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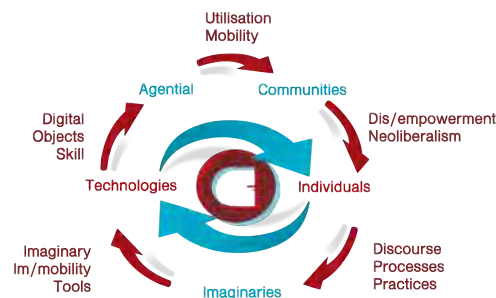# [In]Visible and un/fixed Communities: Living with the Welfare Reforms

RCUK DE Communities and Culture Network + Pilot Report

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Abstract:
'[In]Visible and [Un]Fixed Communities' worked with two third sector organisations to critically interrogate the lived realities of the welfare reforms. The key themes that shaped the project were: housing, food, job seeking, benefits and technology. The research comprised two ethnographic projects with community arts organisations and young people that were supplemented by interviews with third sector and public sector workers, charities and community organisations. It also represented one of a number of projects funded by the Communities and Culture Network+ that was investigating the impact of the Austerity measures in relation to digital communities.

Our overarching aim was to critically interrogate the assumptions that are at the heart of the welfare reforms- around digital literacy, around individualism, around politics and identity - and understand how these are revealed through the framing issues detailed above. The second aim was to work with the participants to produce digital texts, films and performances that speak to the issues detailed above, and to work with them to engage in wider issues around digital transformation.

1. Executive Summary

Our findings are compiled in a series of theoretical prototypes: Digital (il)legitimation, Digital (im)mobility, Shallow Capital, Digital Mundane, that look to critically grasp the complexity of the relationship between digital technologies, communities and welfare. Complementing these prototypes, we developed an intervention model for theoretical resilience and sustainability as the base for a future research agenda. These prototypes and models are detailed in **section 5** of this report, and they emerge from the elucidation of key empirical findings and the juxtaposition of these with policy initiatives and wider academic research on digital technologies, communities, young people, class, and geography. Our key findings that have informed these prototypes and models are as follows:

Community:

1. The concept of community continues to be understood primarily in relation to geographic proximity. Smartphones, and particularly social media play a central role in the communicative practices within communities across generations but usually prompted by young people.

Digital:

2. The people with whom we worked were all digitally literate. Digital literacy is not related to formal education or employment. All participants had smartphones and used social media on an hourly basis.

3. Our participants were digitally literate, but this did not translate into social mobility, employment or education: digital literacy does not have transformative potential on its own.

4. The concept of digital literacy is flawed: our participants can also not transfer social media skills and knowledge across other digital platforms or formats. Digital literacy as a concept and policy needs to consider the various affordances of particular technologies and platforms. It is not an all-encompassing term.

5. Mobile phones in many daily encounters – public transport, shopping, job seeking – were used as a means of subjecting the participants to discrimination. Participants would be ejected from buses, shops, taxis and the job centre for mobile phone use which suggests to us that digital literacy can run counter to cultural and social capital

Employment:

6. All our participants were in and out of work over the two years of the project. They were all actively seeking employment. Some had developed mental health issues including depression hat they directly related to the process of seeking work and more specifically their weekly encounters with the job centre.

7. The job centre website is clunky and not operable on mobile devices (the main if not only technology of our participants)

8. Other means of seeking work (such as the use of job seeking Apps like *Monster*) are not recognised by the jobcentre so that participants would still be sanctioned even if they had actively sought work because it was not through the stipulated channels..

9. Many of our participants sought employment in the public sector: social work, childcare, policing for example. Increasingly these services all require a period of volunteering which makes them inaccessible to single parents or those unable to pay for childcare. Those seeking to return to (or commence) work after having children were finding many routes barred.

10. Although many participants were able to use their digital knowledge for job seeking, it was class signifiers such as postcodes, manner, dress that were the main barrier. One participant told us he changed his post code to apply for a job in the same organisation with the same C.V. when he was rejected in the first round and subsequently got the job.

Parenting:

11. Most of our participants had children during the project, and parenting (particularly motherhood) played a key role in how our participants orientated themselves to their everyday.

