. The community event took place on the local shopping high street and was billed as a free afternoon event celebrating all things food, based out of a previously empty shop. There were cooking demonstrations, food tasting, produce for sale, growing activities, and stalls about healthy eating.

The JDPs curated an interactive installation of the survey results in the form of a 'pop-up' shop, with data displayed in the forms of food products, and graphs made out of drinks bottles filled with coloured sand. More than 200 people attended the event.

**Table 2.** Some figures from the 'Fridge' survey.

<p><b>62% of BS4 residents would like more information about the environmental impact of the food they buy</b></p>	<p><b>61% of BS4 residents aren't happy with the range of products in local shops and want change</b></p>	<p><b>35% of local people who were surveyed eat home-grown food at least once a week</b></p>
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**Wider participation in Knowle West**

Working with the team of eight young people was an important part of making the research participatory at KWMC and creating new opportunities for involvement. It also met KWMC's commitment to providing opportunities for young people in the creative sector who otherwise wouldn't have them. It did, however, present some challenges to the nature of co-production with community members who had direct experience of living in Knowle West. One of the JDPs lived and had grown up in area, and so brought much needed experience of life in the community. For the other JDPs, who had no experience of life in Knowle West, it took longer to understand what the problem was, as one of the JDPs outlines:

*"I think initially a lot of us thought... As JDPs, a lot of us thought we were out to change people's food habits in a more direct way. Maybe we thought the idea was to get people to eat more vegetables or something. But it quickly became clear that wasn't the goal, and the goal was actually to find out what people are choosing to buy and eat now and what*



*the reasons are for that. I think it just got really... Yeah, it was really interesting to see, especially when you work in the place that you're studying, and you realise that things like fruit and vegetables are not particularly readily available in the Knowle West area. Then you really start to understand why there is something that needs to be done here."*

- George, August 2016.

While this change in perspective was a useful learning experience for the JDPs themselves, this diversity of understandings of what the project was for did complicate the nature of the research in Knowle West. Additionally, on a practical level, working with the JDPs impacted on the capacity and resources of the Researcher to meaningfully involve other community members.

One way this challenge was addressed was to create opportunities for the JDPs to gather input and ask for feedback to ensure that their work on the project was guided by local residents and make sure it was addressing relevant issues. With this in mind, the team of JDPs worked to organise an interactive community event in January 2016 to showcase the 'Fridge' survey idea and gather input from local residents. Lunch was provided by a local organisation and a men's baking group, with ingredients sourced from the nearby allotments. Based on feedback gathered at the event, the JDPs made amendments to the fridge installation before it was taken on the data collection tour the following month.



*One of the Junior Digital Producers at KWMC engages with local residents at a project event in January 2016.*



*Two of the JDPs showcasing the interactive 'fridge' survey at a Community event in KWMC, January 2016.*

Following this event, local residents were invited to join a 'community steering group'. It was not called a research group as it was felt by KWMC staff that the term 'research' would be discouraging for community members. This was in part due to the negative experience that some community members have previously had in engaging with projects and a general antipathy felt towards academics, practitioners and policymakers. In turn, this past history makes the community a challenging environment in which to carry out research. Past histories of institutional involvement need to be taken into consideration when any project of 'co-production' is to take place.

While the JDPs focused on gathering responses to the fridge survey, the RA worked with a group of local residents to gather qualitative data, holding small focus groups and interviews exploring the past and present of shopping in the area. A longer workshop of peer research training activities, including participatory mapping, was supported by the Productive Margins Research Associate.



*Local residents of Knowle West map the shopping areas, including shops that have closed down, in a workshop at KWMC, April 2016.*

Participants in these sessions generally represented the older demographic in Knowle West and welcomed having an opportunity to reflect on what life had been like in the past. One participant, Fran, reflected on how the area had changed;

"I used to love it when all the shops were around there, all the little shops. It was a real hive of activity, there was real community spirit around there. And that's gone and I miss all that."