12. Key themes we did not envisage were: motherhood, imagining, food, children. Being a parent opened up a range of avenues around the future that was prompted by a desire to see their own children 'do better'. The future was often talked about and imagined for their children in positive and agential terms even though the daily realities of managing on a budget, of dealings with social services, of childcare and parenting starkly contrasted with their discussion. Children were talked about and imagined in hopeful and positive terms and in ways that redirected their own dreams and imaginings for their own future.

13. These discussions occurred despite (of perhaps because of) their own struggles that included children being taken away by social services, food bank visits, partner or family abuse, eviction and so on. Their imaginings seemed (to us) overly hopeful, but they were clearly necessary, frequent and sustained by the group. Parenting enabled and closed down a range of options and avenues for our participants.

2. Context

When the project commenced, it was widely believed that Universal Credit would overhaul the benefit and welfare services. It was supposed to roll out in 2013, following pilot testing in specific geographical areas and the aim was that the majority of the UK will be using the new system by 2015-16. It was a policy widely heralded by the national media and local councils as inherently problematic, not only for how it understood literacy, empowerment, independence, barriers; but also because of the fundamental changes it would engender around domestic power relations, class, gender, ethnic and geographic identity, invisible and visible populations, responsibility, and everyday routines (to name a few). Our aim when we started was to map the lived realities of the welfare changes through close ethnographic work with specific communities in Leeds as they went through and experienced the changes that Universal Credit wrought in particular in relation to everyday mobility, housing, jobs and futures. Through this, our project sought to interrogate the assumptions and lived realities that lay at the heart of these policy changes by developing two long-term ethnographic fieldwork with community arts organisations in Leeds.

At the time of writing, Universal Credit has not been rolled out on the scale or within the timeframe first envisaged when the project began. Nevertheless, the wider digital by default initiative[1] has had significant rollout particularly when combined with the austerity measures that have led to rationalisations of services and an economic imperative to move online. While the Universal Credit has not had the singular effect that was first envisaged when the project started, there have nevertheless been significant

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[1] The Digital by Default initiative is the name given to a collection of policies over the past few years, including enacted changes to the governments own digital services through the gov.uk website that have sought to encourage, sustain and facilitate digital engagement. See UK Cabinet Office 2012, 2013, 2013b, 2015

changes to digital policies that have been felt at a local level (Wessels 2013, 2015, Simpson 2013, Gómez Cruz and Thornham 2015a,b,c, Thornham 2013, 2014a, 2014b, Thornham and Parry 2014) .

3. Aims and Objectives

Our overarching aim was to critically interrogate the assumptions that are at the heart of the welfare reforms- around digital literacy, around individualism, around politics and identity, and understand how these are revealed through the framing issues of digital expertise, housing and the lived experiences of the reforms. Our starting premise was that key concepts such as community, digital and culture would also go through significant change particularly in terms of communicative methods within them but also in terms of the values and practices associated with them. Our argument was that it is vital we understand these changes, which will impact on the framing, context and power relations of all future work with communities, digital technologies and cultures of practice.

4. Key findings[2]:

Many of the descriptive findings are noted in the Executive Summary and can be consulted in the interim report. In this report we want to highlight the important theoretical implications of these findings. In order to do so, we have developed four theoretical prototypes and an intervention model. These developments look to critically grasp the complexity of the relationship between digital technologies, everyday practices, imagination, expectations, communities and the welfare reforms. They represent a compilation of our key findings and, at the same time, they are envisioned as interventions into academic discourses and policy decisions regarding the Digital by Default initiatives and the wider Digital Economy. While they are not mutually exclusive (on the contrary, they constantly overlap), these prototypes represent three of the biggest challenges to attend in future developments and analysis of the Digital Economy.

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[2] Most of these findings had been published in different papers and conference proceedings (see the Dissemination section of this report for a comprehensive list of references).

<u>Digital (il)legitimation:</u>

Our first prototype is Digital (il)legitimation. A central finding in the project was that **digital literacy does not equate with participation, engagement or empowerment**. There is a clear example of this found in our empirical research that we detail here that is engaged with the notion of expertise (Bassett, Gómez Cruz & Thornham, 2015): Participants in our study are perfectly capable of becoming advanced users of technology, managing tools for content production that at times reaches expert levels. Nevertheless, this expertise is subsumed into a bigger array of social capital as well as traditional structures of power such as class, gender and race. This means that on the one hand, expertise is limited to/as form of *authorship* that is, in turn, claimed by the young people, but it is only through their encounter with established institutions (art centers, certifications, schools) that this authorship is legitimated as a very particular kind of expertise (that is also not necessarily transferrable beyond the specific project they were engaged with/through). While many of the young participants in our study could claim certain success as digital producers (for example with a significant number of visits to a YouTube channel produced by them), **expertise requires legitimation** (through more traditional channels, institutions and cultural gatekeepers) **and this legitimation, in turn, constructs expertise in very particular ways.** This in turn problematizes the idea of digital culture as open and participatory, and it also reminds us that we need to understand digital literacy in a myriad of ways that are not necessarily complementary or transferable, but are temporally and contextually framed. In this sense:

> **Digital expertise is framed and produced with certain values and through the valorization of particular practices, this at the expense of alternative or even complementary forms of expertise, which are effectively disappeared. This directs us to ask about the broader (digital) inequalities within which expertise is evoked – as an agential force and about the ease with which it is dismissed when in the 'wrong' hands – when those power relations re-emerge. Expertise here is explored as a quality defined within a system that is also continuously re-appropriated by that system, and is used as a tool for critique. (Bassett, Gómez Cruz & Thornham, 2015, p. 291).**

Expertise on its own does not 'enable' the young people, 'empower' them nor elevate them. Instead, without legitimation, individuals are repeatedly challenged and expertise is routinely unrecognized – located elsewhere and inherently future orientated. This in turn

continues existent power/knowledge roles and the young people remain on their perpetual journey – authorship is momentary, expertise is elusive.

Digital (im)mobility

The second prototype is closely connected to the first and relates to Digital (im)mobility. Mobility has been understood mainly as a positive force and related to certain devices such as mobile phones and especially smartphones. If a mobile device is connected to Internet, it is assumed that the person in possession of such a device will become a mobile subject. Nevertheless, in our research with young NEET people, we found that **technology does not straightforwardly enable mobility through information** (they are still refused access to infrastructure), and at the same time, technologies are intrinsic *to* processes of mobility and experiences of space and place, because both constitute their experiences of journeys. In other words, while our participants routinely use digital technologies to access information around, for example, travel timetables, or to book taxis or to game whilst travelling, this access did not equate to the successful completion of a journey. They were still routinely refused access to board public transport or ejected because of mobile use. At the same time, we found that the concept of mobility and the notion of boundary crossing is not only embedded in the discourses around technology – usually through the constitution of the ideal user of technology as a mobile individual (see Thornham & McFarlane 2014) it is also embedded in the concept of NEET - usually in relation to the (policy constructed) journey to employment (see for example Magure & Rennison 2005, Furlong 2006, Bynner and Parsons 2002). **This means that the concept of mobility** – particularly in terms of how it has bled into theories of both young people and digital technologies as a positive and agential force – **needs critique**.

The young people we investigated are intrinsically connected, but their connections are not necessarily creating a positive, productive or useful impact on their lives. Claiming the NEET kids are digitally literate reveals as much as it glosses over in terms of large gaps in knowledge, use and understanding. Mobility as a concept remains only accountable as/for a series of consumer choices but *not* as a real possibility of navigating freely through spaces and places. Access and connection does not straightforwardly or transparently enable mobility – it only enables the *idea* of it. Their knowledge and literacy of digital technologies is vast but this knowledge and literacy does not empower them. For example, we found that digital knowledge and literacy does not enable them when

faced with a job search or application, a court order or email exchange with a social or youth worker, travel throughout the city, everyday mediations with and within spaces and places. These young people are, clearly, 'digital by default', but it seems that their digital literacy and mobility can only "take them somewhere" when it is enacted and performed within (and through) traditional power structures. The **(im)mobility** of their connections created a rupture with the possibilities of physical and technological mobility that uncovered the power structures and ideologies underpinning both.