Participants were able to remember Knowle West as a thriving area, with a bustling high street of

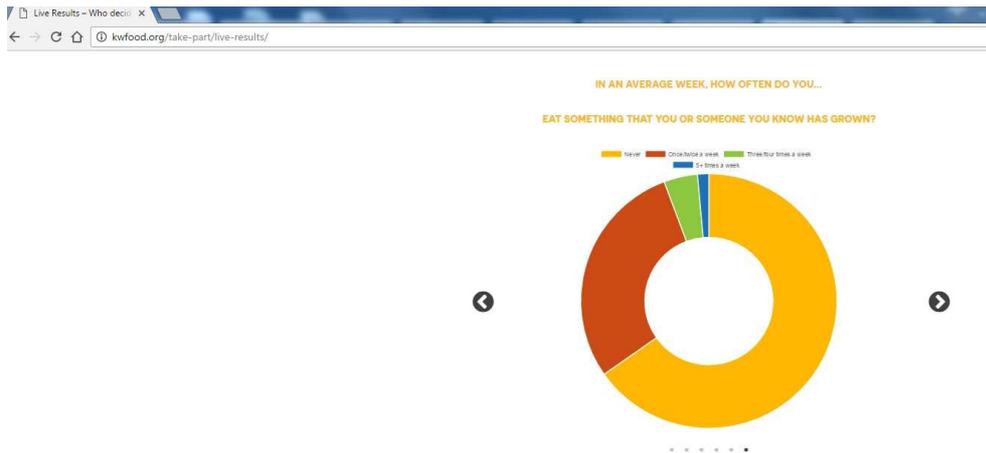
shops where the community could mingle and interact;

*The community spirit and the way of life is so, so much different. But how enjoyable it was, when there were shops, people walking around continuously. We were always talking to people, communicating, you had places to go. And now you look, we've got nowhere to go, we go no shops. So that's what... Life's changed.*

- Bob, January 2016.

This opportunity to remember food practices and spaces from the past was an effective way to reflect on the present and reimagine the future. It was also felt important to challenge the often negative portrayal of Knowle West in the media and the perception of it as an 'undesirable area'. One participant, outlined how, "Young people today have accepted today's way of living. To us, we've seen both sides, and it's nice, I think, for the older people just to express that in the past, things have been quite good. It's not all been bad."

Knowle West participants also co-designed a second survey focusing in more detail on some of the factors that people said they most wanted to change in the initial 'Fridge' survey, namely shopping and growing habits in the area. Participants took paper copies of this survey away and filled them in with families, neighbours and in local groups and returned them. The JDPs then visualised the results on the kwfood.org website. The survey is still available to be taken on the website, and so the results can continue to inform the work of future projects and food initiatives in the area.



Screenshot of the results from the second survey in Knowle West, co-designed with local residents in March 2016. The visualisations were created by the team of JDPs for the

Community group members also participated in the wider events that were organised as part of the project in Knowle West, including an event in May 2016 exploring the local landscape and running activities around foraging and making food and drink from local ingredients.



Participants forage and prepare flowers to create drinks that celebrate the landscape of Knowle West.

## The research at Coexist - bringing the two groups together

Rather than work with another group of participants through Coexist, it was decided that we would utilise the skills and assets of the organisation, including the physical space at Hamilton House, to convene the groups that were working on the project at KWMC and SPAN. In many ways, KWMC and SPAN share experiences and ambitions as organisations with both working to serve the interests and enrich the lives of those that face multiple disadvantages. In both 2010 and 2015 Lawrence Hill and Filwood wards had the highest levels of employment derivation in Bristol.<sup>8</sup>



*An early project visit in May 2015 to 'Feed Bristol',*

Residents from both areas had been brought together at an early visit to a growing project in Bristol, back in June 2015. There was much interest in learning about each other and finding out about the problems that the two communities faced.

In February 2016 the two groups were brought together for a workshop, facilitated by Coexist, in Hamilton House to share knowledge and diverse cultural understandings, and to identify overlapping research themes.



At the workshop, participants from Knowle West and Easton shared their concerns about accessing food and outlined what they considered the key problems for their communities.

The workshop involved activities and discussions to reflect on the research so far and think through next steps. Participants were keen to engage with each other and learn from each other's communities.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/32951/Deprivation+in+Bristol+2015/429b2004-eeff-44c5-8044-9e7dcd002faf>

Aisha, a research participant from SPAN, outlined the context in her neighbourhood;

*"When you think about one street and how many shops there are selling unhealthy food. That been a huge problem in our area. The number of leaflets we get from the takeaways. What they are selling is quite cheap in our area. And that has become a problem. A huge problem for families in our area. You know, we don't know what they are selling we don't know whether it's healthy or not, but our children are so into eating fast food."*

Denise, a resident of Knowle West, explained the issue facing her community;