When we set these findings against policy on digital literacy we find that:

> **In policy terms, these young people are considered digitally 'literate' – they have 'access', 'understanding' and can 'create' (OfCom 2006: 6); they have 'awareness, attitude and ability' (DigEuLit, Martin 2005: 135) they have scope and frequency, speed and plethora (see also FutureLab 2010: 2; Bassett et al. 2013). Digital literacy is conceptualised here then, as access to digital technologies and use of them. In turn, access 'itself' is conceptualised as a form of literacy and an underpinning element that enables literacy - through and into the technology. Digital literacy is also about an understanding of the limitations, critiques or issues with mobile technology: what it does and does not enable. Literacy is also about amount and frequency of use. Our argument … is that firstly, literacy aligns itself with ideologies of mobility – and it is easy to trace those arguments if we consider how literacy is being measured (journeys) and what it is said to enable (mobility). Our second argument is that, while the participants of our research may well be digitally literate as defined by policy initiatives above, this is not in and of itself empowering: it does not (literately, figuratively) get them anywhere… In other words, there is a huge leap being made not only between what the technology provides and how it is experienced (see also van Dijck 2009: 44). There is also a huge leap being made between the experiences of the technology and consequential wider or broader empowerment. Finally… we argue that it is the positive assumptions bound up in the discourses of mobility that facilitate and underpin these presumptive leaps. (Gómez Cruz & Thornham 2015)**

<u>Shallow Capital</u>

The third theoretical prototype is Shallow Capital. This prototype is intended to signal how **social participation through digital technologies does have an impact on community practices, communication and access to information but, nevertheless, this increasing capital does not enhance or alter their everyday normative condition.**

Our research raised a number of conceptual and empirical issues that we want to elucidate here. Take for example Social Media. In a similar vein to the discussion around mobility in the previous section, there seems to be an implicit understanding that participation in social media as a positive force (because it allows social life, participation and opportunities). The young people in our study are heavy-users of social media, they are constantly online, posting, reposting, commenting and creating content, taking selfies, photographing family members or things they consider important. They do have an important amount of contacts (sometimes more than a thousand) and social media is an important part of their everyday life. Nevertheless, these contacts and this constant activity are never translated into job opportunities, and while it represents a safety and support network, especially for the women of our study, it is also a way to reinforce existing social roles including heteronormative and gendered behavior:

> **[Technology is] not free from socio-cultural, political and economic power structures and any mobility or agency [it] may offer the user is momentary, contentious, negotiated and ambivalent… In an investigation into mobile phone practices and issues of mobility, it is the *impossibility* of mobility that is revealed at the same time that the user is repositioned within existing power relations that locate, immobilise and disempower. In seeking to redress a number of presumptions around the ideologies and discourses of mobile phones, we have suggested that mobility is not an agential condition triggered by the affordances of the mobile phone, but is instead related to a complex entanglement of elements that are set within socio-economic power networks. At the same time, the concept of mobility, and the presumption that mobility is agential, is absolutely central to the majority of literature we have engaged in through this article to the extent that we need to unpack the ideologies of mobility in**

order to account for lived and everyday experiences. Seen here, mobile phones generate and underpin mobility *and* immobility and the concept of mobility masks as much as it reveals. This also, of course, has implications for the discourses and literature we have engaged in here – not least because we also need to further interrogate concepts such as 'digital literacy' and 'digital divide' to consider how such discourses perpetuate the assumptions and ideologies of mobile phones as eliding with mobility (and mobility as agential and positive). (Gómez Cruz & Thornham 2015).

When thinking about the 'digital by default' approach to welfare provision,[3] and the assumptions around digital literacy within existing UK policy;[4] it is clear from working with these young people that even while they have access to technologies, especially smart phones, (that are compulsively taken in and out of pockets, checked, and engaged with), they are inadequate devices for what is required by the welfare system for a number of reasons not overtly connected to the technology 'itself'. There are continued power relations through which digital technology is positioned but routinely fails to intervene. This is essential to understand because one of our findings is that **technological use and literacy, as a form of capital, does not equate to a meaningful capital in terms of economical and social improvement of their life conditions. Instead, it represents an increasing form of *Shallow Capital* that does not have transformative potential on other aspects of their lives.**

Digital Mundane

The fourth theoretical prototype we want to describe is Digital Mundane and it has been developed from our concern that in thinking about the wider **digital economy**, it is not appropriate to approach digital as a determining force, nor is it appropriate to consider digital as a separate entity of the everyday life. We could suggest that the digital is shaped by what we might call economies of practice. For example, when considering mobility and the mobile phones, it is the *impossibility* of mobility that is revealed at the same time that the user is repositioned within existing power relations that locate, immobilise and

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[3] https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/digital-by-default (accessed 15.12.14)
[4] E.g. OfCom 2006, FutureLab 2010, Martin 2005 as well as Bassett et al 2013, Thornham 2011.

disempower. We can affirm that, while technology does not enable an already-existing intention towards or of mobility, nor are digital exploration and new digital horizons made possible by the mobile individual; mobility and technology are nevertheless intrinsically connected, but not necessarily in helpful, straightforward or even agential ways:

> **The digital mundane is a concept that seeks to account for routine digital mediations or practices we enact daily…. [It] is a useful device for allowing the convolutions, contradictions and inconsistencies of mobile digital practices to sit side by side with embodied, un-thought and routine practices within a variety of settings (Thornham & Maltby 2015)**

Our research has conceptualized the digital mundane in four key ways. First in relation to mundane banality – where the compulsive and mundane engagements with digital technologies (checking in, scrolling for updates, using smart phones for music, alarm clocks etc) increasingly 'disappear' such engagements *as* technological and instead locate them within a quotidian routine. This concept follows the trajectory of cultural studies scholars, extending what Meaghan Morris has called mundane banality (1990) to newer digital technologies (see also Hansen 2006, Gómez Cruz & Thornham forthcoming a & b, Thornham 2011). Some examples from our fieldwork include the constant searching for and securing Wifi signals, switching on and off music with one earphone in place throughout engagements with other activities and snapchatting or messaging whilst speaking or engaged in another activity.

The second way we conceptualise the digital mundane is in relation to embodiment. Drawing on phenomenology (de Certeau, 1984; Merleau-Ponty, 2002) and feminist scholarship (Sobchack, 1995; Grosz, 1994) to consider embodied actions in specific places and with specific objects (Pink, 2011; Ingold 2011, 2013), digital use is part of what Shaun Moores has called 'unreflective, taken-for-granted' corporeal movement (2014:202). This second concept considers the tactile or sensory relationship we have with our devices and the way these relationships reconfigure our knowledge about the world. Examples from our fieldwork here include the routine swiping, tapping and holding of mobile phones, literal journeys around the city that were also digital, taking selfies.)

Although such embodied actions may be taken for granted, they are *not* unresponsive. Consequently, the third way we consider the digital mundane is in relation to mundane and everyday technical infrastructure that conditions and frames our mediations. This latter conception elucidates further our concept of shallow capital not least because it acknowledges the 'durable' power relations (Latour 1990) of the technical even as they become increasingly obfuscated. As Suchman argues (2007, online) technical systems also configure mediation, not straightforwardly or transparently but by framing our 'capacities for action' (Suchman 2007, online). In this context the digital mundane relates to the increasingly in/visible infrastructure of social media that becomes in/visible through everyday use, mediation and promotion through uptake. Examples from our fieldwork in this context would be the practices of selfies or the phenomena of 'checking in' that are increasingly compulsive *and* generate economically profitable data (Gehl 2014, Berry 2008). That these processes are increasingly normative and mundane through use and familiarity, acceptance and deployment, is a central issue.

The final way we consider the digital mundane is in relation to discourse and in particular the ways our participants talk about their lives and their digital engagements, including the value structures and the meaning digital technologies hold for them. This fourth concept reminds us that a consideration of the technology as isolated is always inadequate not least because the objects and the digital affordances signify very differently for individuals and groups (see also Gray 1992; Brunsdon 1997; Walkerdine 2007; Thornham 2011). There are complex markers of distinction that occur in the same space and at the same time as others: phones changed more rapidly than clothes, for example, and there was always a certain incongruity between physical appearance and mobile phone ownership that at the very least, demonstrates to us that the meanings of the mobile phone are far more complex and nuanced than we can ever hope to understand. A key example from our fieldwork relates to the smartphone as an metaphor for distinction – not because of its cost or affordances (although this was important as a status signifier) but in relation to what the smartphone signified about successful relationships. More important than the latest model was who paid the tariff:

> **Who pays the tariff is important, but it also assumed and routine that someone else *should* pay the tariff. The many conversations about tariffs**