*"The main issue is we haven't got a supermarket within walking distance. We've got local shops, not very many of them, but we've got local shops, but we can't really get hold of fresh fruit and vegetables because what the shops do sell aren't very nice or very fresh. In the whole of the estate we've got one vegetable store that does fruit and veg and flowers. But sometimes that's a bit hit and miss. We got some takeaway stores and we got different ones, so we got Chinese, kebab stores and fish and chips that are dotted around the estate. And one of the other main issues is that we haven't got a good bus service. We've got one that serves half the estate but not the other"*

## Two sides of the same coin

This workshop was a turning point in terms of the focus and ambitions of the project. Up until that moment, the research had felt quite disjointed, with activities and workshops taking place separately in each organisation. During this workshop it became clear that while the two groups face different challenges and barriers when it comes to accessing good quality food, they also had lots in common in terms of how their food habits are regulated and what it is they wanted to change. The key question was freshly articulated at this moment as: **who, or what, controls our neighbourhoods? Who gets to decide how many takeaways there are? How do supermarkets decide where to open? Who controls the spaces where we live and where shop? What alternatives are there that communities can pursue? What are the conditions that are needed to create positive community spaces based around food?** Together the groups were interested in further exploring the spatial regulation of food habits: how local environments and neighbourhoods work to influence the decisions that we make about food, and how to create change.



In other words, the problems faced by both communities - an excess of fast food outlets in one and a lack of shopping facilities in the other, can be understood as two sides of the same coin. In a neighbourhood with so many unhealthy options or a lack of fresh, affordable, quality produce it is harder to make healthy choices. Both communities had found themselves in a situation where they had little say over what facilities or shops are in their community.

### **Interpreting difference: 'Food desert' vs 'food swamp'?**

Despite this overlapping theme and shared connection over how the local environment worked to regulate food habits and influence over decision making, participants also highlighted the differences between the two communities by drawing on existing narratives around food and food poverty, namely 'food desert' and 'food swamp'. The term 'food desert' was first coined in a London Department of Health's study to describe urban areas that lack access to nutritious and affordable food (Beaumont et al. 1995). 'Food swamps' offer refer to inner city and low income areas in the United States with relatively few healthy options or with an excess of unhealthy options. Knowle West is sometimes referred to as a 'food desert', and Easton and Lawrence Hill as a 'food swamp'. While these terms are often used in literatures and studies around food access, some researchers and practitioners have noted that the binary presented between the two concepts is not helpful in addressing the underlying issues and for thinking through solutions.

Perhaps more helpful than this dual term was the subtle kinds of differentiation that were made visible by movement and dialogue between the communities. Thus participants from Knowle West repeatedly attempted to connect the problems facing the two communities:

*And really just talking with Easton about their problems, and of course they have a different catchment area, different community to Filwood. So therefore their problems are not the same. Theirs was junk food, mainly, shops; with us, we don't have shops. So there's a vast contrast.*

- Bob, Knowle West resident.

As part of this logic, there was a perception from residents of Knowle West that the problems facing SPAN participants was easy;

*I mean, when I was talking to them around that table, I wanted to get their end and fight for them, and I thought, 'You've got an easy fight where you're...' They've got everything; they've got the shops and everything. They were moaning about the fast food outlets. And I thought, 'God, that'd be an easy fight, wouldn't it?'*

- Mary, Knowle West resident.

On reflection, and with more time, more work could have been done to overcome this sense of difference expressed by Knowle West residents. The terminology of 'food justice' could have been helpful to think more holistically about the factors that work to limit or steer food access. The observations made are nonetheless useful for showing how food access is understood in relation to the perceived access of others, and in relation to geographical difference.

## Making change

Despite the differences between the two groups and their perceptions of one another's issues, there was a positive and supportive interest toward each groups. This led to greater understanding and sense of engagement over time, and a shared interested in ensuring that the project would be beneficial to the community and help to instigate some change.



As outlined above, SPAN participants were keen to learn about mechanisms for change and to campaign in the community. Participants wanted to campaign in the area and lobby local policy makers to improve the regulation of fast food takeaways in the area.

Meanwhile, for many years, the community in Knowle West had campaigned for a supermarket to open in the area. For the majority of participants, the primary motivation to get involved in the project was to pursue change and wanted the project to be part of trialling new options for food access in the area. Thus, one participant asked:

*"Can we get some more directive from someone to make it more positive? For example, how do we get something to happen? Because we can talk about it till the cows come home [Mary: Which we have] and we've done that for forty years and nothing ever happens. For instance now, someone organised a food fair that's something we haven't had happen, could they recommend it. Where would we go, how would we start it?"*

- Bob, Knowle West resident.