> **with the young people reveal a long, complex history of negotiated payments – mothers, aunts, grandparents, sisters were all cited as paying tariffs (or contributing to payments) at one point or another (and we should note the notable absence of male figures in their narratives). Further, there is a distinguished delineation between the object and the tariff. The object signifies social and cultural status, partly because of its cost, although it is a misconception to think, given the conversations about tariff payment, that because the young people have the latest iphone in their hands, they can afford it themselves. At the same time, the phone also carries with it certain responsibilities around care for/of it that is unevenly taken up or rejected ... The tariff signifies connectivity, relationships and being desired. It also, conversely, positions the owner into further power relations – here, one that is more traditionally domestic whereby the boyfriend pays the tariff but also expects her to be available ('He pays for it so he can talk to me whenever he wants. So why shouldn't he pay for it?'). (Gómez Cruz & Thornham 2015)**

Our contention in detailing these theoretical prototypes is that together they signify a profound intervention into the wider digital economy. In our research, we have used these prototypes to not only think about practices and uptake of digital technologies – issues that are central to the digital economy. We have also used them to think about methods of engagement and in particular the way certain discourses have become assumed ideologies that need methodologically unpacking in order to move forward (such as the presumptions around mobility and transformation). Third, these prototypes have much wider resonance, and we are beginning to use them to think about institutional and digital infrastructure in terms of the ways certain actions or presumptions become legitimated or illegitimated within a system and the implications of this socially, culturally, economically and politically.

5. Intervention model for theoretical resilience and sustainability

In this section, we present a device for theoretical resilience and sustainability that is capable of resisting neoliberal constructions of disenfranchised individuals who are also positioned through traditional Gender, Race, Geographic and Class power structures.

Our findings suggest these contradictory discourses (of neoliberalism and of traditional power structures) generate unfulfilled expectations that are related to different economies (financial but also geographical, of time, control, etc.). Our intention is to highlight the technologies and ideologies that in turn make visible the hidden power structures in a productive way for both academics and policy-makers.

There are multiple accounts of how social media participation, particularly with the advent of mobile technologies, boosts creativity, democratization and empowerment (see Turkle, 2011; Ling & Donner, 2009; Papacharissi, 2011; Lim, 2012; Lievrouw, 2011). As the technology of a particular generation (see Hall & Baym 2011), there seems a particular synergy between the discourses around young people (see Livingstone 2009, Buckingham 2008) and digital technology. In critically exploring these synergies through our research, we argue that both are perceived as an "imaginary journey", complete with connotations of movement, advancement, gaining control and (always) because of this, as inherently positive. These imaginary journeys (of youth, learning; of becoming digital, etc.) tend to be combined in multiple ways and in relation to social media (digital natives, online communities, etc.) and tend to focus on arrival points, and/or overcoming obstacles - rendering the trajectories invisible and constructing a certain narrative which is inherently focused on the individual and the technologies as useful facilitators.

Set against this, we focus on the moments of rupture of lived (rather than imagined) journeys in order to reveal the hidden power structures that underpin these arrival points. We argue for a different constituency of individual and technology that in turn nuances the agential processes assumed within the rhetoric and discourses of the imagined journey. Widening the concepts away from the **individual** seems a useful task, not only because it acknowledges the longstanding power relations within contexts and relations, but because it brings back the role of communities.

By focusing our model specifically on digital (il)legitimation and shallow capital, we offer a very different narrative about the digital mundane, one that is disruptive and brings the invisible into accounts of the digital. We want to draw attention to the invisible and immobile subject who is routinely forgotten, negated or undermined in the advent of digital, mobile and social media and, in order to do this, we propose that following model captures many of the presumptions critiqued in this report when studying digital

technologies and communities. Crudely, this model supposes that communities are constituted by a set of individuals whose untapped potential can be garnered through the (supported) uptake of digital technologies with subsequent (if immeasurable) positive results for the community from which they emerge and to which they return:

Uncritical model of technological agency
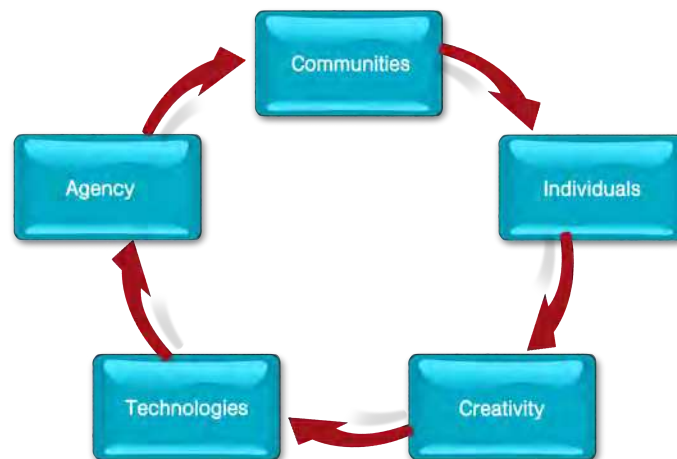
Model 1

This model is necessarily and problematically linear and we contrast this with the second model ('Intervention model' below) where **the power structures and ideologies underpinning (and legitimating and producing) very particular notions of transformation are accounted for.** This model also attempts to acknowledge the messy and sometimes contrary synergies that digital technologies through economies of practice reveal (Model 2).

Intervention model
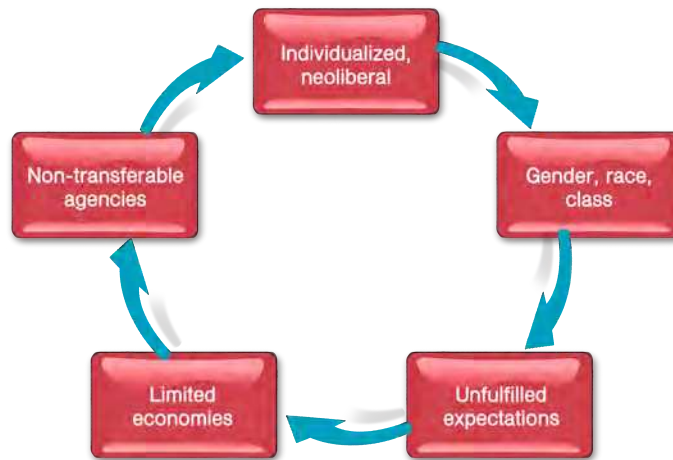
Model 2

There are a number of issues to note in Model 2: One, that we conceive digital, imagining, cultures and individuals as inherently entwined. Two, that the interesting spaces for us are in the tensions between these – and these spaces are fed and shaped by the other elements in the diagram. In other words it is in the contrast between traditional signifiers of class, gender and race (to name a few) and the ideologies of neoliberalism and individualism that produce the lived realities of unfilled expectations in particular ways and (re)constitute these expectations within a transformative model such as the one above (Model 1). Our central question from this is about the politics of imagining – not just about who gets to imagine, where and when, but also about the wider socio-technical frameworks, or discourses of imagining – the moments when imagining gets pulled into or elided with other political, socio-technical structures. **The emerging values associated with digital (conscious and unconscious, economic and well-being) cannot be separated from wider socio-economic, geographic and age-related signifiers**.

What we suggest following these two models, is a framework whereby the ideologies, presumptions and elisions between (for example) concepts of community, empowerment, mobility, digital are highlighted so that we can identify the way that ideologies, concepts and policies bleed together in moments of practice to produce particular claims around the digital economy. Many of the key elisions have been noted

in the sections above, but the model below is an attempt to acknowledge the range of discourses and power structures at play in our empirical and ethnographic work. It is also a model that reminds us to think of our own assumptions, knowledge structures and power relations when we engage with empirical work. Finally, the model we are currently working with is an amalgamation of all three models – superimposed as an animation that moves between the models in a non-linear way. We clearly can't present that here, but it is worth noting that our model is not static.

Of technology and digital cultures
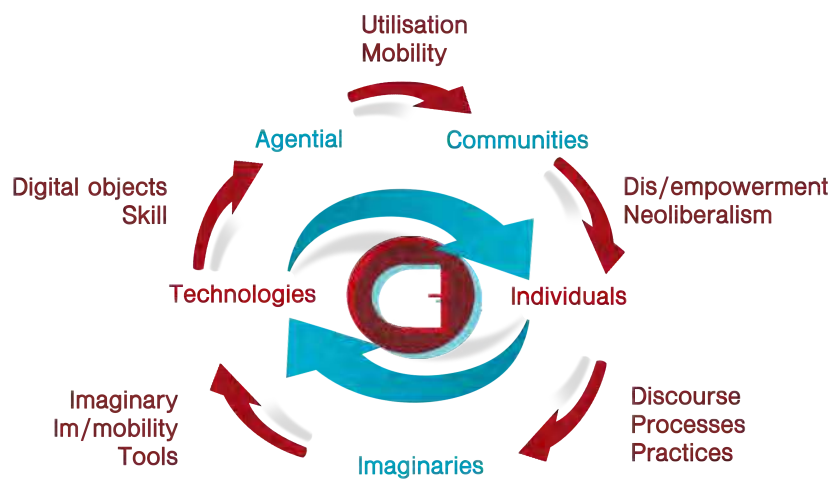
Model 3