While it was problematic operating in an area such as Knowle West where the community feels so let down and so ignored by 'the powers that be', this shared emphasis on exploring conditions for change informed the next stage of the project; working with an artist.

## Working with the artist

In May 2016 the working group commissioned an artist, Anne-Marie Culhane, to explore and reimagine community food spaces in the two project sites. Informed by the work of the project so far, the aim was for the artist to work with participants to reimagine what our food habits could look like if communities had more regulatory control over the production, marketing and distribution of food.

After consulting with working group members and project participants, Anne-Marie Culhane proposed to bring a pop-up 'shed on wheels' to Bristol and to co-curate a series of food-based activities in Knowle West and Easton with community participants involved in the project.

In both communities, the project had tapped into a strong desire for community food spaces where they can interact with others, and access and learn about food. Working with an artist enabled the project to explore what some of the conditions might be for (re)creating thriving community spaces based on sharing food, enabling interaction and building communities.

### Box 3: Anne-Marie Culhane explains the concept behind the 'shed on wheels'

 The shed on wheels (SOW) is a recycled, modified electric-powered milk float designed as a meeting place, eating place, a site of creative exchange, sharing and discussion. It is made from mostly recycled and reclaimed materials. It has a kitchen area, with rocket stove, a comfortable seating area inside and a small area for exhibition/display. There are two pop-up sides which enable space for seating & gathering. It travels at 5mph.



The SOW provides a temporary hub for community activity focused on food. It catches people's attention and models recycling, reuse. It references the past for older people (through memories of milk floats) and future (in terms of re-purposing) as well as being popular with children and younger people. ”

## Taste of Knowle West

The shed on wheels was brought to Knowle West for two days of activities in July 2016, based around a growing and cooking competition called 'Taste of Knowle West'.

The events in Knowle West, enabled us to pilot some of the ideas that project participants and local organisations had in terms of organising food events in the community. The shed on wheels was stationed at two different outdoor spaces on the estate, in order to appeal to as many residents as possible.



The objectives of the event were:

- To find out and celebrate the cooks, bakers and growers in Knowle West.
- To encourage people to try new foods made from natural ingredients sourced locally.
- To help grow a network growers with cooks in Knowle West, and those that would like to find out more about growing and cooking.
- To help link up organisations that are working in food and cookery, and to promote the work that they do.
- To collect and document people's thoughts and ideas and reflections on local food and access to healthy food.

The main activities on both days were: contributing to a 'food map' of Knowle West, sampling foraged foods and drinks, contributing to a family recipe to the 'Taste of Knowle West' recipe book, and an activity called 'write to your local shopkeeper' to share feedback and ideas with local shops. As well as this, there were cooking demonstrations from local organisations and project participants.



Two local primary schools organised visits to see the shed on wheels and took part in cooking activities and sampling foods made from foraged ingredients - often to the delight and surprise of their teachers.

People who lived or worked in the area were invited to enter a dish of food that they had cooked or grown in the 'Taste of Knowle West' competition. Prizes were donated by local organisations.

At the end of the second day of activities, local residents were invited to take part in a community judging ceremony with 30 local people tasting each of the entries and deciding on the winners.

In all, more than 250 people participated in the event in some way.

## Somali Kitchen

Following the event in Knowle West, the shed on wheels travelled on to Easton. Project participants co-curated an event with the artist, named Somali Kitchen.

SPAN participants wanted the event to:

- Showcase Somali food and culture in a positive way
- Provide positive representation and strong women role models - for their children to see their cultural identity in a positive way
- Bring together communities in Easton and share our culture
- Create a space for women and children that is clean and healthy - an alternative to fast food takeaways
- Provide traditional, nutritious food for families for free
- Test out a response to Somali street food



Based on the research we had done participants wanted to disrupt and re-creating the spaces used by the communities. The shed on wheels was placed in a busy public area outside a library. The timings of the event were arranged to ensure that children and parents walking home from local school would walk past. Part of the objective was to test whether young people would eat the traditional Somali food, rather than going to one of the many nearby fast food outlets.

The group worked to prepare traditional food for the day, source traditional materials and cultural artefacts to display, and organise cultural activities for attendees to take part in. One of the participants ran a henna activity, others taught attendees how to make traditional Somali spice.