6. Next steps

Upon the completion of this research project, we have identified two further steps. The first one is the completion of a significant monograph that unfolds and develops the theoretical prototypes. This book is intended not only as a contribution to the academic discussion on the Digital Economy and Society but also as a broader intervention into policy making and oversimplified and generalistic assumptions about the transformative powers of the digital.

The second, related to the first one, will be to test the prototypes and models in different communities, age groups and countries[5]. Following this, we have already secured funding from the British Academy as a preliminary step here, and are working towards further international projects that will develop these models.

7. Impact

The project has had an important amount of impact items reaching several stakeholders. Here are some of the most important:

1. Media and local policy visibility for young people's voices and ideas. With MyMap Leeds this was underpinned by the CBBC, the City Council and several stakeholders that used social media to discuss and support the project. This was positive not only for the Studio and participating children but served as a public example of joint projects between university and government.

2. The shooting of a short documentary, following the ethnographic work with Studio12. This documentary was produced to support the three films completed by the young people. This documentary, along with the films, were screened to city authorities and representatives from local media industries and later became part of the BBCFresh webpage and screened in different festivals around the world.

3. Space2 edited together a series of audiovisual materials. Outputs include a film – a taster has been shown as part of West Yorkshire Playhouse's Recipe for Life event, and a screening of the complete material that was part of one of the participants Art Award Activities. These were showcased at a number of third sector and community sector events including at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, to achieve local recognition. These events were attended by local residents, council members, community arts organizations, industry, and representatives of key services (social services, police, job centres, NHS).

4. The event *Tea, Cake and Conversation* co-organized by the CCN+ and Space2, reunited council members, scholars and families of Space 2 participants who are living on benefits to discuss some of the facing challenges in everyday life- It became an important forum to bridge two groups that are usually disengaged. This

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[5] Further funding had been allocated by the British Academy to develop a small Project in Mexico using these prototypes and model.

event constituted a key methodological prototype we are currently developing whereby creative methods are used as a starting point for political discussion.

5. Helen Thornham, PI of the project, has been engaging in a number of local policy initiatives and working with Leeds Council Third Sector Organisations and Industry on the digital policy of the city. She has also written a number of articles for *the Conversation*, which have resulted in invitations across the disciplinary sectors for research project involvement and research projects outside academia.

8. Notable Dissemination.

Publications

Gómez Cruz, E. & Thornham, H (2015). 'Raw talent in the making': Imaginary journeys, authorship and the discourses of expertise. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies.* 21: 314-32.

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Thornham, Helen et al (2014) [In]Visible and un/fixed Communities: Living with the Welfare Reforms. Interim Report *Working Papers of the Community and Cultures Network+ Vol. 4 Oct. 2014* http://www.communitiesandculture.org/files/2013/01/interim-report.docx

Thornham, Helen (2013) Digital Welfare only Deepens the Class Divide' in *The Conversation* http://theconversation.com/digital-welfare-only-deepens-the-class-divide-15828

Thornham, Helen (2014) 'Claiming 'Creativity': discourse, 'doctrine' or participatory practice?' in the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 20:5 pp 536-552

Thornham, Helen & Parry, Katy (2014) 'Constructing Communities: The Community Centre as Contested Site'. Community Development Journal; doi: 10.1093/cdj/bst088

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Thornham, H. & Gómez Cruz, E. (2015). "Future imaginings and digital practices". (2015). WUN Understanding Global Digital Cultures Conference 2015. Hong Kong.

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Gómez Cruz, E. (2013). "Creative Authorship as a Sociotechnical Expertise". *Forum Mondial des Sciences Sociales. Transformations sociales et ère numérique.* Montreal, Canada.

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