More than 500 people attended the event, tasting the food and taking part in the activities. There was an overwhelmingly positive result from all who came. One attendee said, "It's like you never meet them [other people] in the community. We pass each other by. We come together (at the Somali Kitchen) - it's a really good idea to share the spaces, the culture."



One of the participants, Sahra, outlines what the event meant to her;

"It made me proud. This is very important for me to share my culture, and also my potential to my area. It was fantastic. I didn't expect that. And also now we are more popular, and everyone is saying 'what are you going to do.'"

### **Final project event - imagining a food utopia**

The final stage of working with an artist was organising an event as part of the Connected Communities Festival 2016. The aim of the event was to create a participatory 'third space' in which to bring together participants to build a dialogue around future trajectories for the research questions through the concept of 'utopia', while sharing the key findings of the project with a wider audience. This event would allow us the showcase findings from our project with a wide group of community organisations from Bristol, food networks and local policy makers, in order to inform policy and practice. In the run up to the event we would build relationships with a diverse group of individuals and organisations, and tap into the work of existing networks. Through this participatory event we hoped to establish relationships and networks that we could follow up after the event.



The event was originally planned for June, but was postponed until after Ramadan. Participants were invited to bring along their families to share the work that we have been doing with them. We also invited local practitioners and Councillors to the event. The event enabled us showcase and build on the work of the project by enacting a food sharing space based on the learnings of the project.

We promoted the event as an opportunity to 'Feast on our Research'. Over welcome drinks, attendees were invited to look at an exhibition that displayed project materials, key findings and photos that told the story of the project. Also on display was the interactive fridge survey, with participants and attendees invited to take part in the survey.

Halfway through the meal, everyone was asked to move and sit beside somebody they didn't know. This worked well, as by this time attendees felt more relaxed and were keen to have an opportunity to talk with new people, including practitioners who had come to find out more about the project and meet some of those involved. Participants from the Somali Women's group and residents from Knowle West were presented with certificates of participation to celebrate their involvement in the project.



Takeaways in their neighbourhoods, saying to me, 'They are a very powerful group of ladies. I don't

think they realise just how powerful they are!’

Before dessert everyone was asked to move seats and sit next to somebody they didn’t know. Everyone was relaxed and this led to some really rich conversations and exchanges. The concept of a food utopia helped us to look forward beyond the project to addressing the regulation of our food habits in transformative ways. The menu reflected different phases and interests of the research at the two project sites. Five different courses of food and drinks were served to



attendees during the evening, with each course representing a key finding or different conversation from over the course of the year-long project. Over each course, participants were tasked with reflecting on different learnings of the project and discussing this in small groups. It also reflected the quite different food cultures leading to a rather spectacular hybrid menu of Somali and British cuisine using local produce, wonderfully prepared by the Hamilton House Community Kitchen.

The fusion between Somali and British food stimulated broad discussions about the importance of trying new foods and using food to celebrate and showcase cultures. One local councillor that attended was struck by the group of Somali women that have been researching the issue of fast food volunteered to read out the visions, hopes and dreams that had been written during the evening.



## Reflections and key learnings on the process

While the project has resulted in many fruitful outcomes, connections and exchanges (see the next sections on outputs and impact), it is important to reflect on some of the challenges in the project in order to inform future projects and collaborations. These are intended as useful starting points for discussion and reflections amongst the organisations involved in the project and for the wider Productive Margins collective.

- **The importance of practicalities in collaborations between different organisational cultures** in an increasingly difficult climate of shrinking resources for charities and organisations and competitive bidding for services and funding, money was understandably a point of contention throughout the project. The allocation of resources in a project with complex collaborations and fledgling partnerships, all based in the same city, needs to be discussed and openly agreed. Having the RA based in one organisation presented significant challenges and compounded tensions within the working group. While being community based can be an effective part of co-produced research, in a project with multiple partners it inevitably affected the work and focus of the project.
- **The need to establish clear decision making processes early in the project** following on from the above point, there was a clear process or agreement over how decisions were made. This led to decisions that would greatly impact the project being avoided or taken by one or two people, until processes were already underway.
- **The ethical dilemmas surrounding coproduction** It is extremely problematic operating in an area where residents feels so let down and in a context where the topic of research is such a live issue. For many years, Knowle West residents have campaigned for a supermarket to open in Knowle West, and it sometimes felt that a research project exploring access to food in the area was opening old wounds for participants. The dilemma of creating interest in the project and making it relevant to the needs of the community, while managing expectations that the project was not going to result in the opening of a supermarket, was a constant struggle.

- **The need to agree basic concepts and language before the project gets underway.** In a collaboration between diverse institutional cultures there were significantly different understandings of key concepts, including research, data, community, and co-production, which continued throughout the project. While a plurality of understandings are interesting as a starting point, it would have been more productive to openly discuss different approaches and agree on definitions early on for the purpose of this project.
- **The importance of engaging with power relations within the process** Co-production does not necessarily lend itself to equitable power dynamics. Within a time-pressured and tense space with powerful interests and agendas, a hierarchy of knowledge is not dissolved, rather it is turned upside down. There was a tendency for the expertise of community organisations to be foregrounded over more academic forms of knowledge. In other words, instead of levelling out knowledge hierarchies, one form of knowledge, of expertise, replaced another. Community organisations spoke of 'being in charge', of tearing down the 'ivory tower', and in so doing the academic knowledge became lost and the expertise that academics brought sometimes felt battled against rather than collaborated with.
- **The need to be clear about who the 'co' in co-production is.** 'Co' as a prefix means joint, mutual, common. In this project the formal mechanism for co-production was a working group, made up of staff from the four partners involved. No community participants were part of the working group and the question of representation lingered particularly uneasily in a context of working with a group of Somali participants. Who is brought into the space where different voices are heard and expertise is shared? Who is invited? Who speaks for communities? Who ends up occupying and dominating? In addition, while having the JDPs work on the project was of great importance to the work of KWMC, it added another layer of complexity to a project already attempting to co-produce work between four organisations. There was also a difficult balancing act between meeting the needs of the JDP programme and meeting the needs of the food project.
- **The need for consistency - or why bringing in new people won't fix underlying issues.** There was a tendency in the project to involve new people for fairly short periods of time. For example, a researcher was brought in to undertake the literature review before any research aims and research questions had been agreed. This meant that this piece of work became

increasingly redundant as the research got underway and the interests of participants shaped the focus of the research. Towards the end of the project an artist was commissioned and brought into a difficult situation. Additionally, staff from the partner organisations on the working group often changed and the roles of those that were on the working group weren't always clear. The staff member at KWMC managed the JDPs hadn't been involved in the food project.

- **The need to establish meaningful participation** when working with participants through a charity or community organisation that they support it can be challenging to identify and understand motivations for being involved. Participants can, understandably, feel loyal to an organisation that has provided them with opportunities or services and perhaps not want to say no to being involved, despite assurances that this would not affect their involvement with the organisation. This sometimes resulted in mixed levels of participation and fluctuating level of commitment from participants and a lack of constructive input into the development of the project.
- **The need to use 'neutral' tools for evaluation.** Similarly to the above point, it was challenging to gain constructive input from participants into the development of the project. Working through organisations can result in participants being reluctant to give what they think could be interpreted as negative feedback by the partner organisation. This was exacerbated by the RA being community based and seen as a member of staff of an organisation. Reporting commitments at one organisation meant that organisational evaluation forms were used following workshop activities which generated overwhelmingly positive comments. However, when conducting interviews towards the end of the project with participants individually, more productive reflections were offered which would have been useful to gather throughout the project.

## Key findings

### How the local environment works to regulate food habits

We found that local environments can regulate food habits in ways that override cultural, historical and healthy food habits in communities. At first glance, the circumstances, experiences and local environments for the two communities are very different. In Knowle West, a key concern for residents when it comes to food is the lack of a supermarket in the area. Participants were really concerned about how difficult it can be to get good quality, fresh food on the estate. For those without transport to drive to supermarkets it is a struggle. Older residents remember what Knowle West used to be like in the 1950s, with a thriving mix of butchers, bakers, grocers and other shops; a space where all the community could meet and mingle. For some 20 years, residents have campaigned to get a supermarket on the estate, with no success.

In Easton there is a thriving food scene – a vibrant mix of cafes, grocers and independent shops, however these aren't accessible to everyone and not affordable for those living on low incomes. Fast food takeaways offer cheap, energy dense food, and also a meeting space for people, including children and young people after school. For the participants, however, the numerous fast food outlets are a real worry, with concerns over how (un)healthy and (un)hygienic they might be. There are Somali cafes but these aren't welcoming to women and children and the group didn't feel that they represent Somali food and culture in a positive way. The women felt that they didn't have a safe food space that they could meet in, and interact with others.

Of course, access to decent food relies on a complex interplay of different factors. It is not only about distance to shops and food outlets, or solely about cost, but about availability of food in local shops, access to transport and location of shops. However, our research highlights the importance of environments and spatial regulation in the over determination of individual choices. Proactive policy solutions require engagement with the planning process in local authorities to ensure that the food retail environment offer healthy, affordable choices.

As a result of analysing our data we are working on establishing two sets of 'principles' based around these findings, that can be used to inform policy briefs as well as targeted reports. The first explores **principles for community-led urban design**, using our data to outline key steps for building collective empowerment into the way that city spaces are regulated, with an emphasis on food. The second focuses on rethinking **principles for co-production between diverse cultural communities**,

and summarises what we have learnt about the difficulties and rich possibilities of co-designing research between diversely situated organisations and communities.



## Outputs

### Publications

A number of publications are being produced about the project, all of which are still under development:

- Book chapter co-written by members of the Food Project working group.
- Journal article co-written by the Productive Margins RAs.
- Policy Bristol briefing about the project research on fast food takeaways.
- Project booklet for participants sharing images, quotes and findings.
- A set of principles for designing food systems in the city.
- A set of principles for processes of co-production.

### Collaborations & Partnerships

A number of collaborations and connections were created and built on throughout the research project.

As part of the project SPAN worked with wider organisations on events, visits, and community development initiatives, including (in no particular order): Up Our Street, Trinity Centre, Bristol Food Connections, Junction 3 Community Interest Company, Bristol Somali Forum, Black SouthWest Network, Social Enterprise Network, and Incredible Edible Bristol.

As part of the project KMWC worked with local organisations on events, visits and initiatives, including (in no particular order): Knowle West Children's Centre, Knowle West Men's Baking group, Knowle West Health Association, Springfield Allotments, Square Food Foundation, Matthew Tree Centre, Filwood Community Centre, Inns Court Centre, Incredible Edible Bristol, Company



Drinks, ReWork.

The two groups of project participants from KWMC and SPAN were brought together three times over the course of the project. While it was felt important to develop the connections and understandings between the two groups, limited capacity and time meant that the groups were not brought together again until the end of the project. There is potential for fruitful collaborations between the communities in the future.

A number of collaborations are still being explored and pursued for future work, including a future project between the Coexist Community Kitchen and the Somali Women's Group.

### **Next Destination & Skills**

As a result of this project all of the Junior Digital Producers at KWMC have progressed to new work or study opportunities. Four are in permanent employment within the creative or media industries, one has started an undergraduate degree, one is working abroad and two are working freelance. All eight of them are also being supported through KWMC's agency promoting young creatives, 'Eight'. More information available here: <http://kwmc.org.uk/mediastudio/eight/>.

Discussions are underway for SPAN participants to be offered 'Active Citizens' training from a local organisation.

### **Engagement Activities**

We carried out numerous engagement activities throughout the project, most of which are outlined in Box 1: Timeline of project activities. In addition to those listed in the timeline the project involved the following specific engagement activities targeting broader audiences:

In January 2016 the RA and the JDP team were invited to present about the project to the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement Academy. This is a programme for academics and research professionals who want to embed high quality engagement with research in their institution. The research team shared an overview of the fridge as a tool for interactive surveying and their experience of working on the project to more than 50 attendees.

In April 2016 the Radio 4 Food Programme visited KWMC to interview the project team at KWMC



about the project, and particularly to learn about the fridge as a creative tool to engage with the community. This interview was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on Sunday 24th April and is still available to listen online <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03rtzz9>.

In May 2016, the group of SPAN participants were invited to talk to a local radio station, BCFM, as part of a programme about active citizens and celebrating role of women in the community.

In addition to these activities, wider engagement was driven through online communication channels; namely websites, blogs and social media. A list of highlights are provided here:

- Blogs on the Productive Margins website, including:
  - Who decides what is in my fridge? Interactive fridge survey results  
<http://www.productivemargins.ac.uk/2016/04/23/eat-greet-in-knowle-west/>
  - 'SPAN's Somali Women's Group goes to the Community Kitchen at Coexist'  
<http://www.productivemargins.ac.uk/2016/06/10/spans-somali-womens-group-goes-to-the-community-kitchen-at-coexist/>
  - 'Somali Kitchen cooks up healthy fast food for Easton'  
<http://www.productivemargins.ac.uk/2016/07/27/somali-kitchen-cooks-up-healthy-fast-food-for-easton/>
  - 'Feasting on our research' <http://www.productivemargins.ac.uk/2016/09/08/feasting-on-our-research/>
  
- Blogs and updates on the KWMC website, including:
  - Live updates with photos <http://kwmc.org.uk/projects/whodecides/?live>
  - Write up of the 'Made in Knowle West' event, with photos and a short video  
<http://kwmc.org.uk/madeinknowlewestevent/>
  - 'A food project that's close to home' <http://kwmc.org.uk/foodprojectclosetohome/>
  
- Article written about the 'Somali Kitchen' event in July 2016  
<https://medium.com/@CoexistCIC/somali-kitchen-d94ce19fd401#.su44slg5e>
  
- Twitter account about the project, set up and managed by JDPs at KWMC:



<https://twitter.com/KWMCFridge>

- Vine account, with short videos from events and workshops, set up and managed by JDPS at KWMC: <https://vine.co/u/1311338726034927616>

Additionally, there are plans underway at KWMC to work with a local radio station to produce a show about the food issues in the area, drawing on the work of the project and interviews with participants.

### **Influence on Policy, Practice, Patients & the Public**

The work that has emerged from SPAN has potential to impact on policy areas of health, licensing and planning. The RA and participants have engaged with local councillors throughout the project who have been interested in and supportive of the work of the project. Participants were invited to present about the project at a Neighbourhood Forum, with three local councillors in attendance.

As a result of engaging with local councillors, the group have been invited to a meeting with Councillor Fi Hance, the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, to explore ways to improve regulation of fast food takeaways in the area.

The two sets of principles that are being completed will be used to engage with policy makers and will also form the basis of subsequent academic papers.

### **Research Tools & Methods**

KWMC have had discussions with other organisations, including At-Bristol Science Centre, about further developing the interactive fridge survey for future research and engagement activities.

### **Artistic & Creative Products**

- One of the major creative outputs of the project was the website that the JDPS built. The website includes an overview of the project, a live survey for community to continue



inputting into, and a page for resources. This will be maintained by KWMC staff as an open-access legacy beyond the project: <http://kwfood.org/>

- The 'fridge survey' itself was an interactive installation as well as a data gathering tool.
- The data gathered through the 'fridge survey' was analysed and uploaded in a digital, interactive portal: <http://kwfood.org/fridge-survey/interactive-results/>.
- KWMC hopes that local groups and activists will continue to use the website to start new conversations about food provision and the regulations that surround it – and spark new action to create the change they want to see in their area.
- A comic booklet, called, 'I can make that', created by KWMC, detailing how to make drinks made from locally foraged ingredients. This was made from a series of illustrations that were produced by graphic novelist, Joff Winterhart, documenting three of project events; the *Eat and Greet* in April 2016, *Made in Knowle West* in May 2016, and *Too Many Takeaways?* in May 2016.
- Film made about the 'Fridge tour' by JDPs: <https://vimeo.com/162662050>
- Short film made by KWMC documenting the 'Made in Knowle West' event in May 2016; <https://vimeo.com/167403645>
- Short animation made by the JDPs

### **Spin Outs**

There have been a number of spin outs as a result of the project, particularly building on the interventions with the artist Anne-Marie Culhane.

#### *Somali Kitchen*

Following on from the Somali Kitchen event, there have been requests and invitations for participants to cater for events and run cultural activities at events and workshops.

Two participants were paid to provide Somali snacks for an event with 150 people in attendance.



Participants from the group were invited to run 'Somali Kitchen' cultural activities at Bristol Somali Festival in October 2016.

The group of participants at SPAN have continued to meet as a group and are making steps to continue with the 'Somali Kitchen' initiative, and register as an unincorporated association and apply for funding for future events and activities. The group are exploring future collaborations with the Coexist Community Kitchen and plan to hold future cooking and culture sharing events in the community.

### *Taste of Knowle West*

Community groups, organisations and individuals working on issues of food and community in Knowle West have elected to continue organising events under the banner 'Taste of Knowle West'. One such event was organised in November 2016, and the group have applied for funding to continue to collaborate together and organise food sharing events.

### **Awards & Recognition**

Three of the SPAN participants were awarded a 'thank you award' from community organisation Up Our Street for the work they did on the project and the impact it has had on the wider community, in particular the 'Somali Kitchen' event. These awards recognise and celebrate local people who go above and beyond to benefit Easton and Lawrence Hill.



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